



***Top Priority***

**WORKPLACE SAFETY — SUPPORT**

**SB 154 by Sen. Evelyn Lynn, R-Daytona Beach**  
**HB 359 by Rep. Audrey Gibson, D-Jacksonville**

In 1999, Gov. Jeb Bush and the Florida Legislature eliminated the Division of Safety in the Florida Department of Labor and Employment Security and repealed all of the safety laws covering public sector employees. Florida law currently contains no provisions regarding the general health and safety of public sector workers at any level. Public employees are not covered by the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA). This has had tragic consequences. On January 11, 2006, a methanol explosion and fire occurred at the Bethune Point Wastewater Treatment Plant in Daytona Beach, killing two employees and severely burning a third. The US Chemical Safety Board (CSB) investigated and determined that the lack of federal, state, and local safety oversight and programs was a significant factor causing the fatal accident. The CSB recommended that the state enact safety laws and rules for public employees that at least meet the federal OSHA minimum.

In 2008, Senator Lynn and Representative Gibson sponsored and passed legislation creating a 15-member task force to study and make recommendations on bringing back safety laws for Florida public employees. The task force recommended that all public employers (cities, counties, school districts and the state) be required to meet OSHA minimum standards within three years.

Cities and counties are fighting against the proposals, saying that they are not needed and will cost governments money at a time when funds are severely limited. We argue that safety is a cost of doing business for employers who operate dangerous worksites such as sewer plants. The private sector meets these standards, and government employers should be no different.

***For more information contact Legislative/Communications Director Doug Martin at (850) 212-7447 or [dmartin@afscmeff.org](mailto:dmartin@afscmeff.org)***