

## NOVEMBER 5<sup>TH</sup> PUBLIC POLICY REPORT from Diane Schrier

Public Policy has been very active during the last few weeks, now that the legislatures are back in session. Friday, Oct. 28th, the Governor signed a bill giving charter schools expanded powers by increasing enrollment and grade levels and consolidating schools. The Charter School Review Board was also deleted, although a new system will eventually be in place. By extension, they will receive expanded public monies which will come out of already cash strapped public schools. In Ohio, SB5 strips rights from K-20 teachers and ends collective bargaining for all public employees by the administrative change of making them management. Florida also is considering a bill (HB 21) that creates a career-technical education high school diploma. Governor Scott has also floated ideas that STEM programs should be greatly encouraged at the University level to the detriment of Liberal Arts courses. Florida is undertaking a study to determine minimum per-student funding to meet constitutional requirements.

The US Dept. of Justice has approved 76 provisions of Florida's election reform law. The remaining sections, that have not yet been approved are: requiring 3<sup>rd</sup> party registration groups to submit voter registration cards within 48 hours or face stiff fines, discontinue name or registration changes at the polls, limit the number of early voting days and make it harder to verify voter signatures on petitions. A teacher in Florida has been assessed thousands of dollars for not getting in the voter cards that she had her 12<sup>th</sup> grade students sign within the 48 hour limit. Several states have been creating laws to restrict voting rights in the name of fraud. However, the actual statistics are 44 one-millionth of one percent of all votes. The Brennan Center stated that it is more likely for a person to be struck by lightning than commit voter fraud.

Rumors on the early reports from the Super Committee in Washington say that they plan to cut \$400 billion from Medicare and Social Security benefits. An additional \$200 billion will be from cuts to providers.

Approximately 2.7 million people in the United States are entrapped in Human Trafficking. Florida is #3. We do have a strong system in place, but Florida is a hub. The Trafficking Deterrence and Victim Support Act Reauthorization Act now contains a provision against domestic minor sex.

The extreme number of Federal Judges vacancies continues. Teachers and First Responders Back to Work Act failed to pass.

Florida is in the process of being given an addition 15 day-temporary extension in a Medicaid Pilot program. This allows beneficiaries in 5 counties to enroll in HMOs or other kinds of managed health-care programs. Since the program expired in June, the Federal government keeps asking Florida to submit these extensions to continue the program. Florida has asked the government to waive parts of Medicaid laws, including moving seniors and other long-term care beneficiaries into managed care. Florida is also in discussions about the Low Income Pool program which funnels \$1 billion p.a. to hospitals and other providers for low-income and uninsured people.