**FECA’s Florida Legislative Report**

**January 27, 2023**

The official start of the 2023 Legislative Session will be Tuesday, March 7, 2023. As January comes to a close, there are three committee weeks left ahead of the start of session.

On the heels of the recent election and with many new legislators getting up to speed, with regards to the legislative process, only 453 total bills have been filed at this point. This will certainly change as we move along in the process, but for now, the initial meetings have mainly focused on presentations explaining committee jurisdictions and providing overviews of various issues.

During a presentation on the Public Service Commission’s (PSC) jurisdiction by PSC staff to the House Energy, Communications & Cyber Security Subcommittee, Speaker Pro Temp Chuck Clemons expressed concerns about municipal utilities serving customers beyond city limits in unincorporated areas. He stated that rate payers are forced to pay surcharges but do not have the ability to vote in municipal elections or appeal territory changes and asked if these types of issues should fall under the purview of the PSC. After PSC’s staff responded, Rep. Mike Caruso stated that legislation might need to be drafted to provide the PSC with authority over municipal rates.

The House Select Committee on Hurricane Resiliency & Recovery has requested FECA provide a presentation on the responses to both hurricanes Ian and Nicole. Staff will provide additional detail as it becomes available. The select committee is scheduled for February 16 and the time is TBD. As of yet, we have not been contacted about appearing before the Senate’s corresponding committee, but we expect to hear from them soon.

In addition to this week’s committees, FECA conducted the annual lobby clinic on January 24 and 25. The attendees received Federal updates from Gabe Snow with NRECA and Michael Nolan. Mike Bjorklund and Drew Love provided an overview of state election results, key committees and potential issues for the upcoming session.

Below are bills of interest filed thus far. Moving forward each week, the report will prioritize in the following manner: new legislation filed, priority, monitor, and tracking. Any new activities will be highlighted in RED. If you would like more detailed information or an explanation on any legislation or why it is located in a specific area, please do not hesitate to reach out to Drew or Mike.

**NEW LEGISLATION FILED**

# Trees and Other Vegetation within Rights-of-way

### (SB 108/ HB 55)

**Sponsors**: Sen. Rodriguez/Rep. Garcia

## Summary:

## The bill provides that the current prohibition against the removal, cutting, marring, defacing or destruction of trees or other vegetation within the rights-of-way of roads of the state highway system does not apply if the Department of Transportation (DOT) suspends the prohibition due to a declared state of emergency. It requires DOT to adopt guidelines related to the removal process for debris from an emergency that is subject to an emergency declaration such as a hurricane or tropical storm.

## Committee Assignments:

SB 108: Transportation; Community Affairs; Rules

HB 55: Transportation & Modals; Constitutional Rights, Rule of Law & Government Operations; Infrastructure Strategies

**ACTION RECOMMENDED: SUPPORT**

# Energy

### (SB 284/HB)

**Sponsors**: Sen. Brodeur/Rep.

## Summary:

##  The bill revises the selection criteria for purchasing or leasing vehicles for a state agency, universities, community colleges, and local governments under the state purchasing plan. It removes the provision requiring the use and procurement of ethanol and biodiesel blended fuels and requires the Department of Management Services, before July 1, 2024, to make recommendations to all state agencies, universities, community colleges, and local governments regarding the procurement of electric and natural gas fuel vehicles and best practices for integrating these vehicles into existing fleets.

## Committee Assignments:

SB 284: Governmental Oversight & Accountability; Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment & General Government; Fiscal Policy

HB:

**ACTION RECOMMENDED: NEUTRAL**

# Energy Equity Task Force

### (SB/HB 293)

**Sponsors**: Sen. /Rep. Hinson

## Summary:

This bill would create the Energy Equity Task Force who would provide recommendations to Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for fostering a fair and equitable transition of the state’s energy infrastructure to renewable technologies within minority, underserved, rural and low-income communities. The task force would consist of a minimum of 11 members reflecting ethnic and gender diversity of the state. The Commissioner of Agriculture will appoint: 1) four representatives from minority, underserved, rural or low-income communities from different regions of the state; 2) at least one environmental justice expert; 3) at least one representative from the electrical workers profession; 4) at least two energy industry liaisons representing utility and solar energy interests; 5) at least one representative from a statewide environmentally focused group; 6) one appointed by the President of the Senate and one Speaker of the House. The task force must recommend policies for the equitable siting of energy infrastructure throughout the state including siting of utility-scale and industrial solar arrays. In addition, the taskforce must examine strategies to assist minority underserved, rural and low-income communities in transitioning to energy efficiency programs. The task force would be required to present a report to the Governor, Commissioner of Agriculture, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House by September 30, 2024.

## Committee Assignments:

SB:

HB 293: Not Referenced

**ACTION RECOMMENDED: NEUTRAL**

**United States – produced Iron and Steel in Public Works Projects**

(SB 304/HB)

**Sponsors**: Sen. Boyd / Rep.

**Summary:**

This bill provides that a governmental entity entering into a contract for a public works project or for the purchase of materials for a public works project must include in such contract a requirement that any iron or steel product used in or purchased for the project must be produced in the United States. Exemptions from this requirement include: 1) sufficient quantities or satisfactory quality of the iron or steel products needed are not produced in the United States; 2) the cost to use products produced in the U.S. would increase the total cost of the project by more than 20 percent; and 3) compliance is inconsistent with public interest.

**Committee Assignments**:

SB 304: Government Oversight & Accountability; Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment & General Government; Fiscal Policy

HB:

# ACTION RECOMMENDED: NEUTRAL

# Requiring Broader Public Support for Constitutional Amendments or Revisions

### (SJR / HJR 129)

**Sponsors**: Sen. /Rep. Roth

## Summary:

This joint resolution would propose a constitutional amendment to increase the percentage of elector votes required to approve an amendment to the State Constitution from 60 percent to

66.67 percent. The repeal of an amendment or revision need only be approved by the same percentage of elector votes as required at the time of passage of amendment or revision.

**Committee Assignments:**

### SJR:

HJR 129: Ethics, Elections & Open Government; Judiciary; State Affairs

**ACTION RECOMMENDED: NEUTRAL**