



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF FLORIDA 2024 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

The League of Women Voters of Florida is a **nonpartisan political organization** encouraging active participation in government, working to increase understanding of major policy issues, and advocating for legislative changes and policies for the public good. Members of the League from across Florida have chosen four priority policy areas to focus on during the 2024 legislative session: **voting rights/election reform, reproductive health, education, and gun violence prevention.**

VOTING RIGHTS & ELECTION REFORM

- Over the past few years, Florida's legislature **dramatically raised fines and penalties for third-party voter registration groups like the League** and some have begun vilifying various voter registration drives and agents as bad actors.
- **For democracy to work, it must include all voices.** Civic groups like ours are essential for assisting voters who might not register successfully on their own, or who are more likely to do so only after personal encouragement from a community member. This approach not only leads to greater registration but also leads to greater participation.
- Florida legislators have made many changes to a plethora of election laws over the last several years. Voter registration drives are especially helpful to those who have the hardest time navigating new voting obstacles. **While voter registration drives are especially needed in some communities, they benefit everyone.** Non-partisan voter registration drives have registered tens of thousands of voters in past election cycles, helping ensure that more Americans are in a position to exercise their right and responsibility to vote. Our democracy is strongest when all eligible citizens participate. And to do so, they need to be registered to vote.
- **Please oppose any further efforts to undermine voter registration efforts.**
- Now that we are past the 2022 general election and heading straight towards 2024, all voters who had a vote-by-mail request on file must request a new one.
- Voters will now have to request their mail ballots each general election cycle moving forward rather than every two cycles as has been the case up until now due to changes to state law in 2021 with SB90.
- **We ask funds be allocated to the Division of Elections and local elections officials with requirements that they use every means at their disposal to educate voters about these changes.**

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

- Abortion is healthcare and pregnancy is not risk-free. Therefore, access to safe and legal abortion supports women's health. **Restrictions on abortion in Florida and across the country have created barriers between doctors and patients, putting the pregnant person's health, well-being, and even life at risk. The League believes access to abortion should never be delayed until the pregnant person is in crisis.**
- **Family economic freedom requires safe and legal access to abortion. Without this access, some Florida families will face hardships that impact not only the health and well-being of the family but also the ability to provide for the family.** Research confirms that reliance on the ability to access abortion has contributed to gains for women - in education, economics, employment, professional advancement, and mental and physical health. Further, abortion restrictions will have the greatest impact on those with the least, putting more pressure on these families to make ends meet. Increased state spending will be another result that will negatively impact all Floridians, as the state's ability to solve real problems facing citizens will be diminished.
- The 15-week ban passed in 2022 has been challenged, and a Florida Supreme Court ruling on its constitutionality is imminent. Plaintiffs assert that it violates Floridians' right to privacy, and this is supported by Florida Supreme Court precedence. If the Supreme Court upholds the 15-week ban, a six-week ban, passed in the 2023 legislative session, will go into effect 30 days later. **The harm created by six-week bans in other states has been widely reported. By legislating healthcare, elected politicians have put themselves between patients and their doctors. There are many real problems facing Floridians that the legislature can address to improve lives. Limiting a pregnant person's access to healthcare is not one of them.**

EDUCATION

- The League supports adequate funding of public education. Funds for competitive teacher pay, capital improvement, instructional innovation and resources have dwindled as legislation has shifted billions of taxpayer dollars from Florida's public schools to the state's private schools. **We ask you to oppose efforts to use public funding for the expansion of funding private education, including through voucher programs.** Further, we believe that all state-mandated programs should be fully financed by state funding.
 - **We ask you to support a statewide assessment and accountability system that provides valid data and appropriate intervals to measure student progress for all students and schools that receive public funds directly and indirectly.** Florida's Constitution provides for a uniform, efficient, safe, secure and high-quality school system as the paramount duty of the state. A uniform system should include the same requirements for assessment for any school, public or private, that receives public money. **Billions of taxpayer dollars are now being diverted from public school budgets to private schools that have no accountability. Student achievement in private schools must receive the same scrutiny as there is for public schools, with all required to take the same norm-referenced standardized assessment and results made publicly available. Data should be used to evaluate programs and identify areas where increased support is needed.**
 - **We ask for support in creating higher standards for early childhood education staff and programs.** Research shows that children from low socio-economic status families have lower levels of language and communication skills compared to children from a higher socio-economic status. When low socio-economic status children enter kindergarten, they often don't have the language, communication and literacy skills expected of them.
 - **Gag orders and book bans have been imposed that keep students from understanding those who are different from themselves and marginalized students are reporting that they no longer feel safe in schools. The League is extremely concerned that such legislation is polarizing our communities and discouraging the most highly qualified teachers and university faculty from seeking employment in Florida's education community.**
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GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

- **For the second year in a row, firearms are the leading cause of death for children in America. This is data from the CDC. Firearms have now surpassed motor vehicle accidents as the cause of death for children.**
- **Firearm deaths are most often suicides, not homicides. (62%) Access to a firearm increases the likelihood that a suicide attempt will be lethal. Firearms are the most lethal and most common method of suicide in the U.S. More people who die by suicide use a gun than all other methods combined. Suicide attempts with a firearm are almost always fatal, while those with other methods are less likely to kill. Nine out of ten people who survive a suicide attempt do not go on to die by suicide later. (*Means Matter, Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health*)**
- **Unsecured guns contribute to these statistics. Additionally, unsecured guns are stolen, often out of cars, and then used to commit crimes. The FBI has found that 76% of perpetrators of school shootings obtained their weapon(s) from unlocked guns at home or at the home of family or friends.**
- **With these facts in mind, the League asks you to strengthen our child access prevention laws, states with strong child access prevention laws have lower gun death rates. Model laws such as Ethan's Law in CT, should be reviewed and adapted for Florida.**
- **We ask you to increase awareness and application of our existing Risk Protection Order law. There is federal funding available (\$15 million) from the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act that Florida did not access. Florida is the ONLY state with an existing RPO law that did not accept the funding and is only 1 of 5 states and territories to not do so.**
- **Legislative action should be taken to provide funding for public awareness/education on safe storage along with incentives for buying gun locks and safes. Hold the line on any expansion of ease of access to guns in our state, such as lowering the age to purchase a long gun (now at 21) and open carry or changing the waiting period/background check wording (House Bill 17 – this is what is known as the “Charleston Loophole.” We have it closed, why open it?)**
- **We also ask you to protect sensitive places involved in elections from concealed carry. More than polling places, the Supervisor of Elections office and any place where vote tally occurs should be designated as no guns allowed.**