

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization, that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

JULY 2, 2016

CALLING ALL NEW MEMBERS: NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION

Your new membership chairperson, Donna Sharpless, along with her (currently small, but growing) membership committee (Cathy Protopapas and Jan Gibson) have planned a new member orientation.

Date: Saturday, July 2, 2016

Where: Clearwater Library – Main Branch. 100 N Osceola Ave, Clearwater, FL 33755

Time: 1:00 until 3:00.

Who is invited? Everyone who wants to learn more about the League, but special invitations will be sent to all members who joined for the 2015-2016 year and those who have joined (so far) for the 2016-2017 year. A new member orientation has not been held since you joined.

We expect to have orientations at least two times a year from now on, so if you are out of town for the Independence Day weekend, you will receive an invitation to the next orientation as well. It is planned for November.

What to expect: There are **three main goals.**

- *We want you to understand the organization of the League. What is advocacy vs education? What do we do? What do we stand for? Where did we come from? How are we funded?
- *We want you to become involved to the extent that you want to and are able to. We will discuss volunteer opportunities. Some are committees with a specific focus (poverty, education, environment, voter registration, speaker's bureau, etc.), some are helpers at events (reception, organization, etc.), and some are writing articles for *The Voter* and/or helping the League historian. In addition, we need back-up people to help some of our volunteers (for example, our webmaster needs a back-up). There are many more opportunities as well, so something will fit with your skills, interest, and time availability.
- *We want to meet each other and learn about each other and, maybe, make some friends. Yes, we are committed to serving our community, but we also want to have some fun and be social.

New members, look for your invitation via e-mail shortly and see you there!

If you plan to attend, please RSVP to dsharpless513@gmail.com. Just say "Yes, I will be there." Thanks.



PRESIDENT'S NOTES
from Karen Karinja



LWVFL has presented a voter registration challenge for all locals. ROAR, Reach Out And Vote, asks as many LWV members as possible to get out and register voters prior to the upcoming Primary. If you are interested, contact Karen Karinja at 214.929.8984 or Karen.karinja@gmail.com for information and materials. You may have sites about which we are not presently aware since we have been concentrating on our local campuses. Whatever ideas you have are greatly welcome!

LWVFL Council April 29-30, 2016 was a success when it comes to workshops and plenary sessions. The food was not so great. Beth Hovind, LWVNPC Poverty Director, accompanied new LWVNPC President Karen Karinja for two days in Maitland at the Sheraton Orlando North Hotel. We enjoyed the many workshops from which we gleaned lots of education, including *Develop Your Inner Leader, How to Get Them in the Door, and More!, So You Have New Members, Now What?, Preparing for the Storm: The 2016 Elections, League Crash Course, Communicate and Connect: How to Write in the Digital Age, Speak Easy: How to Get Your Message Across, More Bang for Your Board*. The highlight was attending the plenary sessions and seeing grassroots democracy at work. And throughout the weekend, the League was celebrating its redistricting success.

Diane Wheatley-Giliotti graciously led this year's Board Orientation at which members learned about the non-partisan policy, bylaws, and programs. That was followed by May's Board meeting at which the Board was busy at work putting together a calendar of speakers and events that will highlight many major issues before the voters and representatives for the upcoming year. Kay Pitchon, our webmaster, also proposed the idea of a "private" website where a membership directory would be found and where we can archive all the many files we have from the past, as well as documenting our local League's history. Anyone interested in working on this project, please get in touch with Karen.



L-R: Diane Wheatley-Gillotti, Beth Hovind, Karen Karinja, Judy Ramsey, Kay Pitchon, Also attending was Lois Rogers-Watson who took the picture.

Donna Sharpless will be representing us at the LWVUS National Convention in June!

Our LWVNPC Board is busy with a wide variety of efforts. Consider joining us! We would love your help!

Forgot to sign up for one of the League activities listed in last month's Voter? Never fear. See page 3 where that article is reprinted. Work in the League is rewarding and we don't want anyone to miss out!

Find your place within our expanding League activities to focus your passions.

