

# Capitol Report 2014

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## OVERVIEW

Firstly, I'd like to say how excited I am to be working with all of you around the state, and assure you of how important your role is in helping to drive home the League's priorities: Legislators listen hardest to their constituents -- and you are among their most informed and influential!

Preparation for the 2014 legislative session began in earnest with the beginning of committee meetings in September. Nine committee "weeks" are held prior to the opening of session, scheduled for March 4, 2014. LWVF Staff and Board have been hard at work in Tallahassee, meeting with decision-makers regarding issues of importance to the League. The following constitutes the issues that are at the top of our agenda, and some of our activities, which with your help will get us to some significant accomplishments:

- **Election Protection:** President Deirdre Macnab, Board member Pat Drago, and myself met with Secretary of State Ken Detzner to voice the League's concerns regarding "Project Integrity," following his statewide tour. The initiative, which came as a surprise to the county Supervisors of Elections, is a proposed voter purge which depends on the federal SAVE database of alien registration numbers to verify voter registration rolls. The data base is not designed for this purpose and comes with federal cautions for this process. In addition to aliens, felony offenders and those who have been adjudicated mentally incompetent are being targeted for voter verification. At the time of this writing no local Supervisor of Elections has agreed to comply with the purge.
- **Expanding Healthcare in Florida:** During the November committee week, this team met with numerous legislators and interested parties to urge them to accept the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) provision for Medicaid expansion. The \$51 billion in federal money would provide approximately 1.1 million residents health coverage, including Florida's working poor and uninsured veterans. The expansion is projected to create approximately 120,000 high-paying, permanent jobs in Florida. Currently, the Senate is awaiting a response from House Speaker Will Weatherford's chamber to a bill passed last session sponsored by the Senator Joe Negron. No action so far, but we will not give up, and need your continued letters to the editor and editorials on this pressing issue.
- **Protection of Florida's Waterways:** LWVF Conservation and Natural Resources Chairman, Chuck O'Neal and myself participated in meetings with the Florida Conservation Coalition, the office of Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam, and Senate Environment staff regarding state initiatives to protect Florida's spectacular freshwater springs. Draft legislation is designed to reduce nutrient pollution of 21 springs basins throughout the northern/central Florida region while putting in place mechanisms to recapture and protect those waters from continued withdrawals. The

League has been advised that the springs bill is expected to be filed shortly. Chuck O'Neal has been working hard with Senator Simmons and Florida environmental groups and scientists to ensure that a strong and effective bill is put forward this session. Stay tuned. We will need your help on this, and we believe this has a good chance of passing if citizen voices are engaged.

- **Indian River Lagoon:** Efforts to protect the Indian River Lagoon (IRL), including appropriations necessary to initiate project components, are another environmental priority for the League of Women Voters Florida in the 2014 session. The Space Coast League has helped speak out at local meetings. We are anticipating positive action on this issue.
  
- **Miscellaneous Other Bills of Interest:** Staff is coordinating with members of the Legislature and their staff on reviewing other bills that are of interest to the League, including the following filed bills:
  - o HB25 – prohibiting the implementation of Common Core until certain conditions are met.
  - o HB 71 – the Fracturing Chemical Disclosure Act
  - o HB 75 – changing the allocation of electoral votes for Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates
  - o HB 329 – providing for the automatic restoration of former felon's civil rights
  - o SB 452 – requiring that Charter schools must meet a currently unmet need to gain approval

We expect many more bills to be filed in the coming weeks. The League has a number of priority issues which are expected to receive attention during this year's regular session which begins on March 4th. Legislative work in preparation for the upcoming session will continue with two weeks of committee meetings in January with three weeks of committee meetings scheduled in February.

You will be hearing from me each month until session begins on March 4<sup>th</sup>. At that time you will receive a weekly CAPITOL UPDATE via email. 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!

### **LEAGUE PRIORITY ISSUES:**

The League of Women Voters of Florida has set the following priorities for the 2014 Legislative session:

#### **Social Policy:**

- Support implementation of the Federal Health Care Reform Law in Florida, emphasizing access for all and control of costs including Medicaid expansion and mental health coverage.
- Support the education of Floridians regarding application for coverage.
- Support Florida resident status for children of undocumented immigrants.

### Natural Resources:

- Support water resource programs and policies that reflect the interrelationships of water quality, water quantity, ground water and surface water and that address the potential depletion or pollution of water supplies.
- Promote resource conservation, stewardship and long-range planning, with the responsibility for managing natural resources shared by all levels of government.

### Education:

- Support a free public school system for Florida with high standards for student achievement and with equality of educational opportunity for all that is financed adequately by the state through an equitable funding formula.
- Support the increased oversight of the development and implementation of charter school contracts with regard to administrative fees, teacher salaries and benefits, and instructional innovation.

### Government:

- Support measures to protect, extend and encourage the use of the franchise and to advocate fair methods of financing campaigns.

### Justice:

- Support juvenile justice actions that emphasize civil citations, rehabilitation and other alternatives to incarceration.

### **LOBBY CORPS:**

Meetings with the Tallahassee Lobby Corps have already begun and a lobbying training session is scheduled for January 9, 2014 at 5:30 p.m. at the Tallahassee East Side Library on 1538 Pedrick Road. Please come join us to learn how to impact state policy in a powerful way! Please contact Rebecca Sager ([rsager@music.org](mailto:rsager@music.org)) if you have questions.

### **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 the Capitol Report, which is published every week during the session. Important information may also be accessed at [www.leg.state.fl.us](http://www.leg.state.fl.us).

Watch for your Capitol Report each Friday during 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](http://www.leg.state.fl.us). For more information about the League's advocacy, check out [www.TheFloridaVoter.com](http://www.TheFloridaVoter.com).