

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 297 Indigent Care Surtax/Small Counties
SPONSOR(S): Kendrick
TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** SB 634

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR
1) <u>Local Government & Veterans' Affairs</u>	<u>18 Y, 0 N w/CS</u>	<u>Grayson</u>	<u>Cutchins</u>
2) <u>Health Care</u>	<u></u>	<u></u>	<u></u>
3) <u>Finance & Tax</u>	<u></u>	<u></u>	<u></u>
4) <u>Health Appropriations (Sub)</u>	<u></u>	<u></u>	<u></u>
5) <u>Appropriations</u>	<u></u>	<u></u>	<u></u>

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Currently, counties with a population of fewer than 800,000 residents may levy a 0.5 percent indigent care surtax pursuant to an ordinance conditioned to take effect upon a majority vote of the electors of the county voting in a referendum.

This bill as amended authorizes counties with a population of fewer than 50,000 residents to levy an indigent care surtax of up to 1 percent rather than the 0.5 percent surtax authorized in existing law. Currently, 27 Florida counties could exercise this authority.

The bill as amended expands the use of the tax in counties with fewer than 50,000 residents to include issuing bonds to finance, plan, construct, or reconstruct a public or not-for-profit hospital in the county and any land acquisition, land improvement, design, or engineering costs related to such hospital, if the governing body determines that a hospital in existence at the time of the issuance of the bonds would, more likely than not, otherwise cease to operate. The bill requires the clerk of the circuit court, as the ex officio custodian of the funds of the authorizing county, to disburse the funds to service bond indebtedness upon a directive from the authorizing county. The directive from the authorizing county may be irrevocably given at the time the bond indebtedness is incurred.

The fiscal impact is Indeterminate. The bill as amended provides a discretionary authority to impose and collect a surtax in counties with a population of fewer than 50,000 residents. The 2003 Impact Conference estimated that if all eligible jurisdictions enact the levy, the statewide impacts would be \$23.8 million cash, \$26.0 million recurring, in FY 2004-05; and \$27.4 million cash and recurring in FY 2005-06.

This document does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill sponsor or House of Representatives.

STORAGE NAME: h0297a.lgv.doc
DATE: February 18, 2004

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. DOES THE BILL:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|--|---|
| 1. Reduce government? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Lower taxes? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Expand individual freedom? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Increase personal responsibility? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Empower families? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

For any principle that received a “no” above, please explain:

This bill provides additional taxing authority in certain small counties.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

HB 297

This bill as amended authorizes the imposition and collection of a 1.0 percent indigent care sales surtax in any county with a population of fewer than 50,000 residents. The 27 Florida counties that meet this criterion are: Baker, Bradford, Calhoun, DeSoto, Dixie, Franklin, Gadsden, Gilchrist, Glades, Gulf, Hamilton, Hardee, Hendry, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Liberty, Madison, Okeechobee, Suwannee, Taylor, Union, Wakulla, Walton and Washington.¹ The bill provides that the surtax may be imposed and collected upon approval by a majority vote of the electors of the county voting in a referendum.

The bill provides authority to pledge the surtax proceeds to service new or existing bond indebtedness incurred to finance, plan, construct, or reconstruct a public or not-for-profit hospital. Additionally, the bill authorizes the use of the surtax proceeds to acquire or improve land, or for the design or engineering costs related to such a hospital. Both of the foregoing authorities are conditioned upon a determination that the hospital existing at the time of bond issuance would, more likely than not, otherwise cease to operate.

The bill states that by an extraordinary vote, the governing body of the county may provide that some or all of the surtax revenues and earned interest must be expended for the purpose of servicing the bond indebtedness.

The bill states that such a county may utilize the bond issuance services of the State Board of Administration pursuant to the State Bond Act. Bond issuance is limited to no more than once per year.

The bill states that any county meeting the requirements of this bill and that issues bonds, retains the bond authority throughout the life of the bonds, including any refinancing bonds, regardless of subsequent increases in population.

The bill provides authority to the clerk of the circuit court, as the ex officio custodian of such funds to distribute the funds and any earned interest to service bond indebtedness pursuant to the irrevocable directive of the authorizing county given at the time of bond indebtedness.

