

## FRA Legislative meeting summary for 01/03/2025

The Florida Renal Association's (FRA) Legislative Committee met for the first time in 2025 on Friday January 3<sup>rd</sup>. We are mainly focused on the next Kidney Day planning and preparation, which will occur on Sunday March 9<sup>th</sup> through Monday March 10<sup>th</sup> in Tallahassee.

For a copy of the full transcript, click [here](#). Below is a brief summary of the meeting led by FRA Lobbyist Ron Watson and FRA Legislative Chair Bob Loeper.

We opened the meeting with a Happy New Year / holiday greetings and held a brief discussion about possible snow in Tallahassee(?!). Mr. Watson then started the meeting with the traditional News/Notes section established by former long-time FRA lobbyist Bob Reynolds (Bobby the Lobby).

### NEWS and NOTES:

- Former President Jimmy Carter (D) recently died at age 100 as well as former Governor Buddy McKay (D) at age 91. Flags will be flown at half mast for 30 days in honor of the President.
- **Another House Democrat switches parties!** Recently Rep. Susan Valdes (D-Tampa) switched parties and was rewarded with a Vice-Chair of the powerful Budget Committee (Formerly called Appropriations). She is in her final term and cannot seek re-election. The most recent convert is *Rep. Hillary Cassel (D-Hollywood)*, who was re-elected without any opposition in Broward County recently. However, she is only in her second term and will have to run for re-election in a very blue territory in 2026! She was also rewarded with a Vice-Chair of the powerful Banking/Insurance committee.
- **Florida's Political dominos are still lining up.** Due to President Donald Trump's (R) election victory, he is selecting many Floridians to join his administration, some of which are already holding office in Florida and will have to resign to seek other office. This will create several vacancies, which in turn will create even more vacancies as politicians seek and unexpected higher office. Senator Marco Rubio is the biggest fish and his vacant Senate seat will be appointed by Governor Ron DeSantis; however, both Cong. Matt Gaetz (R-Pensacola) and Cong. Mike Waltz (R-Palm Coast) open seats will have a special election to fill. The primary is Jan. 28<sup>th</sup> and the general is April 1<sup>st</sup>. The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of Florida (Cabinet Post), Jimmy Patronis has resigned to run for Congress district 1. His replacement will also be appointed by the Governor, who is considering a couple of present Senators. However, Rep. Joel Rudman (R-Navarre) has also resigned to run for Congress, which creates a special election for his district. In the palm beach seat, recently elected Sen. Randy Fine (R-Palm Bay), who was in the House for 8 years and just moved to the Senate, is resigning to head to Washington. President Trump has endorsed both Sen. Fine and CFO Patronis for these positions. Stay tuned as the dominos continue to fall.

**Legislative Committee Assignments** were recently released by the new leadership teams in the House and Senate. A brief discussion of the re-organized House healthcare committees ensued. The full committee is still called the [House Health and Human Services Committee \(HHS\)](#); however, there are now 3 sub-committees when there were only two last session. The sub-committees are the [Healthcare Facilities and Systems sub](#), which is most likely to oversee the Agency for Healthcare Administration (AHCA); the [Health Professionals and Programs sub](#), which is most likely to oversee the Department of Health (DOH); and finally the [Human Services sub](#), which will most likely oversee the Department of

Children and Families (DCF). And finally, the [House Healthcare Budget subcommittee](#). In the Senate, the two main Healthcare Committee are still the [Senate Health Policy Committee](#) and the [Appropriation Committee on Health and Human Services](#).

**Bills are being filed for the 2025 session.** House members are only allowed to file 7 bills, but Senators can file as many as they want. There are only 30 or so bills filed in each chamber to date, but the Social Workers Licensure Compact bill ([HB 27](#)) is one of them. It has been filed again for this session, which the FRA strongly supported last year and we have it on our Legislative Issue Sheet again to support in 2025. Only one other bill on “certain businesses being required to accept cash” was also briefly discussed, but the bill has been formerly withdrawn, because it was filed by Rep. Rudman, who had to resign to run for Congress. Mr. Watson reviews bill filed daily as we approach session and will discuss any that affect our industry moving forward.

**AHCA dates still not yet decided.** The FRA has been conducting home modality webinars for the Medicaid Managed Care Plans in Florida for many years, as directed by the yearly budget proviso language we include in Florida’s budget. We have historically made the presentation in either November or December, but we decided to try it after the Holidays to get better participation. Additionally, we are still trying to solidify an AHCA meeting for Kidney Day.

**No additional updates on proposed rules.** FRA lobbyist Ron Watson has been very busy recently with attending two different workshops for newly proposed rules from AHCA. One deals with organ transplant facility regulation and the other is the main dialysis rule which references the **Florida Medicaid Dialysis Services Coverage Policy**. The **Organ Transplant draft rule** was created by a seldom used negotiated rule making committee made up of 15 members from large and small transplant programs, including transplant surgeons, medical directors, administrators and an AHCA representative. The two-day meeting produced a draft proposal, which we are still waiting to see officially published. The main drama and sticking point were whether to require a minimum number of transplants per year to maintain your programs. After two different votes, it was decided to NOT require a minimum number of yearly procedures. Mr. Watson testified on behalf of the FRA for the second rule proposal, which updates the dialysis coverage policy for the first time in since 2015! The FRA was the only group to speak and we thanked AHCA for adding Acute Kidney Injury (AKI) to the coverage policy and also thanked them for continuing the no co-pay language. We also suggested changing the present exclusion of self-administered erythropoietin to specifically include this coverage instead. We argued that Medicare presently covers self-administration and that with the focus on home therapies, making patients come in-center for this injection is costly, time consuming and will lead to more transportation problems. We are still awaiting these draft rules to be published.

**Kidney Day Update.** The FRA will be conducting another Kidney Day at the Capital on Sunday, March 9<sup>th</sup> and Monday March 10<sup>th</sup>. On Sunday we will assist with a National Kidney Foundation of Florida (NKFF) walk at 2 pm at Cascades Park followed by a Legislation reception at the private Governors Club that evening. On Monday, we will set up early on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Capitol with our display tables and we will have room for all of our sponsors to display. We will have meetings through-out the day with Legislators and staff talking about our legislative agenda, as well as lunch at the Capitol. Mr. Watson recently asked for additional permission from the Senate to conduct kidney wellness screenings (KEEP program) at the capitol like we did a few times prior to the pandemic. We are still awaiting an answer.

The meeting ended with a brief discussion about our 2025 Legislative Issue Sheet, which was forwarded to Bob, Shannon and Codie for review and editing.