



THE VOTER

March 2017

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.

MARCH EVENTS

Saturday, March 11, 2017



Open Primaries: Consensus Meeting

After 22 months, the **LWVFL Open Primary Study** is completed and consensus meetings are being held across the state. Our League's Consensus Meeting is on Saturday, March 11, 2017, 10 a.m.-Noon. It will be held at Trinity Presbyterian Church's Fellowship Hall, 2001 Rainbow Drive, Clearwater, 33765.

Open primaries allow voters to vote in the partisan ballot of their choice. This means that political parties cannot prevent non-members from voting in their party elections. Voters may select from the Republican or Democratic ballot. What are your views? Come, study the questions, and share your views.

Tuesday, March 21, 2017



Concerned about our schools?

Hear Dr. Lewis Brinson

- Who oversees the Bridging the Gap Program of the Pinellas County School District. This plan is focused on closing gaps between black students and their classmates in graduation, discipline, and academic achievement.
- Our League's Education Committee has been monitoring School Board meetings and has, as all Pinellas County citizens do, a keen interest and a desire for improvements in the education offered our children and youth. Come and ask your questions!

More information on both events are inside on page 2.

OUR MEETINGS THIS MONTH: Come! Invite Others! Offer Rides!

March 6—International Relations

United Nations Post 2015

Linda McGeehan, Presenter (See page 14 for details)

March 11-Consensus

As reported on the first page, we will be meeting to discuss Open Primaries. The League develops positions through consensus meetings and our fellow Leagues around the State will be meeting to look at some information on Open Primaries and then to talk about statements concerning them. Our responses will be shared with the Florida League of Women Voters and the results of these conversations will determine the position that the State League takes on Open Primaries.

Please attend on March 11th. Each voice is important! To learn more about the process, follow these links on the FL League of Women Voters website. First, a summary of the Open Primary Study Kit— <http://thefloridavoter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/StudyKit-final-edit-1.pdf> and / or the full 100 page Master Study Open Primary Report— http://thefloridavoter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/2017-02-10_Master-Study-Report-FINAL-100pages.pdf These are in pdf form and therefore downloadable and printable.

March 21-Failing Schools: How are they doing?

Dr. Lewis Brinson will be updating us on the failing schools in Pinellas County. That meeting will be at Largo Public Library, 120 Central Park Drive, Largo 33771 at 6:30 p.m.

A former Administrator in the Hillsborough School System, Dr. Brinson has a bachelor's degree in political science from Paine College, a master's degree in adult education from the University of South Florida, an educational specialist degree in educational leadership from Nova Southeastern University and a doctoral degree in education leadership from Argosy University.

Please note the majority of web addresses
in this issue are hyperlinked.

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PRESIDENT KAREN KARINJA'S MESSAGE

A Makeover Every 20 Years: The Florida State Constitution

(Written by Carol Weissert of the Leroy Collins institute for distribution to LWV's)

How about a complete makeover of the State Constitution? That is what the 2017-2018 Constitution Revision Commission (CRC) must resolve to do.

Required by the Constitution every 20 years, this Commission is about to be formed again, and 37 to-be-appointed members will soon embark on a flurry of activity that will result in constitutional amendments for us to vote on the November 2018 ballot.

There are no limits on what can be added to or subtracted from the current Constitution. We may see proposals as far reaching as:

- Tax-funded vouchers to send students to private schools
- Term limits for judges
- Restoration of an independently-elected Secretary of State and Education Commissioner to the Florida Cabinet
- Abolition of capital punishment
- Election reform
- Automatic rights restoration for former felons
- Changes in environmental protection

The possibilities are endless.

For the first time in its history, Republicans will make all 37 Commission appointments. As provided in the Constitution:

The Governor makes 15,

The House Speaker and Senate President each make 9,

The State Supreme Court Chief Justice makes 3, and

The Attorney General is automatically a member.

Ideally, membership of the Commission would reflect the geographic, racial, gender and political diversity of the state. Unfortunately, Speaker Richard Corcoran has said that his litmus test is that commission members be "conservative" with a bedrock belief in individual liberties and responsibilities. President Negrón has made similar statements.

The good news is that, unlike changes proposed by prior Commissions, amendments now need 60% voter approval to pass, increased from 50% by a 2006 voter-approved amendment.

We citizens have a responsibility to monitor the selection of Commission members and their activities. Once the Commission is named, the public should be actively engaged in presenting ideas for its consideration. In 1978 and 1998 the CRC held a series of hearings across the state to get public input and reaction to proposed amendments. We hope this Commission will continue that process. After a year of work, these amendments go directly to the ballot...no legislative or gubernatorial approval is needed.

Any initiative that has already passed the muster of Florida's judiciary and over 60 percent of the voters should be left untouched. For example, the Fair Districts Amendments passed overwhelmingly by the voters in 2010 made many incumbent legislators work harder this election cycle to get re-elected. They also brought forth many new candidates and higher discourse of issues. That's exactly what the people wanted and they got it. But Negrón and Corcoran have said those amendments are flawed and should be rewritten by the CRC.

