

## Florida Legislature 2012 Session Report

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The State Legislature in Florida recently concluded its annual 60 day Session on Friday, March 9, 2012. Akerman's Government Affairs & Public Policy Practice Group in Florida had a banner year in both the number of clients represented and number of legislative successes accomplished on behalf of Akerman clients.

The legislature's preoccupation with the once per decade redistricting as well as the annual balancing of the state budget made client advocacy that much more difficult as very little attention was paid to other issues. This meant Akerman's Policy team had to be aggressive, assertive and act quickly in a highly competitive environment in which almost 3,000 pieces of legislation were introduced and only 200 were ultimately passed.

The variety of issues covered in the following list of clients further demonstrates the incredible achievement of the State Policy Practice during the 2012 Session of the Florida Legislature.

Highlights include:

- In a year of budget cuts, none of Akerman's numerous appropriation clients received any reductions. In fact, two programs, Citrus and Camillus House, received increases and Jackson Memorial Hospital, which was looking at a potential loss of up to \$200 million at the outset of the Session, was held harmless;
- Akerman ended a long-standing closed process on bidding on State information technology contracts. Now our client, a Florida company, will have for the first time ever the opportunity to bid on State contracts;
- Succeeded in getting a \$5 million dollar appropriation for public infrastructure in Miami Design District's project;
- Greatly expanded our gaming practice, led by the addition of Magic City Casino.

### **Local Government**

**City of Doral** – Monitored all legislation affecting local government;

**Florida Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials** – Introduced legislation allowing Florida's Public Housing Authorities to use their land for commercial enterprises for the purpose of generating income to rehabilitate deteriorating housing units;

**Miami-Dade County** – As part of the county's lobbying team, helped on major health care issues facing the county as well as port related issues;

**One Watermark** – Passed legislation removing the residential condominium from the City of West Palm Beach's Downtown Development Authority;

**Palm Beach County** – As part of the county's lobbying team, helped on major health care issues facing the county;

**Port of Palm Beach** – Passed legislation defining "Inland Ports" as they pertain to sea-based cargo. Negotiated for over \$20 million in infrastructure funding from the Florida Department of Transportation on behalf of the Port.

### **Gaming**

**Florida Arcade and Bingo Association** – Preserved the exemption from the gambling statutes which allows the operation of amusement arcades;

**Diamond Games** – Introduced legislation allowing for table top lottery games to be included within the Department of Lottery vending machine expansion;

**Florida Council for Compulsive Gambling** – Secured \$600,000 in annual funding for the program which includes the 1-888-ADMIT-IT hotline;

**International Internet Technologies** – As part of a larger coalition, helped to defeat legislation which would have outlawed internet cafés in Florida;

**Magic City Casino** – Monitored all gaming issues affecting pari mutual facilities and Racinos from Destination Casinos to decoupling of live racing requirements.

### **Renewable Energy**

**Florida Alliance for Renewable Energy** – Introduced legislation to allow commercial entities to install renewable energy devices on their property for the purpose of supplying electricity to their tenants. Passed legislation that will allow local governments through referendum to use a portion of their local option sales tax to fund renewable energy projects.

### **Health Care**

**Camillus House** - Protected their annual allocation of \$250,000 and secured a second non-recurring allocation of \$250,000 to double their state contribution for 2012;

**Citrus Health** – Protected their annual allocation of \$455,000 and secured a second non-recurring allocation of \$455,000 to double their state contribution for 2012;

**Epilepsy Foundation** – Held harmless their annual allocation of \$3.5 million;

**Jackson Memorial Hospital** – Passed legislation that allowed JMH to recover overpayments to the government and qualify for additional funding, which completely offset a 5.64% Medicaid rate cut;

**Shands** – Protected their \$5 million dollar allocation for the Shands Cancer Hospital and helped secure an additional \$2.5 million as well as \$500,000 for the Brain Tumor Registry Program.

### **Corporation Initiatives**

**AT&T** – As part of a lobbying team, helped to pass new terms and definitions within the taxing statutes regulating communication services;

**Florida East Coast Railroad** – Introduced legislation clarifying the railroad's right to erect communication towers within the railroad's right of way;

**Ford Motor Company** – Negotiated a clarification of the Rental Car Surcharge statute with the Department of Revenue;

**Fortress** – As part of a lobbying team, worked on legislation to strengthen the secondary market for life insurance policies;

**Metro Traffic Schools** – Introduced legislation to ensure traffic school referrals must go to independent entities;

**Veolia** – Monitored all local rail transit issues statewide as well as oversight issues pertaining to the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority;

**Vertex** – Introduced legislation to create a viral hepatitis awareness program in the State of Florida;

**Vology** – Passed legislation which will open the state purchasing bid process to include resellers of original IT equipment.

### **Regulation of Professions**

**American Society of Interior Designers** – Prevented the introduction of legislation to deregulate the profession of Registered Interior Designers;

**National Electrical Contractors Association** – Drafted and secured House and Senate Sponsors for the introduction of legislation to regulate the use of electricians on large commercial construction projects;

**Association of Professional Communication Officers** – Fought efforts to water down the licensing requirements for 9-1-1 emergency dispatchers;

**Florida Association of Cosmetology & Technical Schools** – Monitored all legislation introduced affecting cosmetology schools as well as efforts to reduce continuing education requirements.

### **Children's Advocacy**

**Early Childhood Initiative** – Passed legislation establishing and mandating pre- and post-assessment examinations for voluntary prekindergarten students;

**Florida Guardian ad Litem Association** – Protected their annual allocation and secured an additional \$1.5 million;

**Foster Care Review** – Protected their annual allocation of \$392,160;

**Voices for Children** – Protected their annual allocation of \$892,656.

### **Miscellaneous**

**CAMP2012** – Helped defeat condominium and homeowner association legislation which would have increased assessments to unit owners in cases of foreclosure;

**Jackson YES!** – Introduced legislation allowing Jackson County to go to referendum to determine the voter's choice for allowing liquor sales by the drink.

All accomplishments are subject to Gubernatorial veto at the moment. Appropriation achievements were led by the strong leadership of the Miami-Dade delegation.

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