

## **Working teens**

Two bills that would have allowed teens to work as roofers and would have greatly expanded the eligible hours 16- and 17-year-olds can work were both amended with added protections. For the roofing bill, the height of the roof was limited to 6 feet and only to residential construction, keeping teens much closer to the ground and on smaller sites. And a Senate amendment cut down on the hours a 16- and 17-year-old can work, unless they get parental permission. A representative from the Florida AFL-CIO even supported it, saying "this is an area where we have to break with tradition."

## **Loosening child labor laws**

It's hard to believe this happened in the year 2024, but the Florida Legislature decided the state's child labor laws.

The very last policy bill to pass this year was House Bill 49, which rolls back protections on the number of hours that teenagers can be made to work. To be fair, the final bill was not nearly as bad as the original version of the legislation, which was written by a billionaire-funded, right wing think tank. Under the bill that was passed, teenagers as young as 14 will be able to work longer hours over the summer and holiday breaks, while 16- and 17-year-olds will be able to work longer hours on Sundays, too. Some home school and virtual school kids could also be put to work for full-time hours even when school is in session, too.

## **A last-minute assault on working Floridians**

Unfortunately, at the very last minute the Legislature passed one of the most anti-worker bills we've seen in Tallahassee in a long time. House Bill 433 will eliminate local living wage laws around the state that require local government contractors to pay their employees enough money that those workers can afford to live in the community they are working in. It will also prevent any cities or counties from adopting "fair work week" or "predictive scheduling laws," which require businesses to provide hourly workers with their schedules at least two weeks in advance. And it will stop local communities from setting heat-safety standards to protect farmworkers, construction workers and other Floridians who work outside in extreme heat.

we also saw bills pass to:

- Tie the hands of cities and counties when it comes to regulating vacation rentals and homes rented on platforms such as Airbnb and Vrbo (Senate Bill 280)
- Stop local governments from restricting the use of gas-powered leaf blowers, which are not only a source of noise pollution but contribute to consumption of fossil fuels and climate change (House Bill 5003)
- Prevent citizen-led charter amendments that would impose limits on real-estate development. This was a last-minute issue that emerged from developer industry lobbyists in response to a proposed rural boundary being considered by the Orange County Charter Review Commission (Senate Bill 1420)
- Undermine the power of local communities to independently investigate and discipline police misconduct (House Bill 601)
- Ban cities and counties from regulating electric vehicle charging stations. This would even stop communities from expanding the availability of EV charging stations, by blocking local laws that require commercial developers to include EV infrastructure in their development plans. (Senate Bill 1084)

State Road A1A will be designated Jimmy Buffett Memorial Highway from Nassau County to Key West, spanning 13 Florida counties. Buffett, whose songs celebrated a salt water-tinged lifestyle, died last year. In a nod to a line that cites a "Labor Day Weekend show" in his classic "Come Monday," the designation will take effect Aug. 30 – the Friday before Labor Day.

### **Beginning to crack down on the Ron DeSantis book bans**

One of the more encouraging developments of this session was when Gov. Ron DeSantis finally admitted that all his book banning is backfiring on Florida.

As a result, we finally passed a bill that begins to set restrictions on who can challenge books in order to have them removed from public school libraries and classrooms. House Bill 1285 would limit residents of a county who does not have a school-aged child from challenging more than one book per month.

Unfortunately, this won't go far enough to address the problem of anti-freedom extremists objecting to books en masse – even when they haven't read them.

Senate Bill 7014 guts the state's ethics laws by making them far more difficult to enforce.

For instance, the state's ethics commission would only be allowed to investigate complaints that are based upon "personal knowledge" of a violation. Basically, a complaint would have to be filed by either the person who offered the bribe or the person who took the bribe for the Florida Commission on Ethics to actually investigate.

But SB 7014 also kicks the legs out from under local ethics agencies, too. In addition to setting the same "personal knowledge" requirement for local complaints, the legislation will also prohibit local ethics agencies from initiating their own investigations. They will become completely passive agencies, only able to act in response to complaints.

### **Criminalizing homelessness**

We also passed the terrible bill attacking homeless people that's got so much attention this session.

Basically, House Bill 1365 will make it illegal for homeless people to sleep on public property in Florida, unless they are inside a secured camp. But the bill does not provide any additional funding to local governments to build these camps – nor does it say what cities or counties are supposed to do if a homeless person or homeless family refuses to relocate to one.