

Capitol Report 2017

Week ending April 28, 2017

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Overview

The Florida legislature has completed its eighth week of the 2017 legislative session. There is now one week left before the end of the regular session. Common Cause Florida has a number of priority issues that are seeing action in legislative committees, the Senate and in the House of Representatives.

House and Senate leaders agreed on the broad framework of an \$83 billion state budget this week, potentially clearing the way for the legislative session to end on time. The budget deal includes across the board pay raises for state workers, \$800 million to begin work on a reservoir south of Lake Okeechobee and more money for state universities, all key Senate priorities. The two chambers also agreed not to collect more property taxes from Floridians for public schools and to spend \$200 million to expand charter schools, both of which are priorities for the House.

Left out of the budget deal are Governor Scott's priorities that include substantial funding for Visit Florida, the state's tourism promotion agency and Enterprise Florida, the state's economic development agency. Both programs now face severe budget cuts which raises the possibility that Governor Scott may consider vetoing all or part of the budget.

Redistricting

A bad redistricting bill, [HB 953](#), that Common Cause Florida opposed, was amended this week in the House [Judiciary Committee](#). The bill, by [Representative Larry Ahern](#), would have required a court to provide for an expedited hearing and ruling in a scenario where a challenge was brought to the state's legislative or congressional districts. The amendment took out the language in the bill that was of concern to Common Cause Florida. The bill now defines a "year of apportionment" and allows candidates to run in their old districts if a legislative or congressional district map is being challenged.

On Friday, the House substituted the amended version of HB 953 for [Senate Bill 352](#) and passed the bill by a 116 to 0 vote. The amended bill now goes back to the Senate. Common Cause Florida is now neutral on the bill.

Open Meetings

In this final two weeks of the legislative session, a bad bill dealing with open public meetings has emerged that poses a threat to Florida's tradition of government in the sunshine. The bill, [HB 843](#), is on the House special order calendar. It would allow two members of the same government board to discuss public business in private, without public notice and with no minutes taken of what was said. Common Cause Florida has been

a long-time supporter of government in the sunshine and is opposed to HB 843. There's a similar bill, SB 914, currently awaiting a final vote in the Senate.

Elections

[HB 1325](#) was passed this week by the full House. The bill would allow candidates to pay qualifying fees by cashier's check. It also prohibits elected officials from serving as poll watchers and gives Supervisors of Election the option to publish sample ballots in a newspaper or mail them to registered voters. The bill allows the use of touch screen voting machines as long as they produce a paper record to be used for recounts. The bill also restricts the ability of the courts to extend poll hours to just instances where "extraordinary circumstances exist to justify the extension."

[HB 105](#), a bill that requires county elections officials to notify Florida voters if their signatures on vote-by-mail ballots don't match their registration forms is still awaiting final passage by the House.

Several other elections bills are working their way through the Senate Committee process. [SB 726](#), would give Supervisors of Election the option of allowing Florida voters to hand deliver vote-by-mail ballots to an early voting site. The bill was passed this week by the [Rules Committee](#). A comparable bill, [HB 521](#), was passed unanimously by the full House and is now in the Senate. That bill **requires** all Supervisors to allow voters to hand deliver vote-by-mail ballots to early voting sites.

Two bills, [HB 707](#) and [HB 709](#), were passed by the full House this week and are now in the Senate. The bills direct the Secretary of State to enter into agreements with other states to better maintain the statewide voter registration system. Two similar bills, [SB 1070](#) and [SB 1072](#), are also moving through the Senate Committee process.

Legislation

Common Cause Florida is currently tracking a number of bills that have been filed for the 2017 legislative session. They include:

- [HJR 1](#) and [SJR 482](#) – Proposes a constitutional amendment to place a 12-year term limit on Supreme Court Justices and District Court Judges.
- [HB 41](#) and [SB 774](#) – This bill would create an independent commission responsible for legislative and congressional redistricting.
- [HJR 51](#) and [SJR 74](#) – These joint resolutions would propose a constitutional amendment that, if passed by voters, would automatically restore the voting rights of non-violent ex-felons, once they have completed the terms of their sentences.
Common Cause Florida supports these bills.
- [HB 53](#) and [SB 270](#) and [SB 934](#) – These bills would statutorily provide for the automatic restoration of voting rights and some other civil rights to former felons.
- [SB 72](#) – This bill would allow driver license applications and identification card applications to serve as voter registration applications. *Common Cause Florida supports this bill.*

