

HURRICANE IAN & LEGISLATIVE SPECIAL SESSION

By Marco T. Paredes, Jr, Esq.



Again with the Special Session?

Looks like legislators from around the state will get a taste of the North Florida fall weather because Governor DeSantis plans to call the Legislature back into special session. As of the time of this article being written, no

specific dates were given, but the Governor said it would likely be after the November elections but before the end of the year. My money is on early December.

With Hurricane Ian causing billions of dollars in damage when it hit our state, it should be no surprise that the state's property insurance market will be the focus. The Governor was not forthcoming with what policy proposals he would like considered, but the incoming House Speaker Paul Renner and Senate President Kathleen Passidomo are both on board with coming back to Tallahassee to address issues stemming from Hurricane Ian's aftermath.

This would be the second special session dealing with property insurance this year. Florida has seen property insurance companies either collapse or scale back their coverage options while Citizens Insurance, which was designed to be the state insurer of last resort, has had massive growth in the number of policies, with more than one million policyholders. Over 500,000 claims worth an estimated \$6.45 billion have already been filed due to Hurricane Ian, and that number is expected to continue to grow. The continued crisis with property insurance could have state-wide ramifications beyond the insurance market, in areas such as growth management, real estate, and affordable housing.

Hurricane Ian Recovery Efforts

As the State of Florida continues its post-storm recovery efforts from Hurricane Ian, the Department of Emergency Management has set up a website, FloridaStormRelief.com,

to serve as a one-stop-shop to help navigate all available assistance. The website includes a checklist for recovery, resources for businesses, and ways to help Floridians impacted by Hurricane Ian.

Other relief efforts provided by state and federal authorities include:

- An initial award of \$2.5 million to businesses through the Florida Small Business Emergency Bridge Loan Program. This Program was activated by Governor DeSantis following Hurricane Ian to provide short-term, zero interest loans to small businesses that experienced financial impacts or physical damage due to Hurricane Ian. The Program is intended to bridge the gap between the time a disaster impacts a business and when a business can secure long-term recovery funding. Loans are available up to \$50,000 per eligible applicant and are short-term, personal loans. Interested applicants can apply now through December 2, 2022, or until all available funds are expended.
- The Department of Revenue issued Order of Emergency Waiver/Deviation #22-003 (Sales and Use Tax and Related Taxes), extending certain filing due dates for Florida businesses located in specific counties impacted by Hurricane Ian. The order extends the September 2022 and October 2022 reporting periods for sales and use tax, reemployment tax, and several other tax types to November.
- The IRS has extended numerous deadlines for taxpayers impacted by Hurricane Ian. Individuals or businesses who had a valid extension to file their 2021 return due to run out on October 17, 2022, will now have until February 15, 2023, to file their returns. This relief also applies to Form 5500. In addition, the deadlines for quarterly estimated tax payments, normally due on January 17, 2023, and the quarterly payroll and excise tax returns normally due on October

31, 2022, and January 31, 2023, are now due on February 15, 2023. This relief applies to businesses and individuals located in Florida and South Carolina. The relief also applies to businesses and individuals whose records necessary to meet the above deadlines are located in Florida.

- The State of Florida continues to operate under a declared state of emergency (Executive Order 22-218 and 22-219). A declaration of a state of emergency issued by the Governor for a natural emergency tolls expiration times for developers and other permit holders, development orders, permits, and certain other authorizations for the time the declaration is in effect plus six months under section 252.363(1)(a), Florida Statutes.

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