

Capitol Report

March 28, 2014

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LWVF RESPONDS TO FLORIDA'S DECISION TO POSTPONE VOTER PURGE:

After months of opposition from the League and other voting rights organizations, Secretary of State Ken Detzner announced his intention to suspend the "Project Integrity" initiative until at least 2015.

On March 27th the League issued a press release in response to the state's decision to postpone its voter purge efforts. To read the full release, please click [here](#).

LEGISLATIVE WEEK 4 OVERVIEW:

At mid-point in the 2014 legislative session we are encouraged to see that a number of the most egregious bills have either been amended, postponed or withdrawn from consideration, keeping the League on track for a successful session. But bad bills and bait-and-switch tactics are in play. Now is the time during session where involvement from our League members becomes critically important – both to push through the League's priority bills and to stop bad legislation from moving forward. We are only as strong as the voices of our members!

Please consider joining the League for our 2014 Legislative Summit & Council, April 9-11 in Tallahassee. Essentially our "lobby days," the League of Women Voters of Florida's annual Legislative Summit brings members from all over the state to Tallahassee to advocate on our issues before state leaders, ensuring that a strong and united League voice is heard. Council of Leaders is a day-long conference for leaders from local Leagues all around Florida. Participants have the opportunity to receive leadership training from state board members, elected officials and leadership experts, as well as approve the budget for the coming fiscal year.

To learn more about 2014 Summit & Council and to register, please click [here](#). Online registration will close at 11:59 PM on Thursday, April 3rd, but registrations can still be made at the door.

Here is your weekly update of action at the Capitol and where we need your help in order to keep our voice strong:

ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION WORKSHOP HELD IN HOUSE:

Reports that the Senate Ethics and Elections Committee's comprehensive elections reform bill (SB 784) was dead last week did not prohibit the House Ethics and Elections Subcommittee, at the urging of bill sponsor Representative Alan Williams (D-Tallahassee), from holding a workshop on the proposal (HB 667). LWVF Executive Director Jessica Lowe-Minor, with a host of Lobby Corps members in attendance, testified in support of implementing OVR in Florida. Jessica's testimony focused on the League's support for online voter registration, highlighting a number of the benefits of OVR. Here were a few of the key points she made:

- OVR makes registration easy. The PEW Charitable Trusts found that 65% of registered voters support allowing online voter registration.
- Arizona determined that processing paper registrations costs \$.83 per registration while the cost for online registration was merely \$.03 per registration.
- These savings are considerable when approximately one third of SOE budgets are spent on registration.
- Arizona, which implemented paperless registration in 2002, now registers 70% of all voters online.
- OVR reduces the likelihood of human errors.
- OVR encourages voters to keep their voter information up to date and as accurate as possible: to submit address changes, as well as changes in their name due to marital status. It allows voters to receive accurate polling precinct information to match their current address. All of these are critical to ensure smooth elections.
- Implementing OVR is the next logical step in harnessing technological advances in our electoral system.

The Senate Ethics and Elections Committee will take up SB 784 at 4:00 on March 31st. The bill is not expected to pass this session, but provides LWVF with the opportunity to educate lawmakers about the value of implementing the system during next year's legislative session.

IN-STATE TUITION ON THE MOVE:

While the House has passed legislation, which will allow undocumented students to attend Florida colleges at the in-state tuition level, the Senate companion has encountered some resistance. SB 1400, sponsored by Senator Jack Latvala (R-Clearwater), passed its first committee stop by just a 5-4 margin. The bill is now on the agenda to be heard in the Senate Judiciary Committee on Tuesday, April 1st. In a press statement made this week, Sen. Latvala spoke about the chance of SB 1400 passing in the Senate:

I know beyond a shadow of a doubt...I'm one of the best vote-counters in the Senate, if I should happen to say so myself. I know we have the votes to pass this in the Senate if we could just get a hearing on the floor. That will be our challenge. We have three more committee stops. We have five weeks or so to do it, and I'm going to work on it every single day to make sure it happens.

TAKE ACTION: Let Judiciary Chair Sen. Tom Lee (R-Brandon) and other members of the Senate Judiciary Committee know it is important that this bill be heard in committee on Tuesday! Click [here](#) to learn more about this issue and find contact info for the committee members. (NOTE: Sen. Tom Lee's number is misprinted in the Action Alert. The correct phone number for his Tallahassee office is 850-487-5024.)

