



Capitol Report

League of Women Voters of Florida

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This is the Capitol Report Wrap-up. The 2009 Legislative session adjourned on May 8th Sine Die at 2:58pm. The Wrap-up report is a summary of the legislation the League has been tracking through the 2009 legislative session.

LEAGUE PRIORITY ISSUES

As indicated in previous issues, the LWVF set three 2009 Legislative priorities: Government, Education in Florida and Social Policy in Florida. Under Government there are priority subcategories as follows: Finance and Taxation, Redistricting, and Citizen Initiatives including the Statutory Initiative and Election Law. Under Education in Florida our priorities are: Funding, Accountability and Civics Education. Social Policy has as its priority subcategory: Health Care.

The League decided to once again hire a professional lobbyist, C. Heather Walker, with WildLaw to represent the League throughout the 2009 legislative session on some of the priority issues. We would like to thank all of the League members who volunteered to be point persons during the 2009's legislative session. Their hard work was very much appreciated!! We would also like to thank the LWV of Tallahassee Lobby Corps Members whose assistance was invaluable.

OVERVIEW OF THE SESSION

The 2009 Legislative Session was a successful one for the League. For the most part we were able to defeat significant issues of concern and in a few instances assist in the passing of good legislation dealing with League priority issues. Our efforts did not go unnoticed as we were frequently mentioned by Legislators on the record and in the public media.

This Wrap-Up will summarize the happenings and ultimate results of the major pieces of legislation the League prioritized as well as those of lower priority that we tracked throughout session.

GOVERNMENT IN FLORIDA

FINANCE AND TAXATION

The League supports a state fiscal structure that is equitable in its distribution of the tax responsibility and responsive to public needs.

Everyone on both the Senate & House Finance & Tax Councils were asked to review all current sales tax exemptions. For the first time in a decade, the Senate Finance & Tax Committee heard a presentation from Tax Watch identifying over 2 million dollars in exemptions that could be eliminated and expressed a greater willingness to consider ending tax exemptions. Still, when the council members reported back only a few members recommended eliminating some of the exemptions they reviewed, but none

of the elimination recommendations were adopted by the Councils. Ultimately, the House and Senate settled on raising fees on services such as driver's licenses, title transfers, court fees, university students, and fishing licenses. Some of these fees more than double and several are for items that seniors and low income families cannot do without.

The League supports tax legislation which does not jeopardize local service, addresses infrastructure deficits, and removes unfair tax exemptions which affect governments' ability to serve citizens.

HB 1163 - called for all reviewable tax exemptions to be considered for repeal or modification by the Joint Legislative Sunset Committee and for all reviewable exemptions to expire if not renewed or modified.

- Introduced by Rep. Hukill (R, 28) was assigned to Finance & Tax Committee, but was never placed on the agenda.
- Companion bill, **SB 2576**, filed by Senator Lynn (R, 7) never made it out of its first committee.

SB 1840 - increased the cigarette tax by \$1 and levy the tax on almost all other tobacco products.

- Filed by Sen. Deutch (D, 30).
- March 31st - passed favorably as a CS out of the Senate Finance & Tax Committee by a 5-0 vote
- April 7th - passed favorably by the Policy & Steering Committee on Ways & Means by a 16 to 1 vote with Sen. Garcia (R, 40) opposed.
- April 16th a CS was passed on the Senate floor by a 39-0 vote.
- On April 17th the House passed a CS on 117-0 vote. The Senate declined to concur and a conference committee was appointed April 17th.

- May 8th both the Senate passed the conference committee report 40-0; the House passed the conference committee report 85-30. The conference committee report contained a \$1 surcharge on cigarettes and smokeless tobacco products but excluded extending the tax to cigars.

SB 2270 - aimed at closing an existing tax loophole in Florida's system which allows companies in Florida to assign business profit gained in Florida to other states thereby avoiding Florida taxation. This bill was supported by the League.

