

Capitol Report

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Please note: This is a partial Capitol Report because session is still underway and is expected to continue until late into the night.

LEGISLATIVE WEEK 9 OVERVIEW:

As the 2014 Legislative Session slowly grinds to a halt we take a moment to update our members on that status of a number of our highest priority bills. Watch for a full review of the session in next weeks' Capitol Report Wrap-Up! Here is a re-cap of this weeks' action so far in the Legislature:

Constitutional Amendment # 3:

The League will be preparing pros and cons on this issue in the coming weeks.

Florida's GOP-dominated House approved a proposed constitutional amendment Wednesday that could give the winner of next November's gubernatorial election the power to reshape the state Supreme Court.

House Republicans sent the measure to the November ballot in a 74-45, party-line vote, after Democrats objected to both the process and the politics behind a proposal that would allow an outgoing governor to replace appellate or Supreme Court justices whose terms expire on the governor's last day in office.

The measure, SJR 1188, which received final passage just two days before the end of the legislative session, had not been filed in the House and was not vetted by any committee prior to being sent to the House floor this week.

In-state tuition approved for Florida's undocumented students:

An eleven-year battle to secure in-state tuition rates for Florida's undocumented students is a pen-stroke away from becoming law. HB 851, sponsored by Rep. Nunez (R-Miami), would assure undocumented students who have applied for citizenship and have been enrolled in Florida schools for at least 4 years will be granted in-state tuition rates in Florida colleges and universities. The measure faced intense debate and close votes moving through the committee process. Senator Latvala (R-Clearwater) had sponsored the Senate companion and served as a strong advocate for passage in the Senate. The bill, having now passed both the Senate and House Chambers, is headed to the Governor's desk where it is expected to be passed into law. This bill received strong bi-partisan support.

Indian River Lagoon, Lake Okeechobee and Everglades:

The proposed budget for the 2015 fiscal year includes funding to implement the recommendations of the Select Committee on Indian River Lagoon, chaired by Senator Joe Negron (R-Palm City). Here is the breakdown on environmental funding included in this years' budget:

- \$167.5 million for the Indian River Lagoon, Lake Okeechobee and Everglades
- \$ 30 million for Springs protection
- \$ 12.5 million for Florida Forever land purchases

SPRINGS PROTECTION WAITS ON THE HOUSE:

Despite strong support and continuous advocacy by the League of Women Voter and other groups, it appears that the Springs Protection legislation will not be enacted this year. The bill has passed the Senate chamber unanimously, but at the time of this writing has not been heard in the House. The bill, SB 1576 by Senator Charlie Dean (R-Ocala), was championed by Senator David Simmons (R-Altamonte Springs) throughout the legislative session. The measure passed each of its Senate committee hearings and the Senate Chamber with unanimous support. But the Senate push was not enough to convince Representatives in the lower chamber to take up the bill. In-coming House Speaker, Steve Crisafulli (R-Merritt Island) has announced that Springs Protection will be a priority issue during his leadership in 2015. On a separate note, the House and Senate budget conference settled on a \$30 million appropriation for springs protection measures this year.

WOMEN FACE INCREASED OBSTACLES TO CHOICE:

Women seeking late-term abortions must now undergo fetus viability tests under a bill passed by both Chambers of the legislature this week. SB 918 by Senator Anitere Flores (R-Miami) prohibits the termination of a pregnancy if a fetus is determined to be viable outside of the womb. The measure awaits a decision by the Governor to sign the requirement into law.

PUBLIC EDUCATION DOLLARS TO FUND PRIVATE SCHOOL VOUCHERS STILL IN PLAY:

At the time of this writing, we are busy watching and continuing to fight against final efforts to extend public tax revenues to private school voucher programs. The private schools which receive public dollars are not required to hire certified teachers and are not required to have their students undertake the same state standardized tests that public schools do. The measure, spearheaded by Rep. Manny Diaz, Jr. (R-Hialeah), passed through the House early this session, but has been one of the most contentious bills this session. Efforts to pass a Senate companion bill (SB 1512 by Senator Keli, R-Lakeland) has been met with a dozen amendments requiring the same FCAT testing for private school students as public school students. Rather than require the

accountability requirements outlined in the proposed amendments, Stargel instead temporarily postponed action on the bill in the Senate.

FLORIDA LEGISLATURE POISED TO REFUSE \$51 BILLION:

The League has been strongly advocating for the Legislature to accept massive federal dollars that would allow Florida to expand health coverage to over 1 million Floridians. The Medicaid Expansion bill sponsored by Senator Rene Garcia (R-Miami) and Representative Amanda Murphy (D-New Port Richey) has not been heard in either chamber despite our persistent urging and press conferences. The League today joined with Florida's faith community in a press conference calling on the Governor to call a special session of the legislature to expand healthcare to all Floridians.

TRACKING LEGISLATIVE TRACKING:

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 legislative 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 progress report on League issues, and let you know **WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP!**

Get Involved!

Debbie Harrison Rumberger is the League's Governmental Consultant 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.