

INTERIM UPDATE



FROM FEBRUARY 3, 2021

LEGAL & JUDICIAL

HB 7 – Civil Liability for Damages Relating to COVID-19

On Wednesday, February 3, [HB 7](#) by Representative Lawrence McClure (R-Plant City) was heard by the House Pandemics & Public Emergencies Committee and was reported favorable with 11 yeas and 6 nays. **AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis, spoke in support of this legislation.**

The bill provides civil immunity from COVID-19 liability to businesses, educational institutions, religious institutions, governmental entities, and other covered entities that acted in good faith during the COVID-19 pandemic. The bill protects reasonably-acting entities and institutions so that they can predict their COVID-19-related litigation risks, remain viable, and continue to contribute to the state's well-being.

HB 7 will now go to the House Judiciary Committee.

AIF supports legislation that protects the Florida business community from frivolous and costly litigation by plaintiffs suing to settle.

HB 35 – Relating to Legal Notices

On Wednesday, February 3, [HB 35](#) by Representative Randy Fine (R-Palm Bay) was heard by the House Civil Justice & Property Rights Subcommittee and was reported 11 yeas and 6 nays. **AIF's Senior Vice President of State and Federal Affairs, Brewster Bevis, spoke in opposition to this legislation.**

The Florida Constitution requires that public notice be given for meetings at which official acts are to be taken or where public business is to be conducted. All meetings of a county, municipality, school board, or special district at which official acts are to be taken or at which public business is to be discussed or transacted must be open to the public and notice must be given.

All legal notices and publications must be made in a newspaper that meets the following qualifications:

- Published at least once a week;
- At least 25 percent of its words are in English;
- Considered a periodical by the post office;
- For sale to the general public; and
- Contains information of interest or value to the general public in the affected area

The bill would allow a governmental agency the option to deviate from print and publish legally required advertisements and notices, such as impending sale of real property, on a publicly accessible website.

HB 35 will now go to the House Judiciary Committee.

AIF opposes internet-only public notice, as it eliminates the wide net created by print media and the internet combined. Webpages are present one day and gone the next; the internet is an inherently unreliable platform for critical information.