



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF FLORIDA

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League of Women Voters, Sen. Garcia, Rep. Murphy and other groups urge Legislature to extend healthcare coverage to Florida's uninsured

Tallahassee -- A leading Republican lawmaker today called on members of the Florida Legislature to accept \$51 billion in federal money to extend healthcare coverage to nearly 1 million uninsured and provide the state with a huge economic stimulus.

Sen. Rene Garcia of Hialeah, spoke at a news conference along with Rep. Amanda Murphy (D-New Port Richey), local business owners, members of the medical community and the President of the League of Women Voters of Florida.

Their message was clear: Time is of the essence.

Garcia said it doesn't make sense that the state of Florida accepts federal funding for things like transportation and education, but refuses to take federal dollars for healthcare expansion. "This is not about politics -- its about policy and being consistent and taking care of our own," Garcia said.

Garcia is sponsoring a bill (SB 710) that would allow Florida to accept \$51 billion in federal funding available for expanding healthcare coverage, and mirrors a bill that received unanimous support in the Senate last year. Murphy is sponsoring the House version (HB 869).

This bipartisan initiative would "positively impact working families and those that have fallen on hard times by ensuring access to affordable healthcare through the free market," Murphy said.

She called on House Speaker Weatherford and others opposing the measure to "come to the table" so that "together, we can find a way to set aside our differences and benefit Florida's working families."

Florida has the second-highest rate of uninsured citizens in the nation, with 1 in 4 Floridians living without basic healthcare coverage. "These people are more than just a number, they are real people with families who work hard everyday," said Dr. Mona Mangat, Chair of Doctors for America and an Allergist-Immunologist based in St.

Petersburg. "Floridians in the coverage gap deserve access to healthcare. It is time for state leaders to put patients over politics."

Speakers at the news conference emphasized the economic imperative of expanding healthcare coverage, highlighting the \$51 billion and the estimated 121,000 new jobs that the expansion is predicted to create in Florida. Additionally, extending healthcare coverage will help Florida businesses avoid the massive financial penalties they face if they are unable to provide coverage to their employees, an estimated \$169-253 million a year.

"With Florida losing \$7 million a day by refusing to expand healthcare coverage, there is no time to lose," League President Deirdre Macnab stated, urging the Legislature to take advantage of the 60-day session to act on this issue. "This is a historic economic stimulus opportunity for Florida, and will do more to improve our business climate than anything else our Legislature can address this session."

Please contact LWVF President Deirdre Macnab for further comments.

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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, please visit the League's website at: www.TheFloridaVoter.org.