

Capitol Report

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OVERVIEW:

The LWVF has been actively preparing for the **2014 legislative session:**

- Working with LWV Tallahassee to coordinate our activities with the Tallahassee Lobby Corps. The Lobby Corps, composed of policy experts in an array of fields, including health care, environmental protection, ethics and voter services, has had a tremendous impact on the strength of our message in the Capitol.
- Holding workshops on utilizing the state of Florida's website to learn how to find information on legislators, bills, committee meetings, and actions throughout the legislative session.
- Attending committee meetings, analyzing bills as they are proposed, identifying priority concerns for the League, setting up meetings with Senators and Representatives, developing positions on key legislation.
- Working with the LWVF President Deirdre Macnab and the State Board of Directors to determine priority issues and approaches as bills and themes appear as we move closer to the opening of session.



Forward movement has been taking place over the past month on a number of key issues for the League:

EXPANDING HEALTH CARE IN FLORIDA/ GETTING FLORIDA'S FAIR SHARE:

Senator Rene Garcia (R-Dade) has introduced legislation expanding health care coverage in Florida by accepting \$51 billion in federal funding for Medicaid expansion. SB 710 establishes the Healthy Florida program which would administer the expanded Medicaid

program. Similar legislation was introduced by Senator Joe Negron (R-Stuart) and passed by the Senate in the 2013 legislative session. We will be working to secure support for a companion bill in the House, and full passage of Medicaid expansion during this legislative session.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION:

INDIAN RIVER LAGOON AND EVERGLADES: Support is growing for broad action intended to reduce nutrient pollution, curtail damaging water releases and other activities intended to provide protection of the IRL and advance Everglades restoration projects. Governor Scott has released a proposed budget that includes \$130 million in funding for many of the recommendations put forward by the Select Committee on Indian River Lagoon:

- \$30 million to create an elevated roadbed for 2.5 miles of Tamiami Trail, allowing water to flow under the highway, which for decades has blocked the natural water flow of the Everglades. This will be in addition to the one mile of bridging which was recently completed. The Tamiami Trail project will eventually result in a total of 6.5 miles of elevated roadbed.

- \$32 million to build cleanup facilities for agriculturally polluted water from the Everglades Agricultural Area.

- The remaining funds are to be used for the creation of reservoirs to store polluted water in Martin County and along the Caloosahatchee River, and for the final restoration of the Kissimmee River.

SPRINGS PROTECTION: The League is assisting in the review of draft legislation to be introduced by Senator David Simmons (R- Almonte Springs) intended to provide for the protection of springs, rivers and other water basins in Florida. The bill is intended to control over-allocations of water and reduce nutrient pollution of those resources. The Governor has recommended \$55 million in his budget to address these problems. More information can be found by clicking [here](#).

FRACKING: Finally, we are tracking legislation (HB 71 and HB 157) which could potentially lead to fracking in Florida. Fracking is the technique of hydraulic fracturing of rock by pressurized liquid (water, sand and chemicals) to extract hydrocarbons. We will continue reporting on each of these activities as the session moves forward.

EDUCATION:

The League is tracking legislation impacting the adoption of Common Core standards in accordance with the League's position. There is currently a proposed House bill to postpone adoption of the standards for one year.

TRACKING LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS:

Clicking [here](#) will take you to the entire list of bills that your League is tracking. You may click on any bill to receive more information about that particular piece of legislation, committee stops, as well as members and the legislative process.

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 during the three weeks of committee meetings scheduled in February.

You will be hearing from me each month until session begins on March 4th. At that time you will receive a weekly *Capitol Report* directly in your inbox! Please share them with others. They will be brief, provide a quick progress report on League issues, and let you know what you can do to help!

I'd like to say how privileged I feel to have the opportunity to work with so many talented, concerned, involved individuals with the League of Women Voters of Florida. Your knowledge, ideas and involvement provide much appreciated guidance to me as we embark on the annual task of promoting and defending our ideals in the halls of the Capitol in Tallahassee. Your participation, whether it be meeting with your legislators, organizing Hot Topics meetings, writing letters to editor or participating in direct lobbying activities here in Tallahassee, is the strength of our voice at the Capitol.

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.

Watch for your *Capitol Report* each Friday of 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 <http://www.thefloridavoter.org>.