



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
OF NORTH CAROLINA**

**LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

**Final Status Update of NC League of Women Voters Issues  
in 2008 General Assembly**

**CAMPAIGN AND ELECTION REFORM**

SB-1263 Election Law Amendments was approved. This bill:

Creates an Election and Campaign Finance Oversight Committee. This committee is a permanent body (will likely meet monthly or bi-monthly) that consists of nine senators and nine representatives. The committee will be charged with examining all elements of campaign finance and election law and will provide a great opportunity to study Voter-Owned Elections extensively.

Reauthorizes Instant Run-off Voting. Allows up to ten local elections (cities, counties, or school boards) to use Instant Run-off Voting per year in 2009, 2010, and 2011. It required local approval before enacting, a coordinated education campaign on how IRV works, and School of Government implementation of criteria used to guide IRV's implementation.

Judicial Public Financing Changes. This section removes the 21 day ban on fundraising by non-participating candidates. (*From Chase Foster, NC Voters for Clean Elections*)

**HEALTH CARE**

The Health Care Policy Council bills encountered tough opposition in the last weeks of the legislative session. At the end the bills had been weakened significantly by opponents, and in House/Senate negotiations the bill were allowed to die. The concept of the bill was rolled into the NC Institute of Medicine Access to Health Care Study Group <http://ncleg.net/Sessions/2007/Bills/House/HTML/H2688v2.html> with the Institute of Medicine appointing the members of the Study Group. Thanks to House Speaker Hackney, Representative Insko's hard work and the intent of the original Health Care Policy Council were preserved. A permanent study group has been created which is to make recommendations to the General Assembly on moving us forward to a system where all North Carolinians have health insurance. (*From Evelin Brinich*)

**DEATH PENALTY**

Racial Justice – the Racial Justice Act (House Bill 1291) never made it out of committee in the Senate. This bill would have allowed defendants in capital murder cases to challenge their prosecutions on the grounds of racial bias. (*NC Justice Center*)

## **THE BUDGET AND REFUNDABLE EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT**

The total budget (General Fund) is \$21.3 billion. Of this money, \$11.4 billion is for education (public schools, community colleges, and UNC System combined), \$4.9 billion is for health and human services, \$2 billion is for justice and public safety (including prisons and courts), and \$460 million is for natural and economic resources.

The state Earned Income Tax Credit will be raised from 3.5% to 5% of a taxpayer's federal EITC, but it won't go into effect until the 2009 tax year.

## **IMMIGRATION**

House Joint Resolution 2237, No Postsecondary Education/Illegal Aliens, would have allowed the House to consider a bill to prohibit undocumented students from attending North Carolina community colleges or universities. HJR 2237 was not heard in the House or Senate.

House Bill 2717, Access to Higher Education, would have prohibited North Carolina community colleges and universities from considering a person's immigration status in making admissions determinations. HB 2717 was not heard in the House or Senate.

## **ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT**

In the final hours of its legislative session, the North Carolina General Assembly passed a bill establishing the Legislative Study Commission on Television Access to State Government. The Commission will likely explore policies to televise the legislature and other state branches in the throes of the political process. The legislation carries with it \$100,000 for the Commission to commence studying possibilities. (*NC Open Government Coalition*)

## **ENVIRONMENT**

One of bills receiving final approval is H2499, Drought/ Water Management Recommendations, which will help strengthen North Carolina's drought response.

Another bill approved is S1967, Improve Coastal Stormwater Management, a compromise bill that strengthens coastal stormwater rules.

Three bad ideas – hardened structures on our beaches, indefinite reconstruction of hog lagoons, and promotion of offshore oil drilling – all died in committee at the end of session. (*NC Conservation Network*)

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This is the final LWVNC Legislative Update for 2008. Additional information can be found at the League website: [www.lwvnc.org](http://www.lwvnc.org). The Legislative Update is compiled by Beverly Kawalec, Advocacy Chair of the NC League of Women Voters ([bevkwalec@bellsouth.net](mailto:bevkwalec@bellsouth.net)). If you wish to unsubscribe, please email Patty Dale at [daleph55@gmail.com](mailto:daleph55@gmail.com).