- [SB 80](#) – This is a public records bill that has been amended to address frivolous public records lawsuits. **Common Cause Florida now supports this bill.**
- [HB 105](#) and [SB 544](#) and [SB 954](#) – These bills require Supervisors of Elections to allow submission of an affidavit to cure signature discrepancies on vote-by-mail ballots. **Common Cause Florida supports these bills.**
- [HB 117](#) and [SB 426](#) – Requires an independent audit of voting systems in random precincts before certification of an election rather than after.
- [HJR 121](#) and [SJR 1098](#) – Provides for legislative review of judicial rulings declaring a legislative act void. **Common Cause Florida opposes this bill.**
- [SJR 130](#), [SJR 132](#), [SJR 134](#), [SJR136](#), [HJR 187](#), [HJR 271](#), [HJR 571](#), [HJR 721](#) – Dealing with the selection and duties of county officers.
- [SJR 138](#) – Proposed constitutional amendment requiring Supervisors of Elections be elected.
- [HB 159](#) and [SB 758](#) – Gives a candidate an additional 48 hours to pay a qualifying fee if for some reason a check is returned.
- [HB 207](#) and [SB 1470](#) – These bills would prohibit agency Inspector Generals from receiving a bonus for work performance.
- [SB 224](#) – Related to voting assistance, poll watching and voter solicitation.
- [HB 231](#) and [SB 366](#) – Provides for nonpartisan elections for state attorneys and public defenders.
- [SB 242](#) and [HB 311](#) – Providing for the election of the president by popular vote.
- [SB 246](#) and [HB 163](#) – This is the compromise public records bill that was agreed to last year as an alternative to Senator Steube’s bad public records bill.
- [SB 306](#) – This bill would raise the conflict of interest bar for the legislature and prohibit legislators from voting on issues that benefit themselves.
- [SB 352](#) – This is a redistricting bill that allows legislators to run for election in their current districts even while those districts are being challenged in court. **Common Cause Florida is now neutral on this bill.**
- [HB 409](#) – requires Supervisors of Election to establish an election alert system informing voters of changes in polling.
- [HB 445](#) – Provides public records exemption for certain voter registration information.
- [HB 479](#) and [SB 880](#) – These bills provide clear definitions of government abuse, fraud and waste and require all government agencies to establish internal controls aimed at preventing those problems.
- [SB 508](#) and [HB 519](#) – Relating to automatic tabulating equipment and recounts.
- [HB 521](#) and [SB 726](#) – Allows an absent elector to vote by personally delivering a vote by mail ballot to an early voting site.
- [HJR 565](#) – Provides a constitutional amendment to automatically restore a felon’s right to vote three years after completion of sentence.
- [SB 598](#) – Relating to provisional ballots.
- [SB 602](#) and [HB 817](#) – Allows preregistered voters to vote in the presidential preference primary if they turn 18 before the general election.

- [HB 707](#) and [HB 709](#) and [SB 1070](#) and [SB 1072](#) – These bills direct the Secretary of State to enter into agreements with other states to maintain the statewide voter registration system.
- [HB 733](#) – Revises provisions for “curing” provisional and mail-in ballots.
- [HJR 811](#) and [HJR 882](#) – Constitutional amendment that would make the Secretary of State an elected office.
- [SB 862](#) – Provides for a public records exemption for preregistered voters who are minors.
- [HB 897](#) – Allows local governments to post legal notices on their websites.
- [SB 914](#) and [HB 919](#) – Allows two or more local officials to meet as long as no action is taken and no public business is discussed.
- [SM 944](#) and [HM 825](#) – Memorial urging Congress to remove obstacles that prevent states from ensuring that noncitizens are not allowed to vote.
- [SB 952](#) – Revises the resign-to-run law to require an officer who qualifies for federal public office to resign from the office he or she presently holds if the terms, or any part thereof, run concurrently.
- [SB 990](#) – requires local governments to hold elections in odd or even years on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.
- [HB 1057](#) and [SB 1178](#) – Campaign finance bills that prohibit transfers from political committee or ECO to another and requires quarterly reporting instead of monthly reporting.
- [SB 1160](#) – Specifies what payment can be used to qualify for election.
- [HB 1325](#) – This is an elections bill that expands the use of voter interface devices, specifies the forms of payment that can be used to qualify for election and prohibits a court from extending the official closing time of the polls unless extraordinary circumstances exist.
- [HJR 7001](#) and [HB 7003](#) – This joint resolution and bill propose a six-year ban on former legislators, elected officials and appointed officials from lobbying state government after leaving office.
- [HB 7021](#) and [HB 7023](#) – HB 7021 would require local elected officials in cities with more than \$10 million in annual revenues for three consecutive years to fill out more-detailed personal financial disclosure information, known as a [Form 6](#). It also creates a local government lobby registry system. HB 7023 creates a trust fund to pay for the lobby registry.
- [HB 7083](#) – This bill includes the six-year ban on lobbying and also prevents public officials from accepting or soliciting legal or other professional work with entities regulated by the state.

Capitol Report will be filed weekly when the legislature holds committee meetings and during the legislative session. We will let you know if there is any recommended action that can be taken by Common Cause members that would be helpful to our lobbying efforts.

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