

Lead Letter: Greedy vendors, lawyers are driving up costs for Floridians

By [William Stander](#) Fri, Mar 18, 2016 @ 5:38 pm

With the 2016 legislative session completed, the Florida Legislature has failed to pass a meaningful solution to the assignment of benefits crisis that is now rapidly spinning out of control.

Organized and carried out by a handful of vendors and lawyers, this kickback-driven, lawsuit-for-profit scheme is already punishing homeowners with higher rates. And it threatens to do so for years to come.

Legislation originally filed by state Sen. Dorothy Hukill and state Rep. Matt Caldwell would have protected consumers by preventing a handful of vendors and their lawyers from stealing homeowners' insurance policy rights and using them to pad their own pockets.

Sadly, these bills died when Senator Miguel Diaz de la Portilla, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, would not allow the bill to be heard.

A news release by state-sponsored home insurer Citizens Insurance stated that water losses in South Florida will drive up annual rates in the region by 10 percent — the maximum amount Citizens can raise its rates each year — for many years to come.

It is important to note that of the more than 85,000 lawyers admitted to The Florida Bar — and the nearly 6,000 trial lawyers — 40 percent of all assignment of benefits lawsuits involving restoration vendors in 2015 were filed by just five law firms.

And 57 percent of all lawsuits were filed by 10 law firms.

In total, 85 percent of these lawsuits were filed by only 31 law firms.

As a result of this, even without a hurricane making landfall in our state, property insurance rates are set to skyrocket for all Floridians while a small group of greedy vendors and their lawyers get rich.

Florida deserves better.

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