



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF FLORIDA

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF FLORIDA CRITICIZES LEGISLATURE'S REJECTION OF MEDICAID FUNDING FOR SENIORS

A Florida legislative panel recently rejected federal money intended to help nursing home patients return to or stay in their own homes with needed support systems in place. By refusing to spend \$2 million, Florida's legislative leaders have sent back \$35 million in federal funding that is designed to help keep seniors in their homes, instead of being sent to the much more expensive and less satisfactory option: nursing homes.

The "Money Follows the Person" program (launched by the George W. Bush Administration) would have provided an initial \$2 million leading to an additional \$35 million in Medicaid funding over a 5-year period. Nursing homes had a \$200 million budget cut this year and could have used the federal funds to help facilitate the existing nursing home diversion efforts in the state. Most patients would opt to live at home if possible. For many family members, this isn't manageable without needed services. But if forced into costly nursing home care by a lack of support services and alternatives, many would end up requiring more state dollars for their nursing home care when they deplete their savings and become Medicaid-eligible.

"Unfortunately, Florida is earning the reputation of being strident and oppositional in choosing ideology over the needs of citizens -- in this case, the elderly and their caregivers," said LWVF President Deirdre Macnab. "The legislators' stubborn resistance to the Affordable Care Act has led to the refusal of a series of federal funding initiatives."

In recent months, Florida has deliberately forfeited \$54 million in grants because the funds were related to the health care overhaul. Florida and 25 other states are challenging the Affordable Care Act's "individual mandate" in court, but other states aren't turning down these funds -- money that Florida taxpayers deserve to have returned from Washington for our use.

The League of Women Voters of Florida joins other citizen advocates in speaking out against

this shortsightedness on the part of our legislators. These are difficult economic times in Florida; the state needs less partisanship and more policy based on common sense, especially for seniors and the disabled.

For more information about the Affordable Care Act, visit www.TheFloridaVoter.org and select Health Care Reform.

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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 about the League, visit www.TheFloridaVoter.org.