

November 16, 2021

Dear Legislators,

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The League of Women Voters of Florida, like many Floridians, contends that our state legislature should work endlessly to keep the health and safety of our citizens as their primary focus throughout the session surrounding COVID-19 vaccines mandates and required masking. To do this, our legislators should listen to and adopt the guidance of the overwhelming majority of science and health experts including those affiliated with the Center for Disease Control, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Medical Association. **The League is unified against any legislation that penalizes educational entities from making their own local decisions on what is needed to ensure their students' safety. In addition, the League has major concerns surrounding proposed legislation prohibiting employer requirements for vaccinations and mask-wearing.**

The League is deeply disturbed about the idea of forcing employers to provide five exceptions to a vaccine mandate and should they fail to do so, to the satisfaction of their employee, being subject to a complaint from the employee, a state-run investigation, and a hefty fine from \$10,000-20,000. These proposed laws appear draconian on their face and are counter to legal precedent that an employer is the master or mistress of their working environment. These proposed provisions place employees in charge of employers' workplaces in a manner never before seen in Florida.

This is an unprecedented incursion into the workplace and forces heavy administrative burdens on all employers. Other laws protecting employees from sexual harassment, racial discrimination, and other unlawful discrimination were written with a careful balance between the individual employee and their employer. In the past, small businesses and chambers of commerce have banded together to obtain several safeguards to prevent every employer, regardless of size, from complying with many overarching state and federal laws. One of the safeguards in almost all employment-based laws is a requirement that only employers with more than 15 employees are to be impacted by employee protection laws. It is important to ask why that same level of protection is not made available with the proposed legislation now in front of you? Thought processes behind past legislation concluded that small businesses would be overwhelmed by forcing them to comply with laws that are more easily adhered to if you have more staff to monitor and address new laws.

The creation of the proposed COVID-19 employer mandate gives no regard to the carefully titrated balance between employees and employers that have been placed in other state and federal laws protecting employees. This proposed legislation has the potential to open the door to future directives that all employers must adhere to regardless of size. This does not bode well for employers in Florida or for the often touted notion that Florida is friendly to business interests.

The proposed legislation surrounding this topic should be reconsidered in its entirety and with a deep focus on the universal application to all employers within the state of Florida.

Sincerely,



Cecile M. Scoon, Esq.
President
League of Women Voters of Florida