- Filed by Sen. Gelber (D, 35)
- April 1st - voted favorable by the Commerce Committee with 10-0 vote.
- April 8th it passed the Senate Finance and Tax Council with a 4-1 vote. Sen. Bennett (R, 21) opposed the bill. League President Marilyn Wills attended the meeting and spoke against this resolution.
- April 15th passed by the General Government Appropriations Committee 3-2; Sen. Dean (R, 3) and Sen. Baker (R, 20) opposed.
- The bill dies in the Policy & Steering Committee on Ways and Means.
- The companion bill, **HB 1247**, filed by Rep. Randolph (D, 36) was never heard in a committee.

SB 2546 – which closed other corporate tax loopholes with respect to deductibility of intangible expenses, interest expenses and management fees.

- Filed by Sen. Altman (R, 24).
- April 1st passed the Finance and Tax Committee 5-0.
- Re-referred to the Policy & Steering Committee on Ways & Means on April 23rd. Dies in this committee waiting to get to the Senate floor.

Senate Joint Resolution 1906 and HJR 1263 – Government Revenue Requiring Voter Approval (also known as TABOR) - was STRONGLY OPPOSED by the League as it restricts revenue growth at both the state and local levels to a formula based on population change and inflation. This limit can lead to deterioration in public services.

Colorado has been the only state to implement a similar tax system in 2001 and it saw its general funds revenue decrease by 17% by 2003. TABOR would require budget cuts in good economic times because revenues above the formula based limit could not be spent. But, budget cuts also occur in bad economic times because of insufficient funds. Thus, state services will constantly face budget cuts and those services will deteriorate in most years (good and bad years alike). For example, in Colorado while it had TABOR in place, the state saw its K-12 funding decline from 35th in the nation to 49th and its higher education funding drop by 31%.

- March 10th - was passed favorably out of Community Affairs Committee 6-4 with 3 amendments; Sen. Deutch (D, 30), Sen. Hill (D, 1), Sen. Ring (D, 32) and Sen. Siplin (D, 19) opposed the resolution.
- The next committee stop was the Governmental Oversight and Accountability Committee, chaired by the sponsor – Sen. Haridopolous (R, 26). The resolution was on the agenda but postponed four times, because Se. Haridopolous could not garner enough votes to move it out of committee. The resolution was not even considered during the last two committee meetings and died in this committee.
- March 26th the companion, **HB 1263**, sponsored by Rep. Flores (R, 114), passed the House Military & Local Affairs Policy Committee 8-6.

- The resolution dies in the House Finance & Tax Committee.

REDISTRICTING

The League supports single-member election districts that are equal in population, that provide access for minorities, are compact and, when possible, take local characteristics such as political and geographical boundaries into consideration.

SJR 202 - proposes amendments to the constitution pertaining to redistricting and reapportionment. The bill would create an independent commission to set up redistricting plans. By having an independent commission draw the lines for districts will ideally alleviate concerns of gerrymandering and other political influences affecting redistricting. It addressed many of the League's concerns pertaining to redistricting.

- Filed by Sen. Justice (D, 16).
- The resolution was never placed on any agenda.
- It had no companion legislation in the House

CITIZEN INITIATIVES

In the past few sessions, the League has spoken out against proposed bills which further limit citizen access and elevate the role of the legislature in writing, rewriting and regulating the constitution. This increased role of the Legislature is troublesome to the League as it dramatically curtails checks and balances in the Florida government system. The League opposes measures which limit citizens' right to constitutional initiatives and where appropriate advance the idea of a citizen statutory initiative.

HB 497 - aims at only paid petition gatherers requiring registration, fees and training for paid petition circulators.

Additionally, the bill establishes as a remedy the rejection of voter's validly signed petition if the paid petition gatherer failed in any way to be in full compliance with all registration rules. While the League knows we do not pay signature gatherers, many of the initiatives we have supported have had to in order to even possibly be successful in the climate that has chilled citizen and volunteer involvement because of the many burdens effected in numerous bills aimed at this process in the last few years.