Choose an area of interest and contact the team leader

Advocacy issues such as

Health (Tamsen Martin, tjmartin123@aol.com, 727.946.2378)

Education (Pona Piekarski, pona-piekarski@gmail.com, 816.289.9218)

Pinellas Poverty (Beth Hovind, bethse@gmail.com, 727.938.9809)

Environment and Transportation (Peggy Toohey, ptoohey2@tampabay.rr.com, 727.786.3457)

Constitutional Revision (Ellen Siegman, ellensiegman@gmail.com, 727.422.2879)

Stop Campus Carry (Judy Curtis, gdjcurt@aol.com, 727.204.2771)



Pona Piekarski ready to register voters at Tarpon Springs



Judy McSwine moderating a candidates forum

Management areas such as

Membership (Donna Sharpless, dsharpless513@gmail.com, 727.786.1772)

Publicity/PR (seeking team leader, contact Karen Karinja)

Social Media (Facebook – Candy Ryan, candysculpt@hotmail.com, 727.789.7157)

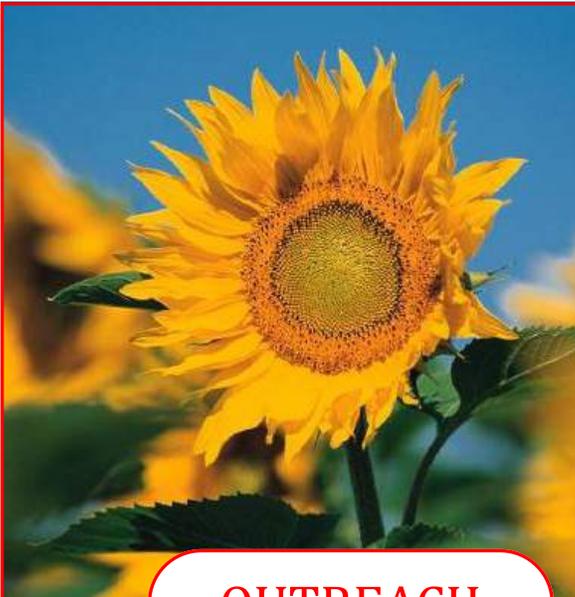
Technology (seeking team leader, contact Karen Karinja)

Development (Ashley Pimley, ashley7276928450@gmail.com, 727.692.8450)

Event Planning (Judy Ramsey, pookiejunejr@gmail.com, 727.504.8922)

Voter Service (Karen Karinja, Karen.karinja@gmail.com, 214.929.8984)

LET'S GET ALL ELIGIBLE PEOPLE READY TO VOTE!



OUTREACH

Our League is reaching out to the community to do voter education and voter registration.

Our League is reaching throughout the community to expand our options for increasing voter education and registration. The Hispanic Outreach Center and FAST (Faith and Action for Strength together) are presently in talks for future events.

The Hispanic Outreach Center supports the needs of the Hispanic community throughout Pinellas County. Located in downtown Clearwater, it was founded fifteen years ago by Canadian American Sandra Lyth, its CEO. Our LWVNPC President Karen Karinja and Sandra are working to forge a relationship between potential Hispanic voters and the League. A major priority of the Center is education with a goal of developing future citizens and leaders. The League wishes to encourage citizenship and voter registration within the Hispanic community. One caveat for our voter registrars is to be sure to ask of possible Hispanic registrants whether he/she has a US passport. Only those with a US passport may register to vote. The Center is expanding its work into Tarpon Springs where it will be located at

the Housing Authority building. There they will have voter registrations on hand as people process through the Center.

FAST (Faith and Action for Strength Together), an interfaith organization of forty congregations, is in the process of requesting permission from Pinellas County places of worship as voter registration sites prior to the upcoming elections. LWVNPC has agreed to work with those wishing voter registration on their sites. If any of you have a place of worship connection that would like the League to come by for voter registration, please contact Karen Karinja at 214.929.8984 or Karen.karinja@gmail.com.

SNAP

Has your signature changed? Your name? Your address? Your political affiliation? Then you should SNAP to it and update your voter registration! Pinellas has about 82% of the eligible population registered. It is, however, updates that concern us the most! Signatures change for many reasons: health, marriage, divorce, and AGING. This is a critical issue in order to be assured that your vote counts! Did you know that you can change your political affiliation as many times as you like up to 29 days before an election? Updating is extremely important in order to be part of the voting process. Be sure to update yourself and urge all you know to do so as well.

