



**BROWARD METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION  
WEEK OF OCTOBER 23, 2017**

This week has been action packed beginning with the official Designation of Senator Galvano as the next Senate President for the 2019-2020 Legislative Sessions. The Legislators held campaign fundraisers throughout the week and the budget process has begun to ramp up with the November 14th deadline for local requests fast approaching. Below are highlights from the week we believe you should be aware of. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns.

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**HURRICANE RECOVERY**

Discussions on hurricane recovery efforts continued this week, with the House and Senate budget leaders taking opposing views on whether or not to tap into the state's "rainy day" funds. The House Speaker stated that the reserves were at a minimum amount and could not go lower, while the Senate Appropriations Chair stated that Hurricane Irma constituted the sort of emergency that the funds were set aside for.

The House Select Committee on Hurricane Response and Preparedness heard presentations on utilities and the power grid, fuel supply, evacuation options, among other things. Senate Appropriations, meanwhile, heard from the Division of Emergency Management on local government reimbursements. The Division's new director vowed to make improvements to the system. Of the estimated \$650 million in recovery costs, FEMA is expected to fund \$600 million. Senators also listened to testimony regarding higher rates on DOT's no-bid debris removal contract and discussed funding for Hurricane Maria evacuees.

Senate: [http://flsenate.gov/PublishedContent/Committees/2016-2018/AP/MeetingRecords/MeetingPacket\\_3972.pdf](http://flsenate.gov/PublishedContent/Committees/2016-2018/AP/MeetingRecords/MeetingPacket_3972.pdf)

House: <https://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Documents/loaddoc.aspx?PublicationType=Committees&CommitteeId=2978&Session=2018&DocumentType=Meeting%20Packets&FileName=schrp%2010-26-17.pdf>

**TEXTING WHILE DRIVING**

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Senate Communications, Energy and Public Utilities voted 6-2 to pass a bill that would make texting and driving a primary offense with many members expressing the desire to see the bill go farther than just texting. The committee adopted an amendment that would require law enforcement to inform individuals of their right to refuse to turn over their phone for verification of texting. An amendment to expand the bill to apply to any technology that is not hands-free failed, however many of the bill's supporters stated that they do want to see the bill expanded to include all distracted driving. Many families who have lost loved ones in crashes resulting from texting and driving spoke in favor of the bill. The bill still has a long way to go despite the early progress. It has three more committees of reference in the Senate. Its House companion has yet to be heard in its first committee of reference. Historically, the House rejects texting and driving proposals. The Speaker had promised to conduct a study on the issue in time to make a decision for the Session.

<http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2018/00090>

### **HOUSE TOURISM AGENCY ACCOUNTABILITY PACKAGE**

The Speaker of the House unveiled an Economic Development and Tourism Promotion Accountability package in a continuation of reform of tourism agencies. The package includes requiring local tourism councils to go before the County Commission for contracts above a threshold dollar amount and post contracts online (HB 3) and redefining "trade secret" to require a vendor get court approval ( HB 459, 461). The package was unveiled amidst news that the House also filed a lawsuit against the City of Tampa regarding the legality of a hotel assessment within a special taxing district. The bills have not received committee references yet.

<http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2018/00003>

<http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2018/00459>

<http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2018/00461>

### **PUBLIC MEETINGS**

Senate Community affairs unanimously passed a bill to allow two or more board members to gather without public notice so long as official business is not conducted. The bill is meant to correct what some see as a broad interpretation of the Sunshine Law that can impede government process. The bill now has one more committee stop in the Senate. Its House companion has not yet been heard in its first of three committees.

<http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2018/00192>

### **LOCAL TAX REFERENDA**

Senate Community Affairs voted 6-1 to pass a bill that would stipulate that local tax referenda must have 60% vote threshold to pass when the vote is during a special election.

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Under the bill, a majority of voters would be sufficient during a general election. The committee adopted an amendment that removed a requirement that 60% of a local governing board be needed to increase the millage. The bill has three more committees of reference in the Senate. Its House companion has not yet been heard in its first of three.

<http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2018/00272>

## **TOLL LANES**

House Transportation and Infrastructure invited the Florida Department of Transportation and MDX to present on the implementation of legislation passed in the 2017 Legislative Session that, among other things, required a reduction in tolls. The toll reduction has yet to take place despite the effective date of July 1, 2017. The slow timeline has especially frustrated the Miami-Dade delegation, including Speaker Pro Tempore Nunez, the bill's sponsor, who sat in on the committee as a special guest. The agency testified that it has begun implementation but that the extra time was needed before the tolls could be reduced. Members of the committee seemed to dismiss agency concerns and expressed dissatisfaction that legislative mandates were not being heeded.

### **Bills:**

#### **SB 544 Procurement Procedures by Sen. Brandes**

Specifying the applicability of procedures for the resolution of protests arising from the contract solicitation or award process for certain procurements by specified transportation, expressway, and bridge authorities, etc. ;Effective Date: 7/1/2018

<http://flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2018/00544>

#### **SB 572 High-speed Passenger Rail by Sen. Mayfield**

Designating the "Florida High-Speed Passenger Rail Safety Act"; providing powers and duties of the Florida Department of Transportation; requiring the Florida Division of Emergency Management to offer, under certain circumstances, the local communities and local emergency services located along the rail corridor training specifically designed to help them respond to an accident involving rail passengers or hazardous materials; requiring a railroad company operating a high-speed passenger rail system to be solely responsible for certain maintenance, improvement, and upgrade costs, etc. Effective Date: 7/1/2018

<http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2018/00572>