- Filed by Rep. Dorworth (R, 34)
- One of the Florida Chamber of Commerce's highest priorities.
- March 18th **HB 497** passed the Governmental Affairs Committee 9-3 after vigorous debate.
 - League Legislative Advocate Heather Walker testified adamantly against the bill noting the ruse behind the bill that it was designed to raise the cost of running citizen initiatives to exclude true grassroots group efforts. The bill does not penalize the petition gatherer who was improperly registered but instead throws out the perfectly valid petitions.
 - The bill sponsor also had significant problems trying to explain the bill during intense questioning by representatives who later voted against the bill.
- March 24th passed the Civil Justice & Courts Policy Committee as a Committee Substitute 5-3 along party lines. Despite the CS addressing several of the League's concerns too many parts of the bill remained constitutionally troublesome and the entire bill was overly burdensome on the petition gathering process.

- The League spoke out against this bill with several other groups in a committee room that was so overcrowded parties interested in speaking on the bill were unable to enter due to fire code.
- Again during testimony by the sponsor, Rep. Dorworth, questioning made it clear that the sponsor did not completely understand the bill and he deferred to a representative of the Chamber of Commerce to answer some of the questions and he was unable to do any better.
- The CS was then assigned to the Economic Development & Community Affairs Policy Council, but dies in this committee.
- This bill had no companion in the Senate, but the text of this bill appeared later in session in both **HB 7149** and **SB 956**.

ELECTION LAW

The League supports measures to advocate for fair methods of financing political campaigns.

Several bills were filed regarding early voting changes: **SB 472** (Sen. Aronberg), **SB 898** (Sen. Smith), **SB 990** (Sen. Rich), **SB 1098** (Sen. Joyner), **SB 1930** (Sen. Lawson), **SB 2204** (Sen. Siplin) and **HB 31** (Rep. Gibbons), **HB 837** (Rep. Fitzgerald), **HB 1469** (Rep. G. Thompson), **HB 207** (Rep. Clarke-Reed), and **HB 475** (Rep. Williams). The most common issues for early voting included extending hours, adding more locations to the acceptable locations list, providing supervisor of elections with more flexibility to choose locations and times, and establishing a board to review early voting. Despite overwhelming support from election groups

(including the League), the Supervisor of Elections Association, the Secretary of State, the Governor and other groups, none of these bills were ever heard in a single committee.

SB 264 – required supervisor’s of elections to issue voter information cards. The League has no position on this bill.

- Filed by Senator Joyner (D, 18)
- March 11th - passed unanimously as a CS by the Ethics & Elections Committee.
- March 25th passed unanimously from the Judiciary Committee.
- April 27th passed the Senate 40-0.
- Died in House when referred to Committee on Governmental Affairs Policy on May 1st.

HB 133

- Filed by Rep. Gibson (D, 15) as companion for **SB 264**.
- Referred to the House Governmental Affairs Policy Committee, but was never placed on the agenda.

SB 216 - prohibits the use of public funds by a local government for electioneering communications concerning an issue, referendum, or amendment that is subject to a vote by the electors. Provides execution for educational materials and unlike past versions of this bill do not prohibit any local government official from taking a position on an issue.

- Filed by Sen. Justice (D, 16).
- Referred to Ethics and Elections, Community Affairs, and Judiciary.
- Recently, some local Leagues have been disappointed in these extravagant expenditures taking a position on an issue which is supposed to be being decided by the voters. While we support the issue of education, the use of public funds to try to sway the outcome of

such a campaign violates many League principles.

- March 18th passed the Ethics and Elections Committee 8-1.
 - League Legislative Advocate Heather Walker spoke at this hearing about the resolution of the constitutional issues from past version by not prohibiting local governments from taking positions, but just restricting how governmental money may be spent.
- March 31st passed unanimously by the Community Affairs Community.
- April 21st passed unanimously by the Judiciary Committee.
- April 27th passed the Senate 36-2; Sen. Lynn and Sen. Smith opposed the bill.
- April 29th passed the House with amendments 94-22.
- April 30th passed the Senate and sent to the Governor.

HB 591 - similar to **SB 216**

- Filed by Rep. Long (D, 51)
- March 25th passed the Government Affairs Policy Committee unanimously.
- Dies in the Committee on Civil Justice & Courts Policy.

