



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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LWVSC Action Alert: Promoting Transparency, Openness and Accountability in State Government

February 2009

ACTION REQUESTED

-- Contact your state representative and senator: Phone, write a letter or send an email (if you are certain your legislator uses email).

Main Message: Please vote to support legislation that will ensure that votes are recorded in both houses of the S.C. General Assembly.

1. Ask your senator to vote for S. 11, the 2009 Spending Accountability Act.

2. Ask your representative to vote for H. 3047, the 2009 Spending Accountability Act, the companion House bill.

Tell them:

- Citizens have a right to know how legislators voted on all the issues. If an issue is important enough to be debated on floor of the House, then it is important enough for the public to see how each legislator voted on the issue.
- According to the S.C. Policy Council, an independent think-tank, of all legislation passed in 2008, the House only recorded 8% of those votes, and the Senate recorded 1%.
- Support bills that would put recorded roll call voting in statutory form rather than merely a House or Senate rule. A rule is managed by legislators and can be changed every two years; a bill signed into law is managed and accountable to voters who elect their representatives.

-- If your legislators are not on the following lists, please ask them to cosponsor and support these bills.

-- If your legislators are on the list of cosponsors, please thank them.

Cosponsors to H.3047, 2009 Spending Accountability Act: Haley, Ballentine, Wylie, Stringer, R.L. Brown, Kirsh, E.H. Pitts, Miller, G.R. Smith, Whipper, Huggins, Frye, Knight, Daning, J.E. Smith, Rice, Anderson, G.M. Smith, Phillips, Clyburn, Hart, Bowen, T.R. Young, Simrill, Duncan, Gunn, Agnew, Viers, Cobb-Hunter, King, Allison, Nanney, Bingham, Hamilton, Toole, Hiott, Millwood, Stavrinakis

Cosponsors to Senate Companion Bill, S.11: Peeler, Cromer, Massey, Bryant, Fair, Ryberg, Hayes, Campbell, Mulvaney, Rose, Rankin, Davis, Courson, Thomas, Alexander, Cleary, Bright, Campsen, Shoopman, S. Martin, Sheheen, Elliott, Lorie

BACKGROUND

Recently, lawmakers in both the S. C. House and Senate passed new rules for voting on the record. These requirements are a good first step toward ensuring that the people of South Carolina have the tools to hold

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our government accountable. However, they are not enough. Prior to this rule change, South Carolina was one of five states that do not require lawmakers to record their votes when passing bills. South Carolina had the nation's most burdensome requirement for requesting a recorded vote among the five states that do not require them.

In the House, recorded votes are now required for:

- Second reading of contested bills (where debate occurs, five members can make a bill contested)
- Amended third readings (Final passage of a bill)
- Conference committee reports (when the House and Senate compromise)
- Senate amendments (bills that are amended by the Senate that come back to the House for approval)
- Every section of the budget where just one legislator calls the question (asked for a recorded vote)

In the Senate, recorded votes are now required for all of these matters except for each section of the state budget.

This recent rule change gives us an unprecedented number of votes on the record (though uncontested bills are not included). But when these roll call voting bills are signed into law, we will have a statutory requirement for every bill to be on the record and ensure that legislators cannot change the rules in future legislative sessions.

FIND YOUR LEGISLATORS

Go to <http://www.scstatehouse.net/cgi-bin/zipcodesearch.exe> or to the LWVSC Legislative Action Center, <http://www.capwiz.com/lwvsc/state/main/?state=SC>. Type your zip code in the space provided.

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT LEGISLATION AND THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

To see a copy of a bill, go to http://www.scstatehouse.net/cgi-bin/web_bh10.exe. Type the bill's number in the box provided, e.g., 3047.

LWVSC Advocacy 101 Handbook is an essential tool for navigating the S.C. legislative process. It can be downloaded at <http://www.lwvsc.org/files/lwvadvocacymanual.pdf>.

LWV POSITIONS WHICH SUPPORT THIS ACTION

LWVUS position on the *Citizen's Right to Know/Citizen Participation*:

“The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active participation at all levels of government. The League further believes that governmental bodies must protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible” (LWVUS Impact on Issues 2006-2008, p. 20).

LWVSC position on *Structure of State Government*:

“The League of Women Voters of South Carolina supports “A General Assembly that is more efficient, effective, accountable and responsive, including provision for more roll call votes” (LWVSC Agenda for Action 2007-2009, p. 20).

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