Check on Your Voter Status and Observe Your Ballot

Log on to the Supervisor of Elections website (www.votepinellas.com). Be sure that you are properly registered. Follow the progress of your ballot as it is counted. Locate your new district number. The SOE's website is a wealth of information for Pinellas voters. Be informed! Make sure your vote counts!

*Check My Voter Registration Status

*Update Your Current Voter Registration

*Mail Ballots ... Check My Mail Ballots

*Check My Voter Registration Status

*Request a Mail Ballot

*Voter Application Form

*Voter Information

*My Ballot Overview



Upcoming Candidate Forums:

Pinellas County School Board Candidate Forum

Sponsored by the Pinellas County Council PTA

Tuesday, August 2, 2016 at 6 p.m.

St. Petersburg College Seminole Campus

9200 113th Street North, Seminole, FL 33772

Dunedin Mayoral and Council Members

Sponsored by the Dunedin Council of Elections

Friday, October 21, 2016 at 7 a.m.

Breakfast Meeting, Dunedin Golf Club

1050 Palm Blvd, Dunedin, FL 34698

Two Court Decisions Will Discourage Challenges, Confuse Voters—Apr 10, 2016 by Paula Dockery (reprinted from the LWWFL website)



The Florida Supreme Court failed twice last week to do what was in the best interest of Floridians.

Coincidentally, both decisions involved constitutional amendments—one by putting a deceptive amendment on the ballot and the other by holding the Florida Legislature accountable for ignoring a ballot measure that passed. Both were decided on 4-3 splits.

Let's start with the high court's decision to deny plaintiffs who prevailed in challenges to congressional and Florida Senate redistricting the ability to recoup legal fees from the state.

In 2010, Florida voters overwhelmingly supported two "Fair District" constitutional amendments with 63 percent of the vote. Voters wanted the Legislature to stop gerrymandering legislative and congressional districts to unfairly benefit one party or incumbents. Little changed in the following redistricting process.

The only way to hold those drawing the maps accountable was through the courts—a difficult, costly and time-consuming endeavor.

A coalition of voter rights groups—led by the League of Women Voters—became the plaintiff in court challenges to both the congressional and Florida Senate redistricting maps. The Fair Districts litigation—spanning four years—included discovery, depositions, trials, appeals, failed special sessions and ultimately Supreme Court rulings.

The lower court threw out the Legislature's congressional map after finding that Republican lawmakers had colluded with political operatives to produce districts that favored their party. The state Supreme Court also sided with voter rights groups in a strong 5-2 decision rebuking the Legislature and approving the new congressional maps.

The legal costs to defend the Legislature have topped \$8 million. Other expenses including special session costs bring the total redistricting tab to \$11 million. Taxpayers are expected to foot the bill. (continued next page)

The plaintiffs petitioned the court to have their legal fees reimbursed.

Justice Barbara Pariente argued that the court should apply the private attorney general exception, which allows private parties to collect legal fees in public-interest lawsuits when the government chooses not to litigate. (continued on next page)

The court didn't agree and denied the plaintiffs' request for legal fees on a 4-3 split.

In her dissent Justice Pariente—joined by Justices Peggy Quince and James Perry—stressed that it couldn't be overstated how important the efforts of the plaintiffs were in forcing the Legislature to comply with the state Constitution.

This decision will surely have the chilling effect on future court challenges that those who violated the Constitution were counting on.

The other disappointing Florida Supreme Court ruling involves ballot access for a utility-backed constitutional amendment disguised as a consumer-friendly, pro-solar effort.

Contrary to its name, Consumers for Smart Solar has received 95 contributions totaling \$7.5 million, with very few coming from consumers. According to its latest report filed with the Division of Elections, all but 12 of the contributions—totaling \$405—came from power companies or political action committees (PACs).

This was a devious ploy to stop the true pro-solar amendment sponsored by Floridians for Solar Choice. The solar choice initiative failed to collect the 683,149 petition signatures needed in time to make the 2016 ballot so they are now shooting for 2018.

The utility-backed, anti-consumer, protectionist amendment is moving forward. The language is carefully crafted to appear pro-solar and pro-consumer. It is neither. It actually hurts the efforts for true consumer solar choice.

The amendment is so convoluted that solar enthusiasts are asking which of the two competing amendments is the pro-solar one.

