

# CAPITOL REPORT

## With One Week Remaining, Extended Session Looming



Capitol Report 2015

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Filed by: Debbie Harrison Rumberger, LWVF Governmental Consultant

### **ENSURING AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE FOR ALL FLORIDIANS:**

In usual legislative sessions, our elected officials would be intensely working on the finalization of budget negotiations, the one thing that the Legislature is required by law to adopt each year. A standoff between the House and Senate regarding federal health care coverage for uninsured Floridians has preempted budget negotiations. Senate leaders have been pushing for a plan that would bring in \$2.2 billion for Low Income Pool and use \$2.8 billion in Medicaid expansion funds to help low-income residents purchase private health insurance. But the House and Gov. Rick Scott are fiercely opposed to using the expansion dollars, which come from the federal Affordable Care Act. Today, President Andy Gardiner stated the Senate is prepared to extend session to June 30th to work on health care costs with the House. Be on the lookout for an Action Alert on Monday morning with what to tell your legislators!

### **ONLINE VOTER REGISTRATION:**

One of the LWVF priority issues, establishment of a system of online voter registration to provide ease of access, increased accountability and significant cost savings, is moving forward in both the House and the Senate. The bills are expected to be heard in their respective chambers early next week: stay tuned!

### **FRACKING:**

Efforts by the LWVF to establish a regulatory framework for permitting, a study to determine environmental impacts and a moratorium until the study and rulemaking are completed, have been thwarted. Fracking, or hydraulic fracturing, is a method of drilling for oil and natural gas. As the legislation moves forward, it fails to capture the fracking operations that are typical in Florida's karst geology and protects company "trade

secrets" (the chemical compounds injected into the substrate during drilling operations) from public disclosure. The League stands in opposition to this damaging legislation.

### **PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION REFORM:**

Legislation that would make a series of changes dealing with the Florida Public Service Commission, including limiting Commissioners to three consecutive terms, requiring annual ethics training and trying to protect utility customers from rate increases based on changes in billing cycles, has passed both the House and Senate chambers. The League has supported this long overdue reform to the PSC and is excited to see it move forward!

### **ABORTION RESTRICTIONS:**

The Republican-dominated Senate gave final approval to a bill that would require women to wait 24 hours before having abortions. The Senate took up a bill (HB 633) that passed the House on Wednesday. Although exceptions to the 24 hour wait requirement for rape, incest and domestic violence were added onto the bill, a woman is required to provide documentation of same in order to qualify for the exemption. The measure is opposed by the LWVF.

### **WATER POLICY, SPRINGS, TRAILS, AMENDMENT 1:**

The House Water Policy bill adopted on the third day of session replaces a Lake Okeechobee pollution permitting program with more reliance instead on water cleanup plans, sets deadlines for establishing minimum flow levels for springs and sets timelines for springs cleanup plans. Through a series of amendments, the water bill language was added to a Florida Department of Environmental Protection bill that had cleared its committee stops without opposing votes. The late-session tactic brought the House bill into alignment with the Senate companion.

The Senate bill also would establish the SunTrail bike trail network within the Florida Department of Transportation. The Senate bill would establish water advisory council to review water projects. While there are elements of each bill the LWVF supports, overall the policies have weakened significantly as the legislative process has unfolded. The League continues to monitor these bills as they move forward.

### **Get Involved!**

Debbie Harrison Rumberger is the League's professional lobbyist for the 2015 Legislative Session. Aply supported by our very active volunteer Lobby Corps, and our Legislative Interns Cathy Barrios and Abdelilah Skhir. 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](http://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](http://www.leg.state.fl.us). For more information about the League's advocacy, check out [www.thefloridavoter.com](http://www.thefloridavoter.com)

Thank you,

Debbie Harrison Rumberger  
LWVF Legislative Liaison