Finally, the bill as amended authorizes that counties with a population of fewer than 50,000 residents may levy an optional sales surtaxes up to a combined rate of 1.5 percent.

¹ Adjusted 2002 Population Estimates for Florida Counties & Municipalities, Florida Legislative Committee on Intergovernmental Relations, <http://fcn.state.fl.us/lcir/reports/lgfih03.pdf>, accessed 1/26/04.

Background

According to the Florida Hospital Association, in 2000, there were 2.6 million uninsured Floridians. While it is difficult to determine how many of the uninsured are indigent, Florida's hospitals spend millions of dollars each year to support the care of indigent patients. For example, Florida Hospital, Inc., posted \$17 million in uncompensated care² charges in January 2002 – the highest amount ever in the hospital's 84-year history.

Rural and smaller counties face an even more difficult challenge of caring for the health care needs of the indigent. Rural hospitals typically suffer financial hardships due to small community sizes, lack of health insurance in their communities, overall lower incomes in their communities, lower levels of Medicare reimbursement, outdated/aging physical plants, and constantly increasing costs due to technological innovations and costs of pharmaceuticals and other supplies. Often rural hospitals are the only source of care for the indigent given the relative immobility of the poor, the need to go to a hospital outside of their neighborhood limits their access to basic care.

Voter-Approved Indigent Care Surtax

Nationally, indigent surtaxes have been used to subsidize safety-net health care providers. In Florida, Chapter 2000-316, L.O.F., created s. 212.055(7), F.S., to authorize counties with less than 800,000 residents to impose, with referendum approval, the Voter-Approved Indigent Care Surtax. The rate of the levy is capped at 0.5 percent, or 1 percent if a publicly supported medical school is located in the county. Counties levying the tax must develop a plan, by ordinance, for providing health care services to "qualified" indigent or medically poor residents.

Tax proceeds must be used to fund health care services for indigent and medically poor persons, including, but not limited to, primary care, preventive care, and hospital care. Indigent persons are defined as persons certified as indigent by the authorizing county. Persons defined as medically poor are those who:

- have insufficient income, resources, and assets to provide the needed medical care without using resources required to meet basic needs for shelter, food, clothing, and personal expenses;
- are not eligible for any other state or federal program or having medical needs that are not covered by any such program; or
- have insufficient third-party insurance coverage.

Persons participating in innovative, cost-effective programs approved by the authorizing county are also included as "qualified" residents.

DOR is required to collect and remit the tax proceeds to the Clerk of Court, who must deposit the funds in an indigent health care trust fund, invest the deposits as prescribed in general law, and disburse the funds to qualified providers of health care services.

The maximum rate for any combination of the Infrastructure Surtax, the Small County Surtax, and the Voter-Approved Indigent Care Surtax, is one percent, or 1.5 percent in counties with a publicly supported medical school.

² Uncompensated care is a total of: Charity care – treatment for which the hospital does not expect to be reimbursed. Bad debt – treatment for which a hospital cannot obtain reimbursement for the care provided – because people are unable or unwilling to pay their bills. Uncompensated care does not include voluntary or involuntary "reductions in revenue," such as underpayment from Medicare or Medicaid, or discounts to insurers.

While sixty-one counties are authorized to levy the Voter-Approved Indigent Care Surtax, to date no county has done so.³

Chapter 2003-77, Laws of Florida, removed the October 1, 2005 expiration for the authority provided in s. 212.055(7), F.S.

Chapter 2003-254, Laws of Florida, (CS for SB 1176) eliminates the restrictions on the use of surtax proceeds to supplant or replace user fees or to reduce ad valorem taxes. This change became effective on July 1, 2003.

Chapter 2003-402, Laws of Florida, (HB 113A) expands the allowable uses of the surtax proceeds to include the construction, lease, or maintenance of, provision of utilities or security for, those court facilities as defined in s. 29.008, F.S.. This change becomes effective on July 1, 2004.

County Taxing Authority

Section 212.055, F.S., authorizes counties to impose seven local discretionary sales surtaxes (taxes) on all transactions occurring in the county subject to the state tax imposed on sales, use, services, rental, and admissions. The sales amount is not subject to the tax if the property or service is delivered within a county that does not impose a surtax. In addition, the tax is not subject to any sales amount above \$5,000 on any item of tangible personal property. This \$5,000 cap does not apply to the sale of any other service. The Department of Revenue (DOR) is responsible for administering, collecting, and enforcing all sales taxes. Collections received by the department are returned monthly to the county imposing the tax.

