Florida Governor Rick Scott Vetoes HB 217

On June 11th Florida Governor Rick Scott vetoed Florida House Bill 217, legislation that would have changed the existing PE law to establish discipline-specific structural engineering licensure in Florida. As articulated in Governor Scott’s statement:

“This bill creates additional requirements and a new license for current and future engineers who wish to practice structural engineering. These new requirements include passing 16 hours of examinations, but provides an unwarranted mechanism to exempt currently licensed engineers from having to take and pass the qualifying examinations.

Presently, a licensed professional engineer may practice in the area of structural engineering, but beginning on March 1, 2017, the bill prohibits anyone from practicing in that subspecialty unless they meet the new requirements and receive the new structural engineering license. The “grandfathering” provision provides a needless process to exempt currently licensed engineers from the new examination requirement. If there is a need to raise the standards for structural engineering there is no reason to have different requirements for new or existing professionals in the same field.

For the reason stated above, I withhold my approval of Committee Substitute for Committee Substitute for House Bill 217 and do hereby veto the same.”

NSPE’s longstanding position has been to support licensure of engineers only as a “professional engineer”. Governor Scott’s statement is consistent with NSPE’s position on this matter.

The veto can be overridden by a 2/3 majority vote in favor of the bill in both the Florida House and Senate. This prospect is considered unlikely but it is possible. The current special session is slated to end on June 20th. Consideration of a veto is more likely to come up in the 2016 regular legislative session.