

Fire Safety for Agricultural Buildings Update 3-17-2015

This morning, March 17th, the Senate Banking & Insurance Committee took up Sen. Kelli Stargel's (R-Lakeland) SB 1148 relating to fire safety for agricultural buildings such as barns.

Sen. Stargel's aide presented the bill on her behalf.

After testimony from the Buddy Dewar and the Florida Fire Marshals & Inspectors Association, Senators began to discuss the bill. Overwhelmingly, Senators expressed deep concern with the range and extent of the bill's impact on public safety. Sen. Gwen Margolis (D-Miami) raised the issue of cooking in an exempt structure, while Sen. Nancy Detert (R-Sarasota) said that the flaws in bill were evident, and that the bill had a long way to go to get to the finish line.

Sen. Dorothy Hukill (R-Daytona Beach) agreed that she would have a lot of problems voting for a bill that waived fire and safety codes, and that the provisions of the bill did not seem like "occasional use." Sen. David Simmons (R-Altamonte Springs) and Sen. Bill Montford (D-Tallahassee) echoed those concerns.

Sen. Stargel's aide said that the Senator had been working with the State Fire Marshal's office and others to develop an amendment that would address many of these concerns, including a restriction based on square feet per person, but the amendment was not finished in time for the committee's consideration.

The Senators agreed that they would vote to approve the bill "today" and move the bill out of committee as a courtesy to the sponsor, to allow her to continue working to improve the bill.

The Committee then passed the bill 8 to 2. It now moves to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government, and is also referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee. The House companion bill, HB 1025 by Rep. Jake Raburn (R-Valrico), is on tomorrow morning's agenda of the House Insurance & Banking Subcommittee.