

Shutter legislation passes in Senate

The bill was amended to target homes with insured values of \$750, 000 or more.

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Hurricane shutter legislation appears as durable as the window coverings themselves.

Two days after it appeared that a bill by Sen. Bill Posey, R-Rockledge, to force coastal homeowners to install shutters was dead, the legislation returned with a key amendment Wednesday, was passed in the Senate and sent to the House.

Under the new proposal, residents who live in existing homes in the state's wind-borne debris region west of U.S. 19 in Citrus, Hernando and Pasco counties and in all of Pinellas with an insured value of \$750, 000 or more would have to buy shutters if they want to be insured by state-backed Citizens Property Insurance Corp. starting July 1, 2008.

Those same homeowners also would have to buy shutters if they take out a building permit for any activity estimated to cost \$50, 000 or more.

Posey's earlier version of the bill, which stalled Monday, had the insured value of a home at \$300, 000 and no value limit on building permits.

"I think it has a good chance in the House, " said the amendment's sponsor, Sen. Mike Bennett, R-Bradenton.

He added that the higher thresholds for mandating shutters were key.

The legislation, which is part of SB 1864, passed by a vote of 27-11, with Sens. Mike Fasano, Charlie Justice, Victor Crist and Dennis Jones voting against it, and Sens. Ronda Storms and Arthenia Joyner supporting it.

Debate on the proposal centered on the already high cost of shutters and Citizens insurance, as well as fears of a flurry of remodeling work done by unlicensed contractors.

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