Florida newspapers have run numerous articles attempting to explain the differences in the solar amendments and exposing who is behind each.

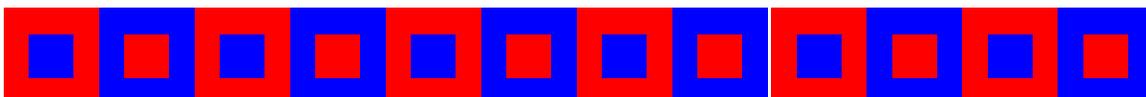
Readers are still confused. Comments at the end of one article illustrate the frustration. One reader asked, "Can you please just tell us which one will encourage the installation of more solar panels. ... People should be able to install solar panels and share any excess energy with their neighbors." Another asked, "What do I vote for if I do not want Utilities to tell me who to hire?" The Smart Solar amendment runs counter to the wishes of both of these individuals but they couldn't tell.

The Florida Supreme Court has the ability to prevent confusing constitutional amendments from reaching the voters. In fact, the court is required to review proposed amendments to determine if the language is misleading.

This one should have been a no-brainer. It was clearly intended to trick voters and prevent the solar expansion many will mistakenly believe it affords. Incredibly, four of the seven justices didn't see it that way. In a logic-defying 4-3 decision, the court allowed the deceptive amendment to appear on the November ballot.

Why bother having them review it?

Paula Dockery is a syndicated columnist who served in the Florida Legislature for 16 years as a Republican from Lakeland. She can be reached at PB Dockery@gmail.com.



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

2016-2017

Lively discussions on timely global issues

Meetings are the first Monday of the month

2 p.m.

Pinellas Park Library at 52nd St. & 78th Ave.

Pinellas Park

This is a joint project of LWVSPA & LWVNPC

**ALL are welcome for stimulating and informative gatherings
on global issues.**



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS SCHEDULE

October 3	The Future of Kurdistan	Richard Pope
November 7	Shifting Alliances in Mideast	Vollie Riskin
December 5	International Migration	Dwight Lawton
January 9	Cuba and the United States	Kay Lahdenpera
February 6	Climate Geopolitics	Joe LeBas
March 6	United Nations Post 2015	Linda McGeehan
April 3	Rise of Isis	Judy McSwine
May 1	Korean Choices	June Bedford

Questions? Email Judy McSwine at judymcswine@gmail.com

Annual Dues Reminder

Yep, it is that time of year. Your dues for 2016-2017 fiscal year (April 1 – March 31) are now due.

The good news: Almost 75% of members have already paid the dues for this year.

The bad news: That leaves 25% who have not renewed.

More “bad” news: Dues for an individual membership was increased to \$55 effective April 10, 2016.

Why this isn't so bad: Instead of keeping only \$4 of each membership dues paid at the local level, we will now keep \$9. This will help fund the important work that we do.

More “bad” news: Anyone who has not paid dues by July 31, 2016, will be dropped from the membership. That means no notifications of events, no Voter newsletter, no volunteer opportunities, and no member discounts for event registration.

So, send a check today to:

LWV North Pinellas County
PO Box 6833
Clearwater, FL 33758

Amount: Individual: \$55 Household \$85
 Student: \$30 Cornerstone (Show of support) \$110

League of Women Voters of North Pinellas County

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

NEW MEMBER? PREVIOUS MEMBER? WHERE? _____

Annual membership is \$55. Household memberships are \$85 (2 people). Student membership is \$30. Cornerstone membership is \$110. Household Cornerstone is \$140. After LWV membership for 50 years, dues are waived.

Please mail the membership application & payment to: LWVNPC, P. O. Box 6833,
Clearwater, FL 33758

Informed and Active Citizen Participation

Visit us on the web at
www.lwvnorthpinellas.org

LWVNPC

P.O. Box 6833
Clearwater, FL 33758
Phone: 727-447-1564

President: Karen Karinja

1st Vice President: Tamsen Martin

2nd Vice President: Vacant

Secretary: Anne Decker

Treasurer: Marti Folwell

Directors

Joy Comstock

Rita Garvey

Judy McSwine

Ashley Pimley

Judy Ramsey

Lois Rogers-Watson

Donna Sharpless

Peggy Toohey

Webmaster: Kay Pitchon

Speak up for Democracy.
Join the League!