



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF FLORIDA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 28, 2011

Contact:
Ben Wilcox
LWVF Governmental Consultant
Phone: 850-544-4448
Email: BenW@infionline.net

League and Others Call for a Halt to the Attack on Voters' Rights

Tallahassee, FL -- In a press conference today, the League of Women Voters of Florida, along with like-minded organizations, called on Senate President Mike Haridopolos to stop the legislature's attack on voters' rights. Currently, a controversial elections measure, SB 2086, is moving through the Florida Senate. Its House companion, HB 1355, has already passed the full House.

Among the more onerous provisions of the bills under consideration are:

- Burdensome new regulations for third-party voter registration groups that will have a chilling effect on those groups' ability to register voters.
- A requirement that voters who've moved from one county to another cast a provisional ballot. These ballots are expensive to process and are not always counted. This provision will hurt college students, relocating professionals and other mobile voters who can currently change their address when they come to the polls to vote.
- A reduction in the time period for early voting. Current law allows 15 days for early voting, and SB 2086 shortens that to 7 days, which will create longer lines at the polls during early voting and on election day.
- A new "no solicitation" provision that prohibits voters from receiving legal advice while in line at the polls.

According to Danielle Prendergast, Director of Public Policy for the ACLU of Florida, "democracy is getting squeezed like a Florida orange. Voting, free speech and civic action should be encouraged and protected, yet this proposal treats voter participation like some contagious disease that should be feared, contained and eradicated."

Brad Ashwell, Democracy Advocate for Florida PIRG, states, "voting is one of the most fundamental rights in a democracy. We should be talking about ideas that will make voting easier like making election day a holiday, allowing early voting on college campuses and modernizing voter registration processes. But instead we're here defending the right of the public to have their vote counted at all."

In addition to the legislation itself, the groups also objected to the process utilized by both chambers to move the measure forward. Via strike-all amendments that

were released less than 24 hours before important meetings and limitations on public testimony, both the Florida House and Senate prevented meaningful public input on an issue that affects every Floridian. A particularly striking example of this occurred on Tuesday, when Senate Budget Committee Chairman J.D. Alexander limited public testimony to three minutes total, despite the fact that 39 people had requested to speak on the bill. Immediately following the meeting, the League, along with Florida PIRG, had to file a public records request in order to examine the speakers' cards. A review of the speakers' cards revealed that 37 people intended to speak against the measure, one wanted to provide information, and one planned to speak in favor of the bill.

"Florida voters deserve better from their legislature," said Ben Wilcox, the League's Governmental Consultant. "Senate President Haridopolos should do the right thing and kill this bad legislation, even if he might benefit politically from its passage."

###

The League of Women Voters of Florida, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. For more information, please visit the League's website at: www.TheFloridaVoter.org.