SB 564/SJR566 - repeals the “Florida Election Campaign Financing Act” and would remove the requirement of public financing of campaigns of candidates for elective statewide office who agree to campaign spending limits. The joint resolution would go to the ballot for an ultimate vote by the voters to remove this provision from our Constitution. The League opposes repealing the public campaign financing program; we believe that citizen owned elections are the best way to ensure open elections with maximum citizen participation in the political process. We also feel this program helps to hold down campaign costs by

providing an incentive to candidates who chose to abide by spending limits to receive public money and that it serves the electorate by preventing individuals and corporations from gaining undue influence over elected officials.

In Florida in 2005 at the sunset of Session, reforms to Florida's public financing law were snuck through by majority leaders – these “reforms” astronomically raised the spending limits which would still allow a person to qualify for public financing. This has resulted in huge election price tags and a backlash against public financing. However, this could easily be addressed by returning to more modest spending limits that achieve the goals of public financing. Proponents of this legislation are using the events since 2005 as a ruse for why public financing should be eliminated but truly they just don't believe in public financing options or the goals it achieves.

- Filed by Senator Haridopolous (R, 26); companions **HB 81** and **HJR 83** are sponsored by Rep. Hays (R, 25).
- February 17th - both Senate pieces passed by the Ethics & Elections Committee
 - Marilyn Wills and League allies spoke again against the bill.
 - Both Senator Justice and Senator Rich spoke strongly against the bills and several committee members were not in attendance.
- March 12th - both Senate pieces were on the Transportation and Economic Development Appropriations Committee agenda.
 - The League was there to speak against the bills.
 - However, both were given a strong push by the Republicans and gained

momentum as the idea of public campaign financing was given the tagline as “welfare for politicians.”

- Both the bill and resolution passed unanimously out of this committee.
- March 19th **SJR 566** passed favorably through the Policy & Steering Committee on Ways and Means 11-4.
- March 26th **SB 564** passed unanimously out of the Policy & Steering Committee on Ways and Means, but contained an amendment which would lower the spending caps on the public campaign financing and return the caps to their pre-2005 caps.
- March 29th - **HJR 81** was substituted for **SJR 566** and passed both the Senate and the House to be placed on the ballot in 2010.
 - The tagline “welfare for politicians” continued to resonate in the House and Senate as the bill was taken up.
- March 30th **SB 564** passed on the Senate floor 34-3. This bill ultimately died in Messages to the House.

HB 81 and **HJR 83** are sponsored by Rep. Hays (R, 25). They are identical to their Senate companions.

- February 4th passed by the House Governmental Affairs Policy Committee 8-4 along party lines.
- February 18th passed favorably by House Economic Development & Community Affairs Policy Council 10-5 again along party lines.
- March 12th **HJR 81** passed the Transportation & Economic Development Appropriations

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- Committee 8-5 after debate. **HB 83** passed 8-5 after a CS.
- March 23rd **HJR 81** passed the Full Appropriations Council on Education & Economic Development 13-6. **HB 83** passed unanimously after a committee substitute amendment which would lower the spending caps on the public campaign financing and return the caps to their pre-2005 caps.
 - March 27th **HJR 81** passed on the House floor 80-34 largely down party lines and was sent to the Senate.
 - March 29th **HJR 81** was substituted for **SJR 566** and passed the Senate 29-11 on March 30th.
 - This proposed constitutional amendment will now appear on the ballot in 2010.

SB 956 - known as the Ethics and Election Committee's election reform package, The Senate Ethics and Elections Committee chair, Sen. Alexander (R, 17), originally filed **SB 956**, as a shell bill.

- March 31st - because of numerous calls about this bill to the sponsor and other committee members, the Ethics and Elections Committee meeting was canceled and committee staff spent the week revising the bill language. The League met with staff several times to discuss problems with the bill language.
- April 7th - **SB 956** was placed on the Senate Ethics and Elections agenda again, but the new language was not released in time for the bill to be heard at that meeting.
- April 14th - Senator Diaz la Portilla (R, 36) released an Committee Substitute for SB 956 that had all the problematic language previously seen and so much more.
 - The new **SB 956** severely restricts third party voter

registration efforts by requiring onerous registration, a submission of all completed forms with 48 hours to the SoE's office and imposes severe civil penalties for the sponsoring organization and the individual as well possible criminal penalties.

