

It's time to protect Home Rule....from a business point of view.

Business Watch is a trade association for government contractors. We represent the private corporations that operate water and wastewater systems, improve infrastructure, provide engineering support, pick up trash and a whole host of other services through local government contracts. In short, we are private sector partners, helping cities and counties deliver the quality of life residents expect.

On behalf of our members, I would like to voice our dismay over the Legislature's wholesale attack on Home Rule.

Why do we so strongly support Home Rule? As local government contractors, we know each jurisdiction's rules and regulations. In fact, it is our knowledge of these local rules and our understanding of community standards that allow us to bid on, win contracts for, and successfully provide services through government contracting.

Legislators have been employing a "Father Knows Best" attitude in an attempt to strip local government of its authority. Some believe that "one size fits all" regulation is a benefit to businesses but, from our perspective, nothing could be further from the truth. One of the strengths of private sector contractors is our ability to custom fit solutions to each local jurisdiction's circumstances. We would ask Tallahassee to stop disrupting our business models with their wrong-headed thinking.

Each time the Legislature attempts to strike already accepted local rules and regulation, or preempt local authority, the seeds of doubt and indecision are sown. Each government entity has to reexamine every local regulation, placing our contracts in jeopardy. Oftentimes, ambiguous wording requires further interpretation, likely through the court system, which can take years. Even more often, this legislative overreach produces unintended consequences, further disrupting our public-private cooperation. The combination can devastate our ability to do business with our local government customers.

Florida's local governments spend tens of billions of dollars every year in the private sector and it is these contracts that support our companies, shareholders and employees. The health of Florida's local governments has a direct impact on our businesses. That's a powerful incentive for us to join the quest to defend Home Rule.

It's time to protect Home Rule for all kinds of reasons. The people adopted Home Rule into the Constitution because they recognized that each community has the right to self-determination and local standards. Circumstances vary widely from city to city and, yes, local elected officials make better decisions for their constituents. But it's also time to protect Home Rule from a business perspective. We at Business Watch stand ready to do so.

Beth Rawlins
President
Business Watch

