



## **FAM Statement AGAINST Isolated Finds Legislation**

March 7, 2016

The Florida Association of Museums (FAM) represents over 400 art, history, science, and children museums in the state from the very smallest to the largest. As repositories of our cultural heritage in Florida, FAM opposes the passage of HB 803 and SB 1054, “An Act Relating to Historic and Archaeological Artifacts,” currently being considered by the Florida Legislature. If HB 803 and SB 1054 were to pass, the consequences could endanger archaeological sites all over the state and impact the integrity of Florida's historic record and cultural heritage.

We believe that archaeological artifacts should be left in the natural environment, however there are times that progress will disrupt those areas. In those cases, experts and professionals are brought in to research, photograph, record, and interpret that particular artifact/s – that way the history can be explained and told when displayed.

There is a fundamental problem with this proposed legislation -- it allows private entities and individuals to remove and take title to archeological “finds” from the state’s sovereign submerged lands with a state-issued annual permit. Many times artifacts are found close to other artifacts from the same historical period. Allowing an individual to take a single object without requiring a deeper examination of the site at which the item was found could damage the site and do irreparable harm to the archaeological and historical record. Once removed those artifacts have lost all historical context – making them of little use for future interpretation.

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Furthermore, the legislation would convey title of these artifacts to the individual who may dispose of them as they please. So rather than artifacts being turned over to research institutions like one of Florida's museums, universities, or the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Tribal Historic Research Office (THPO), artifacts are sold on Ebay, Craigslist or in a private shop. This further removes the artifacts from their historical context and disperses them across the United States and the world rather than remaining in Florida, to be interpreted and protected by the citizens of this state.

It isn't about the monetary value of the items, but historical significance of the artifact. We as citizens of Florida, will be deprived of the knowledge and history of these irreplaceable artifacts. The State has always protected these artifacts on behalf of its citizens.

In addition, another problem with this bill is that it requires the Division of Historical Resources to provide permit holders with a map of archaeological sites "excluded from excavation activities." This is in direct contradiction to Section 267.135, FS (the location of archaeological sites is exempt from public records laws).

For these reasons we stand with our partners, the Florida Public Archaeological Network (FPAN), the Seminole Tribe of Florida's THPO Office, the Tallahassee Trust for Historic Preservation, the Florida Anthropological Society (FAS) and other cultural and historic preservations organizations across the state to vote No on HB 803 and SB 1054.



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