- It removes senior ID cards and neighborhood association cards as acceptable forms of ID to register to vote and as approved identification forms when voting.
- It changes the voter registration process to require all who submit applications by mail to go to the SoE's office and show proper ID to verify their registration or be forced to vote a provisional ballot.
- It changes voting rules to require anyone who changes address within 28 days of an election to vote by provisional ballot. It also requires all voters who do not verify their registration to vote a provisional ballot.
- The bill gutted the citizen initiative process. It requires all petitions to be submitted within 45 days, which is hardship for volunteer gathered petitions. Makes petitions only good for 2 years and allows for an unlimited revocation period. This bill also has all the problematic limitations on paid petition gathering previously seen in **HB 497**.
- This bill created a roving 100 no solicitation zone and eliminates all legal voter

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- protection activities at polling places. And it eliminates media access to early and voting day polling places to report on problems or shows the energy of the election process.
- The bill weakened campaign finance rules by removing the prohibition on leadership funds, allowing parties to make unlimited transfers o campaigns for office cost and mailers, exempting polls done for recruiting purposes from disclosure requirements and allowing political committees registered in other states to not file Florida spending disclosure reports. There were other little nuggets that undermine democracy and civic participation in this bill.
 - April 16th – the bill was heard in the Senate Ethics & Elections Committee during a late afternoon meeting, the League Legislative Advocate, Heather Walker, testified about the constitutional issues with further restricting voter ID's and placing onerous burdens on 3rd party voter registration efforts; other groups coordinated so that all the problematic parts of this bill would be addressed, but after five citizens testified, testimony was restricted to three minutes a person. Despite rigorous questions of the sponsor and others supporting the bill by Sen. Rich (D, 34), Sen. Justice (D, 16), and Sen. Joyner (D, 18), the bill passed out of committee on a 5-3 vote.
 - While groups were testifying against this bill in the Senate committee hearing, the House gave notice that the companion bill, **HB 1749**, had been issued at 4pm that day and would be heard at 8am the next morning in the Economic Development and Community Affairs Policy Council.
 - The 4:30 notice on the 16th was the first time House members were shown the bill, but they were in session at that time and did not leave chambers until 9:30pm. Most committee members had less than 12 hours to read and understand this complicated and extensive election reform proposal. The League offered to meet with any committee members to discuss and explain the provisions of this bill and had the opportunity to talk to three members before the committee hearing the next morning.
 - April 17th - the League with several other groups interested in protecting voter rights arrived for the committee meeting ready to testify.
 - At the committee Rep. Hukill (R, 28) spent about 25 minutes explaining the bill and answering a few questions about content. As the committee was preparing to accept public testimony Rep. Carroll called the question.
 - The chair, Rep. Murzin (R, 2) allowed a local Supervisor of Elections to speak for about one minute and one public interest organization started to testify and was cut off after 30 seconds. Then Rep. Schenck (R, 44) pointed out to the chair that calling the question ended the opportunity or public
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- testimony, so the rest of the speakers were told to submit written comments after the committee voted on the bill. The committee then had 6 minute total of debate allowed on the bill before they voted to pass it out of committee and to the House floor on a strict party-line vote.
- There are several differences between the House and Senate versions:
 - the House includes a resign to run provision;
 - it includes a prohibition on the Governor extending early voting hours without declaring a state of emergency. And it requires SoEs to keep the same early voting sites for the general election instead of changing to accommodate needs;
 - the House version goes further on the advice prohibition in the no solicitation zone to exclude not just legal but any advice; and
 - it also delays voting machine compliance for disabled voters under HAVA until 2014.
 - April 20th – **SB 956** was referred to the Rules Committee.
 - April 21st – the Senate President took the unusual step to issue a reference correction removing **SB956** from the Rules Committee, where it was expected to die, and placing it in the Policy & Steering Committee on Governmental Operations, chaired by Sen. Haridopolous (R, 26), who was expected to allow the bill to be withdrawn and sent directly to the Senate floor.
 - April 24th – **HB 7149** was placed on the House Special Order calendar for a 2nd reading. The bill was temporarily postponed to allow for negotiations to remove problematic parts, but time expired and the bill was not brought up again when a deal could not be reached that day.
 - April 27th – **SB 956** was withdrawn from the Policy & Steering Committee on Governmental Operation and placed on the Senate calendar for 2nd reading. The bill was never brought up on the Senate floor for consideration.
 - May 2nd – both **SB956** and **HB 7149** were indefinitely postponed and withdrawn from consideration when session was extended until May 8th to address only budget related issues.
- Education in Florida**
- Legislators attempted to reduce the influence of the FCAT scores on the grading of schools during the 2008 legislative session. There was a large education bill passed during the last session, but there were other bills that would modify use of the FCAT that never made it out of committee. While several bills were introduced this session, very little was done in this field other than addressing budget issues.
- The League supports legislation that supports a reliable accountability system for measuring achievement of all students, supports high standards for teacher certification and compensation. And where appropriate we oppose legislation that decreases the role of the state in funding of the public school system or does not fully finance programs mandated by the state.
- On April 24th the Governor’s Office finally applied for a waiver of the restriction that the state maintain state funding levels for education at 2006 levels, because out
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funding for schools has steadily declined. On May 11th Florida received this waiver, which is fortunate because the budget passed by the legislature on May 8th relied heavily on these federal funds to avoid further cuts.

