



St. Lucie County Legislative Update

Inside this issue:

New Laws	1
Hydraulic Fracturing	1
Corizon	2
Agency Request	2

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Our Mission....

To provide service, infrastructure and leadership necessary to advance a safe and sustainable community, maintain a high quality of life, and protect the natural environment for all our citizens.

TWENTY SEVEN NEW LAWS ON OCT. 1

Starting October 1, 27 new laws will take effect in Florida. One law deals with restitution when government is the victim. The new law would restrict government from obtaining restitution to cases where the government experiences actual damages as opposed to provide services in response to a criminal situation. The law also requires that when someone is convicted of bribery or misuse of public office, they must make restitution and perform 250 hours of community service work besides any other sentence.

Another law relates to human trafficking that involves prostitution. The law would increase the first violation to a first degree misdemeanor from a second degree misdemeanor, a second offense from a first degree misdemeanor to a third degree felony and a third offense from a third degree felony to a second degree felony.

Another bill would allow law enforcement to issue civil citations as opposed to arresting juveniles who have committed up to three misdemeanors.

Another law would allow people to get compensation if a government project damages their property.

The Legislature also adopted a law making it illegal for someone to sexually cyberharass another person by publishing a sexually explicit photo of another person without their consent.

HYDRAULIC FRACTURING

Rep. Ray Rodrigues, R-Estero, and **Sen. Garret Richter**, R-Naples, have filed proposals to pre-empt the power to regulate oil and gas exploration activities, including fracking, to the state.

Rodrigues and Richter pushed similar proposals last session, but the measures died when the House abruptly adjourned sine die during a standoff between the two chambers over health care funding.

SB 318 and **HB 191** would both strip local governments of the authority to regulate “the exploration, development, production, processing, storage, and transportation of oil and gas.”

But the bills would also institute a moratorium on fracking until the state adopted regulations to guide the practice, require companies disclose the chemicals they use during the fracking procedure, and require a study on the fracking’s environmental impacts and potential risk.

Click the links below



Watch Session Live:**Connect with
St. Lucie County!****Mark Satterlee**

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PHONE**(772) 462-1100****TDD****(772) 462-1428****FAX****(772) 462-2131****e-mail****fogartyn@stlucieco.org****website****www.stlucieco.org****CORIZON HEALTH CARE**

Corizon Health Care, one of the private health providers that service Florida's prisons, has fired two top level managers as it attempts to recover from a series of scandals and failed audits that endangered its \$1.2 billion relationship with the Department of Corrections, reports Arek Sarkissian of The Gainesville Sun.

In mid-June, Corizon appointed its southeast chief executive officer, JM Courtney, as interim replacement for John Dallas, who was relieved of his role as vice president overseeing the DOC contract.

Corizon also brought in Dr. Renee Fallhowe as chief clinical officer for its southeast region, which includes health wards within prisons that stretch from the Panhandle to Port St. Lucie.

The new leaders were brought in after DOC fined Corizon \$67,500 in May for failing a series of performance audits conducted over the past year. The problems ranged from improperly filing paperwork to distributing psychotropic drugs to inmates without evaluations.

The poor audits prompted DOC Secretary Julie Jones to begin looking for possible new vendors for the \$229-million-a-year, five year contract, originally due to expire by 2018. DOC said Jones plans to release an Invitation to Negotiate in December.

Corizon and Wexford Health Sources, the other private prison health care company, have faced consistent staffing shortfalls, among other problems identified in state audits.

ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCIES PRESENT THEIR BUDGETS

Departments charged with protecting and overseeing the use of Florida's environment and natural resources presented their budget requests for the 2016-17 fiscal year to the **House Agriculture and Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee** Thursday, Sept. 17, 2015.

The **Department of Environmental Protection** requested \$1.5 billion, a 4 percent (\$59.7 million) increase from current year's budget.

That increase came mostly from requests for more capital outlays -- improvements to physical structures and equipment -- while the agency actually recommended the Legislature reduce its operating budget by roughly \$5.5 million.

DEP's major priorities included \$176 million for the Florida Everglades (including \$25 million to develop "basin management action plans" to reduce water pollution), \$63 million for land acquisition, including \$25 million for Florida Forever, and \$45.5 million for state parks.

DEP also suggested the Legislature appropriate \$100 million for water projects, split between project to protect Florida's springs and water supply management.

The **Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumers Services** requested \$1.6 billion, including \$244 million in new items for water planning and projects and \$7 million to develop and implement agricultural best management practices. The agency also asked for \$2.4 million to increase firefighter pay.

The **Florida Wildlife Commission** requested \$359 million for wildlife management, while the **Department of Citrus** asked for \$51.2 million to market citrus products and fund agricultural research.