



# Senator Wilton Simpson

## *Weekly Update*

Senate District 18

**March 4<sup>th</sup> – March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

Friends,



Joined by my wife Kathy on the floor of the Senate Chambers for the first day of session

Last week marked the start of the 2013 Legislative Session. I was joined by my wife Kathy on Tuesday for the opening day festivities, and was pleased to meet the families and spouses of my fellow legislators.

As you probably know, this year's session is my first as an elected official in the Florida Legislature, and I am very excited about the legislation that I am working on.

My first bill to be heard before a committee this year was Senate Bill 338, which addresses the problem of utility theft. Electricity theft is a growing problem for electric utilities. Electric co-ops need stronger laws to deter electricity theft and to help minimize losses due to theft that currently must be recovered through electric rate increases. Senate Bill 338 has unanimously passed through its first three committees with bipartisan support, and has just one more assigned committee to be seen through.

I presented Senate Bill 658, relating to wine containers, before the Senate Regulated Industries Committee last Thursday where it received a favorable and unanimous bipartisan vote. This bill will remove an antiquated law from the prohibition era that limits the size of wine containers to one gallon, which will effectively allow for wine kegs to be distributed to restaurants and hospitality businesses throughout the state. These larger wine containers will give consumers a more vastly available variety of wines by the glass, will reduce large amounts of waste from going into landfills from wine packaging, and will help increase the profitability of wine sales by businesses throughout the state. These great advantages are compounded by the fact that the systems manufactured to pour the wine from the larger containers are manufactured by a business located in Brooksville, FL. Senate Bill 658 will next head to the Commerce and Tourism Senate Committee.

During this session I filed a bill that will help reform the current Florida Retirement System by taking steps to ensure the long term financial viability of Florida's pension program, while at the same time continuing to provide employees with choices for their retirement future. In addition, I am working on legislation that will lay out a long-term plan for Florida's Everglades, legislation that will help protect our veterans and military servicemen and women from being defrauded, as well as a bill that will help expand the use of natural gas for transportation within the state.

I'd like to invite you to visit my webpage at <http://flsenate.gov/Senators/s18> where you can view all of the bills that I am working on during this year's session, sign up to get my media alerts in real time, see more details about my legislation, and track them to see how they progress through committees. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me with your questions or concerns at: [simpson.wilton.web@flsenate.gov](mailto:simpson.wilton.web@flsenate.gov).

Regards,  
Wilton

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## **Regulated Industries Committee Unanimously Passes Wine Canister Act**

Tallahassee, Fla. — Last Thursday, the Florida Wine Canister Act (SB 658) unanimously passed the Regulated Industries Committee with a bipartisan vote. Filed by Senator Wilton Simpson (R-Trilby), this legislation would simply remove antiquated red tape that arbitrarily limits wine container sizes in Florida.

"The committee members agreed that by updating these statutes, which were written just after the prohibition era, the Legislature would effectively allow Florida's hospitality industry to proceed with custom tailored wine by the glass programs through innovative new methods and with technology manufactured within my district," said Senator Simpson. "I am very pleased that all of the committee members recognized that these canisters benefit consumers, our tourism industry and the environment and I look forward to having the bill heard in the Commerce Committee."

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