The budget passed by both the house and Senate on May 8th will raise the amount spent per student in kindergarten through 12th grade by \$28, thanks to the more than \$900 million in federal economic stimulus money Florida expects to receive. But the \$6,872 proposed for each student represents an increase only because state lawmakers cut school funding in the middle of this academic year. On average, school districts will get \$256 less per student for 2009-10 than they received two years ago. This budget represents less spent for public education than in any school year since 2002-03. Most lawmakers privately believe they will need to return for a special session this summer, when revised income figures for the State are released and that education could face further cuts at that time.

CIVICS EDUCATION

The League supports legislation which requires civic education in middle school as well as enhancing civic education in high school. The League believes that for our system of representative democracy to be healthy, we need citizens who understand what it means to participate in governing themselves, actually engage in that self-governance, have the knowledge to do it well and appreciate the complexities of the process and understand how it works.

HB 13

Introduced by Rep. McBurney (R, 16) this bill proposed including social studies as a subject tested on the FCAT; it had no companion bill in the Senate.

- March 25th - **HB 13** passed favorably out of the Pre-K – 12 Policy Committee with a unanimous vote.
- April 2nd - **HB 13** was on the PreK – 12 Appropriations Committee agenda, but was temporarily postponed.
- April 23rd – **HB 13** was withdrawn from committee and placed on the House calendar, but never heard. The bill dies when withdrawn indefinitely on May 2nd.

HB 157

This bill introduced by Rep. Kriseman (D, 53) provides requirements for a civics education course that student must successfully complete for middle grades promotion. There was no companion bill in the Senate.

- March 10th - **HB 157** moved favorably out of the Pre-K-12 Policy Committee with a unanimous vote.
- March 15th - the Education Policy Council passed **HB 157** unanimously out of committee.
- March 23rd – The House passed **HB 157** unanimously and sent to the Senate in messages.
- **HB 157** died in Senate messages.
- The content of **HB 157** was attempted to be amended to **SB 1248** a bill about charging student for lost books that the League was not following. The civic requirement portion was not successfully amended, but the portion relating to service training in grades K-12 was successfully amended to **SB 1248**, which is currently with the Governor.

HB 1293

Introduced by Rep. Fresen (R, 111) would further define the criteria for graduation and includes provisions for an alternative diploma (GED). A similar bill, **SB 2654**, was sponsored by Sen. Altman.

- March 18th – **HB 1293** passed out of the Joint Council on appropriations for

Education and Economic Development after much debate on a 7-4 party line vote.

- March 24th - **HB 1293** was considered by the PreK-12 Appropriations Committee; after another contentious debate it passed 5-3.
- March 30th - **HB 1293** passed the House Full Appropriations Council on Education & Economic Development with a 10-7 vote.
- April 7th - **SB 2654** was on the Education Pre-K -12 Committee agenda, but was temporarily postponed.
- April 17th - **SB 2654** was passed by the Education Pre-K -12 Committee 4-2.
- April 20th - **SB 2654** was temporarily postponed in the Senate Education PreK - 12 Committee and the bill died here when session ended.
- April 23rd - **HB 1293** was passed by the House with a 75-42 vote. It was sent to the Senate in messages, where the bill died.

