

Legislative UPDATE By Lori Fayhee

Locally, the Lee County School District (LCSD) Board voted on January 23rd, in a 6-1 vote, to hold a special election on May 15th to ask voters to increase sales tax in Lee County by a half-penny. The dissenting vote was from Board member Melisa Giovannelli. The issue is less about the tax hike and more about how much money might be spent just to pose the question to voters. The minimum cost of this special election would be \$888K, without providing for mail-in ballots. Lee County Commissioners have expressed a preference for putting the referendum question on the ballot at either the August state primary or at the November general election at the cost of \$50.

The News-Press reported that Superintendent Greg Adkins and Board chair, Cathleen Morgan, each told reporters that they consider the cost of the special election an 'investment' that will return more than \$500 million for school buildings and other improvements. During the LCSD Board meetings public comment, constituents questioned the Board's fiscal responsibility of spending nearly one million dollars for a special election and requested that the District perform an external Capital Funds audit to prove good stewardship of public funds and provide more transparency to the public.

Included on the agenda of the Lee County Board of County Commissioners meeting, to be held on Tuesday, February 6, at 9:30 am, will be a discussion of the School Board Resolution. Interested citizens will be afforded three minutes at the beginning of the meeting to discuss any item on the agenda that day.

THE FLORIDA FEDERATION OF REPUBLICAN WOMEN (FFRW) RELEASED THEIR 2018 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES AS FOLLOWS:

FFRW SUPPORTS:

PREVENTION OF TEXTING WHILE DRIVING BILLS

CS/SB 90 Perry - Use of Wireless Communications; HB 33 Toledo and Slosberg - Texting while driving. The bill moved through the first House and Senate committees during the opening week of Session.

PREVENTION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING BILLS

HB 167 Spano - Provides for Civil Action against Human Traffickers/prevention of Human Trafficking Act. The first Reading was on Tuesday, January 09th. SB 1044 Book - Provides for Civil Action against Human Traffickers. SB 96 Steube - Provides education in schools regarding Human Trafficking.

HOMELESS VETERANS AND DISABLED VETERANS

Appropriation - HB 2213 Byrd, 5 Star appropriation - currently \$796,250 for Homeless Vets. The first Reading was on Tuesday, January 9th.

INCREASING OPEN, HONEST GOVERNMENT

SB 432 Lee/CS HB Raburn - Community Redevelopment- Prohibits a person from lobbying a community redevelopment agency until he or she has registered as a lobbyist with that agency

HUMANE TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

HB 473 Leek and Brodue/SB 952 Steube - Animal cruelty definitions - overloading, overdriving, tormenting, depriving of sustenance or shelter, unnecessary mutilating or killing, carrying in a cruel manner in a vehicle and prohibits certain people from owning animals. HB 473 has been added to Judiciary Committee agenda of Tuesday, January 23, 2018.

HB 153 Porter/SB 132 Steube - Guidelines for animal shelters and preventing importing animals to FL. HB 153 first Reading was on Tuesday, January 9th.

SB 222 Bean/HB 6021 Stevenson - Extends Guardian ad litem DSO (Direct Support Organization)

HB107 Fant & Williamson/328 Baxley - Veteran's ID SB 1000 Grimsley/HB 527 Magar -under Keeps Homestead Exemption certain circumstance for surviving spouses of deceased, disabled veterans.

SB 748 Grimsley/HB 881 Burton - Back the Blue Assistance Program

FFRW SUPPORTS CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION COMMISSION ISSUES - (1) Repeal of Blaine amendment forbidding using state money for religious groups and (2) the elimination of Greyhound Racing

FFRW OPPOSES

CS/HB 9 Metz, Co-sponsor Fant/SB 308 Bean. Steube - Rule of Law Adherence - Sanctuary Cities. Passed the full house after much debate. HB 61 Watson, HB 430 Thurston - Restoration of Civil Rights - OPPOSE - With a 40%+ recidivism rate, plea bargains affecting sentences and many exemptions not covered such as armed robbery and gang-related activity, FFRW believes each case must be decided individually for public safety. HB 61 first Reading was on Tuesday, January 9th.