The tax rates, duration levied, method of imposition, and proceed uses are individually specified in s. 212.055, F.S. TABLE 1 identifies the seven taxes, the rate limits, and the number of counties authorized to impose and the number imposing the tax. The maximum combined rate for the Local Government Infrastructure Surtax, the Small County Surtax, the Indigent Care and Trauma Center Surtax, and the County Public Hospital Surtax, is 1 percent. In counties with a publicly supported medical school levying the Voter-Approved Indigent Care Surtax, the combined rate is 1.5 percent. The School Capital Outlay Surtax is capped at 0.5 percent, and is not included in these tax rate caps.

TABLE 1			
Local Discretionary Sales Surtaxes			
TAX	AUTHORIZED LEVY (%)	NUMBER OF COUNTIES AUTHORIZED TO LEVY TAX	NUMBER OF COUNTIES LEVYING TAX
Charter County Transit System Surtax	up to 1%	7	2
Local Government Infrastructure Surtax	0.5% or 1%	67	25
Small County Surtax	0.5% or 1%	31	20
Indigent Care & Trauma Center Surtax	up to 0.5%	5	1
County Public Hospital Surtax	0.5% (Miami-Dade County)	1	1
School Capital	up to 0.5%	67	13

³ 2003 Local Governmental Financial Information Handbook, Legislative Committee on Intergovernmental Relations, 12/2003.

Outlay Surtax			
Voter-Approved Indigent Care Surtax	0.5% or 1%	61	0

(Source: Legislative Committee on Intergovernmental Relations, 12/2003)

C. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1. Amends s. 212.055(7), F.S., by:

- adding s. 212.055(7)(a)2., F.S., authorizing certain counties to levy an indigent care surtax up to 1.0 percent;
- adding s. 212.005(7)(c)2., F.S., providing the uses for the imposed surtax;
- adding s. 212.055(7)(e)4., F.S., providing powers to the clerk of circuit court; and
- amending s. 212.055(f), F.S., providing an optional sales surtax cap of 1.5 percent for counties having a population of fewer than 50,000.

Section 2. Provides an effective date of upon becoming law.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

Indeterminate at this time. The bill does provide for the bond issuance services of the Division of Bond Finance, Board of Administration. A representative of the Division indicates that the bill will have a minimal impact on the operation of the Division.⁴

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

Indeterminate. The bill as amended provides a discretionary authority to impose and collect a surtax in counties with a population of fewer than 50,000 residents. Currently, 27 counties meet this criterion. The 2003 Impact Conference estimated that if all eligible jurisdictions enact the levy, the statewide impacts would be \$23.8 million cash, \$26.0 million recurring, in FY 2004-05; and \$27.4 million cash and recurring in FY 2005-06.

2. Expenditures:

Unknown.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

Counties imposing the surtax authorized in this bill will increase individuals' tax burden by one half cent on sales.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

See above.

⁴ Tim Tinsley, Division of Bond Finance, Board of Administration, 2/6/04.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

Not applicable because this bill does not appear to: require the counties or cities to spend funds or take an action requiring the expenditure of funds; reduce the authority that cities or counties have to raise revenues in the aggregate; or reduce the percentage of a state tax shared with cities or counties.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

Drafting Issues

There appear to be no technical drafting issues in the bill as amended.

Other Comments

A substantially similar bill, HB 583 (SB 2186) was considered during the 2003 Session. HB 583 was acted upon favorably by the Committees on Local Government & Veterans' Affairs, Health Care, and Finance & Tax. SB 2186 was received In Messages.

Division of Bond Finance, Board of Administration – Although contacted, no impact analysis has yet been provided.

Florida Association of Counties – The Association generally supports the bill as an extension of authority provided to small counties.⁵

IV. AMENDMENTS/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES

The Committee on Local Government & Veterans' Affairs adopted a strike all amendment on February 17, 2004. The strike all amendment changes the population trigger for application of the bill from less than 30,000 residents to less than 50,000 residents.

⁵ Bob McKee, Governmental Liaison, Florida Association of Counties, 1/26/04.