SOCIAL POLICY IN FLORIDA FINANCING AND DELIVERY OF HEALTHCARE

During the 2008 legislative session, the League joined with other groups to promote the "Health Care Consumer's Right to Information Act." Passed by the legislature in 2008, the bill will take transparency an important step forward. LWVF continues to work with the Health Check Coalition on health issues and providing health care to all citizens of Florida.

SB 556

Sen. Gaetz(R, 4) introduced this bill which abolishes the Medicaid Low-Income Pool Council. Rep. Patronis (R, 6) sponsored the companion bill, **HB 285**.

- February 18th - **SB 556** was on the Health Regulation Committee agenda but temporarily postponed.
- March 4th - **SB 556** passed unanimously out of the Health Regulation Committee on March 4th after a Committee Substitute.
- March 19th - **SB 556** passed unanimously out of the Health and Human Services Appropriations Committee.
- March 25th - **HB 285** passed the House Health Care Regulation Policy Committee unanimously after a Committee Substitute to make it identical the Senate bill.
- April 1st - **HB 285** passed the Health & Family Services Policy Council unanimously.
- April 7th - **SB 556** passed the Policy & Steering Committee on Ways and Means with another unanimous vote.
- April 13th - **HB 285** passed by the House Health Care Appropriations Committee unanimously.
- April 15th - **HB 285** passed the Full Appropriations Council on General Government & Health Care 31-0.
- April 22nd - Passes on the House floor 117-0 and is sent to the Senate in Messages.
- April 24th - **SB 556** was placed on the Senate Special Order calendar. **SB 556** was laid on the table and **HB 285** was substituted in its place. **HB 285** passed both the House and Senate chambers and was enrolled on April 27th.

SB 620

Introduced by Sen. Oelrich (R, 14) redefines the term "health facility" to allow additional types of health facilities to receive assistance from a health facility authority. Rep. O-Toole (R, 42) sponsored the companion legislation, **HB 573**.

- February 18th - **SB 620** was moved favorably out of the Health

- Regulation Committee unanimously after a Committee Substitute.
- March 3rd - **SB 620** moved out of both the Community Affairs Committee unanimously. **HB 573** passed the Elder & Family Services Policy Committee after a Committee Substitute.
 - March 18th - **HB 573** passed the Health & Family Services Policy Council unanimously.
 - March 31st - **SB 620** was placed on the Senate Special Order Calendar; **HB 573** passed the House Finance & Tax Committee unanimously.
 - April 14th - **SB 620** passed the Senate unanimously as amended and was sent to the House in messages.
 - April 28th - **SB 620** was substituted for **HB 573** and passed the House unanimously on April 29th. This bill currently awaits the Governor's signature.

H8003. Neither of these bills were ever heard in a committee.

FOR FURTHER INFO:

The newsletter is available at the LWVF's website: <http://www.lwvfla.org/>

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP AND SUPPORT THIS YEAR!

Committees in both chambers heard substantially fewer bills this year. Much of the Legislative attention focused on budget and revenue issues. The League was a leader this year on election law issues and a strong voice for revenue reform. The numerous calls and emails by League members made a distinct impact on several bills and we can all be proud of our efforts.

EQUAL RIGHTS FOR MEN & WOMEN

While not a priority for the League this session because of the unlikelihood of anything significantly happening with this, ERA remains an overall League priority. Once again there is a resolution in the house (**HCR 8003**) and one in the Senate (**SCR 1008**) to ratify the proposed amendment to the United States Constitution relating to equal rights for men and women. Senators Joyner, Rich, Smith and Sobel are sponsoring **SCR 1008** and Representatives Planas is sponsoring

C. Heather Walker, Legislative Advocate

Heather is a Staff Attorney with WildLaw in their Florida Office. WildLaw provides a variety of legal and professional services to communities and grassroots organizations working on environmental issues in the public interest. Heather will be representing the League this session on some of the priority issues and writing and publishing the Capitol Report, as disseminated by the LWVF Tallahassee office.

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