

Oppose SB804/ HB631 “Possession of Real Property”

- Beach access is a universal right and necessary for the public’s enjoyment of the beach. The public, including all recreational user groups and members of the community, has the right to enjoy low-impact beach access.
- Beaches aren’t just the heart of Florida’s tourism economy; they’re the reason why so many make the Sunshine State their home- in fact more than two thirds of Floridians live in coastal counties.
- Annually, 3,200,000 visitors come to South Walton where they generate 65% of all spending in the entire county. Jeopardizing beach access means the potential loss of nearly 20,000 jobs that are directly related to tourism in Walton County.
- Recently, a U.S. District Court held that Florida counties have the home rule authority to recognize, regulate, and protect the public’s right to use their dry sand beaches, based on custom.
- Local entities in Florida must continue to have the right to recognize and regulate the public's recreational customary use rights of beaches.
- If the legislature were to take away local governments' home rule authority to protect public customary use rights, it would negatively affect tourism and the economy at the state and local levels. People live and come to Florida because of our beaches. As the recent Alford decision correctly recognizes, and as the Florida Supreme Court has acknowledged, "No part of Florida is more exclusively hers, nor more properly utilized by her people than her beaches."
- **SB804/ HB631** would take away the home rule right of local governments to protect public beach access through customary use ordinances. St. Johns, Volusia, and Walton counties have already recognized public beach access rights based on the doctrine of custom.
- **Oppose SB804/ HB631** and protect the local authority of cities and counties to recognize and protect the public’s right to access their local beaches.

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