

Capitol Report

April 4, 2014

Filed by: Debbie Harrison Rumberger, LWVF Governmental Consultant

LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT & COUNCIL OF LEADERS IS NEXT WEEK!

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, please click [here](#). Online registration has closed, but registrations can still be made at the door.

LEGISLATIVE WEEK 5 OVERVIEW:

Moving into the second half of session, the League is encouraged on a number of important issues where we have been active: Springs protection legislation enjoyed unanimous support in its second committee stop this week in the Senate. Anticipation is mounting that Representative Jason Brodeur (R-Sanford) will bring forward companion legislation in the House next week. In-state tuition for undocumented students, having already passed in the House, has been gaining momentum in Senate under the guidance of Senator Latvala (R- Clearwater). A broad expansion of public dollars for private school vouchers was amended onto a bill in the House, but rejected by the Senate, killing the second attempt to revive the expansion this session. And sadly, efforts to establish online voter registration have been set aside by both the House and Senate this session, with expectations that the bill will be back next year.

The pace in the Capitol is accelerating as we move into the second half of session. Efforts to pass measures have LWVF staff, interns and Lobby Corps members actively engaged in appearing and testifying on legislation critical to the League's positions. Everyone's help is important, impactful and necessary in order to keep good measures moving and defeat bad policies. Whether you are in Tallahassee or by the phone or computer in your home, your involvement cannot be underestimated. Keep your legislators informed of League concerns and help us keep our voice in the Capitol strong! Be a part of the action!

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

JUSTICES TO BE APPOINTED BY GOVERNOR IN SENATE BALLOT INITIATIVE:

With a party-line vote Thursday, the Florida Senate approved a controversial proposal (SJR 1188) that would allow an outgoing governor to replace appellate or Supreme Court justices whose terms expire on the governor's last day in office. Bill sponsor, Senate Judiciary Chairman Tom Lee (R-Brandon), said "all we've done is acknowledge that the executive powers of the Governor continue until his or her successor is qualified to succeed them on Inauguration Day." Democrats objected, declaring that an incoming Governor should have the ability to shape the ideological makeup of the bench instead of someone who was either voted out of office or who will no longer be the state's chief executive. The measure passed in the Senate in a 26-14 vote, but still lacks a companion in the House.

SPRINGS PROTECTION BILL UNANIMOUSLY PASSED IN SENATE AG COMMITTEE:

A Senate measure that would bolster protections for Florida's natural springs unanimously passed its stop in the Agriculture Committee on Monday. SB 1576, filed by Senator Charlie Dean (R-Inverness) along with 5 Senate Committee Chairs, has been moving steadily forward in the Senate, but the House companion (HB 1313) has yet to be placed on a committee agenda. The League is working with leaders in both chambers to advance this critical springs protection measure during this legislative session. The bills would provide funding for the long-term protection of Florida's unique and threatened springs.

DAMAGING ENVIRONMENTAL BILL CONTINUES ITS MARCH FORWARD:

The House Agriculture and Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee passed HB 703 sponsored by Representative Jimmy Patronis (R-Panama City) that would change a number of laws dealing with environmental and growth-related regulations. Dubbed by the environmental community as the "Bad Water Bill," read what LWV Martin County member and noted environmentalist Maggy Hurchalla has to say about this legislation. Click [here](#) to read Maggy's commentary in the *Palm Beach Post*.

IN-STATE TUITION ON THE MOVE:

It appears that SB 1400 by Sen. Latvala will continue its movement forward, indicating a strong possibility that the measure will pass this session. The bill would make a series of changes to college and university tuition rates, allowing undocumented students to qualify for in-state tuition rates. The bill passed the Senate Judiciary Committee on a 7-2 vote Tuesday after a contentious hearing. The measure now moves to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education where it is expected to be heard on Wednesday. A similar bill has already been adopted by the House, and is a priority for House Speaker Will Weatherford.



Sen. Latvala being interviewed by the media after SB 1400 passes in the Senate Judiciary Committee

PRIVATE SCHOOL VOUCHERS REJECTED IN SENATE, AGAIN:

Efforts to establish a corporate sales tax scholarship credit to expand Florida's private school voucher program faced more problems this week when Senator Kelli Stargel (R- Lakeland) declined to allow expansion of Florida's private school voucher system to be attached to her bill. The bill (SB 1512), which would create a new scholarship program called "Personalized Accounts for Learning" for students with disabilities, passed the Senate Education Appropriations Subcommittee this week. After it passed, Sen. Stargel stated "I can tell you at this point it's not my will to make this be the vehicle for the Tax Credit Scholarship Program." The voucher proposal appeared to collapse two weeks ago, when Senate leaders pulled their version of the bill and all but pronounced it dead for the 2014 session. Last week, however, House leaders tacked the voucher expansion onto the House version of "Personalized Spending Accounts for Learning" (HB 7167).

ON LINE VOTER REGISTRATION PROPOSAL WITHDRAWN IN SENATE:

Tallahassee Lobby Corps member Marilyn Wills testified before the Senate Ethics and Elections Committee this week in support of establishing a system of online voter registration in the state of Florida. The measure has had difficulty gaining traction in the House, while the Senate companion (SB 784) was declared dead by the bill sponsor, Senator Jeff Clemens (D- Lake Worth). While the League is disappointed that Florida will not join the 19 other states that have already passed bills implementing online voter registration, expectations are high that this provision will be addressed in next year's session.

MEMORIALS SUPPORTING COAL-FIED ELECTICITY MOVING IN BOTH CHAMBERS:

LWVF provided the only testimony against a Senate Memorial that urges Congress to provide flexibility for Florida in reducing carbon emissions (SB 1174) as it passed another committee stop this week. HB 1027, the House companion bill, is sponsored by Representative John Wood, who said that coal burning provides affordable electricity and that the effects are minimal. "God gave us this resource (coal)," Wood said. "Until we have better technology at some point in the future we need to use it to keep our economy going." The International Panel on Climate Change reported this week that the effects of climate change already are being felt and continued increases in emissions may cause "severe and pervasive impacts that may be surprising or irreversible." The burning of coal for electricity has been established as a major global contributor to greenhouse gas emissions.

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 bills LWVF is tracking this session.](#)

Every Friday during session you will receive a *Capitol Report* in your inbox. Please share them with others. They will be brief, provide a brief 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.