BAD ENVIRONMENTAL PERMITTING BILL ALTERED, BUT REMAINS DAMAGING:

For the 4th year in a row, Representative Jimmy Patronis (R- Panama City) has introduced another wide-ranging bill that would roll back environmental regulations. The bill (HB 703) includes such diverse changes as increasing allowable water withdrawals (consumptive use permits) and preventing

counties from enforcing their own springs or wetland regulations. In a stakeholder meeting held by Rep. Patronis earlier this week, LWVF Governmental Consultant Debbie Harrison Rumberger said “this bill will destroy the very resources we are fighting to protect with the widely-supported Springs Protection legislation.”

The Senate companion (SB 1464) reached the Environmental Preservation and Conservation Committee with a number of amendments proposed by Senators Thad Altman (R-Melborne) and Jack Latvala (R-Clearwater). Their amendments removed a number of the bill’s most egregious provisions, including the springs and wetlands regulation authority. The bill still has provisions that increase the duration of water withdrawals for certain large developments. The League will continue to oppose this proposed legislation in both chambers.

CHARTER SCHOOL NEGOTIATION DISPUTES MOVED TO DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS:

The League supports the constitutional right of Floridians to access a well-funded, high-quality public education. SB 1528 as introduced would have eroded the authority of local school districts by allowing charter schools to open prior to the resolution of negotiations. The legislation also required school districts to relinquish unused education facilities to charter schools. A number of school districts joined the League in our opposition to the bill as filed.

A significantly limited version of the bill was presented in the Senate Education Committee on Tuesday. The new version moves contract disputes to the Division of Administrative Hearings where judges will have 30 days to render their findings. Additionally, charter schools would only be allowed to expel students for violations of their written codes of conduct -- addressing concerns by Sen. Bill Montford (D-Tallahassee) that some charter schools might be trying to get rid of students who struggle academically. To learn more about this issue, please click [here](#) for an article from *The Florida Current*.

PRIVATE SCHOOL VOUCHERS REVIVED IN BILL FOR SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS:

Efforts to establish a corporate sales tax scholarship credit to expand Florida’s private school voucher program faced a snag last week when a [video](#) began circulating of Step Up for Students President Doug Tuthill boasting of his political prowess:

“One of the primary reasons we’ve been so successful (is) we spend about \$1 million every other cycle in local political races, which in Florida is a lot of money. In House races and Senate races, we’re probably the biggest spender in local races.”

Not long after Tuthill’s comments were exposed, SB 1620 was withdrawn by its sponsor, Senator Bill Galvano (R-Bradenton), and the bill was declared all but dead by pundits and newspapers across the state. Without a companion bill, the House version (HB 7099) cannot be passed into law.

Late in the week, however, Representative Erik Fresen (R- Miami) used a procedural move to combine the voucher language with a separate bill regarding education for children with special needs. The proposed committee bill will be heard in a four hour-long meeting on Friday, March 28th. That bill (previously HB 5103, now PCB EDAS 14-03) has a companion bill in the Senate (SB 1512), and is therefore still in play. However, Senate President Don Gaetz has held firm that he will not consider a

voucher expansion without accountability standards being put in place for private schools that accept public funding. The League will be testifying in opposition to this bill and reporting on the outcome in next weeks' *Capitol Report*.

LWV LOBBY CORPS FOCUS ON HEALTHCARE FOR ALL FLORIDIANS:

Members of the League continue working to keep HEALTHCARE FOR ALL FLORIDIANS in the forefront at the Capitol this week. Holding signs calling for legislators to accept \$51 billion in federal funding to provide health coverage to Florida's working poor, Lobby Corps members distributed information and spoke to individuals as they entered the Capitol. The Lobby Corps will continue efforts to keep HEALTHCARE FOR ALL FLORIDIANS in the spotlight. For information on getting involved, please contact Kathy Winn at kathywinnclan@embarqmail.com

TRACKING LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS:

The following link will take you to the entire list of bills that your LWVF is tracking. You may click on any bill and be taken to the state website where you can learn about the bills, committee stops, as well as members and the legislative process.

[Please click here for a link to the list of bills LWVF is tracking this session.](#)

Every Friday during session you will receive a weekly *Capitol Report* in your inbox. Please share them with others. They will be brief, provide a progress report on League issues, and let you know WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP!

Get Involved!

Debbie Harrison Rumberger is the League's professional lobbyist for the 2014 legislative session. Updates on League legislative issues will be provided on a regular basis through *Capitol Report*, which is published every week during the session. Important information may also be accessed at www.leg.state.fl.us.

Watch for your *Capitol Report* each Friday of the session for news on priority issues and what you can do to help. For updates on or copies of proposed legislation, call legislative information at 1-800-342-1827 or visit the Florida Online Sunshine homepage at www.leg.state.fl.us. For more information about the League's advocacy, check out www.TheFloridaVoter.org.