We are hopeful that this commission will enable new forward thought, not devise ways to reverse the will of the citizens that have already spoken to what they want in their Constitution.

A bit of history on this 20-year makeover....

In 1978, eight amendments were put forth by that year's CRC. Among them was a complete abolition of the six member Florida Cabinet. Those Cabinet members and their backers from agriculture, education, banking and other special interests did not take kindly to this dissolution of their jobs and power. They fought against all the amendments. Then-Governor Reuben Askew did not support any of the CRC amendments either. They all went down in flames at the ballot box.

Continued next page

The 1998 CRC did better. Only one out of nine proposed amendments, an obscure local tax exemption, failed. The most far-reaching change reduced the Florida Cabinet from six to three members, removing the Secretary of State and Secretary of Education and merging the offices of Treasurer and Comptroller. Other amendments passed addressed conservation, judicial selection, firearms purchases and election processes.

The League of Women Voters of Florida has partnered with The Collins Institute, The Florida Bar, The Florida Chamber of Commerce, Leadership Florida, NAACP and others in a special project to inform voters about the CRC and the amendments (<http://www.revisefl.com>).

The Constitution Revision Commission of 2017-2018 should provide a pathway for the public's input into the constitutional review process. An opportunity to be engaged, have open discourse and be informed in the process of making laws that will move our state forward in the areas of election reform, education, environment and social issues for the protection and betterment of our citizens.

Floridians, listen, observe, and share your concerns. Let the commission know how much you care about the future of Florida. — For your information from Karen Marie Karinja, President League of Women Voters of North Pinellas County

MacManus Never Disappoints! By Ellen Siegman

On Saturday, February 25th, Dr. Susan MacManus, Distinguished University Professor at USF, Department of Government and International Affairs, addressed the League at a Hot Topic: Legislative Preview luncheon. This is her 20th consecutive year speaking to our League, and she never disappoints!



Dr. MacManus briefly discussed the 2016 election and the Florida electorate. Demographically, Florida is the most diverse state, and with its 29 Electoral College votes is a crucial state in any Federal election. Florida recently elected 10 new Congressional Representatives (many came from the State Legislature). The I-4 corridor constitutes 43% of the voting population, and Tampa Bay is the largest media market in that corridor. We clearly have an important role to play in Florida elections. Dr. MacManus stated that Florida saw an increase in the number of voters who identified as NPA or with Minor Parties (similar to the rest of the country). Millennials in particular do not identify with labels. She also noted the shrinking middle class and the role that economic factors played in the elections. There is a significant divide between rural, suburban and urban voters. People tend to live amongst others with similar values and voting patterns.

This Florida Legislative session will be unpredictable, as the economy will surely play a big part in the legislative agenda. The Republicans have a majority in both the House and the Senate and serve in all three state elected offices. The Legislators' priorities remain twofold: to represent their constituents and to further their own political future within the limits of their terms. The Constitutional Review Commission is in formation, and in 2018 will be able to add any amendments directly on the ballots. The issues range from education (concentrating on higher education), taxes (property) local vs. state government regulations on business, gun control (open carry and conceal weapons permit), the environment (a lot of water bills), Medicaid, criminal justice reform (most argue for reform on sentencing), and election reform (signature on ballot). Dr. MacManus does not believe they will finish the session on time. Many of the key government figures are looking towards the 2018 election cycle, during which Florida will elect all three state offices and a Senator (Nelson vs. Scott the likely match up).



Susan & Ashley Pimley

We all learned a great deal from the informative session, while enjoying lunch at the Belleair Country Club. We are very grateful to Dr. MacManus for providing a most interesting preview of the next couple of months in Tallahassee.



Political Divisions Could Steer Constitutional Revision

By KATE PAYNE • JAN 30, 2017

Originally published on January 27, 2017

Once every twenty years, Floridians have the opportunity to propose changes to the state's most important document. But some are worried political divides could pull the Constitution Revision Commission off course.

Florida has more ways to amend its constitution than any other state. The Constitution Revision Commission is perhaps the most direct way. Thirty-seven Floridians will spend a year listening to their fellow citizens, before drafting amendments that go directly on the ballot for voter approval. It's something people should take seriously, Sandy D'Alemberte told the crowd at a recent political forum. And he should know- he's done it before.

"I've drafted several amendments to the Constitution. I can tell you how not to draft Constitutional amendments, because things I've drafted have turned out awful!" D'Alemberte said.

D'Alemberte chaired the very first CRC back in 1978, and teaches constitutional law at Florida State University. But this year he's worried state politics could derail what should be a citizen-driven enterprise. State officials are in charge of choosing the commission members. The Governor appoints fifteen, Senate President and Speaker of the House each appoint nine, the Chief Justice three, and the attorney general is an automatic member. Speaker Richard Corcoran has said he'll only choose commissioners who align with his views.

"Absolutely there's a litmus test. I will not choose one selection who's not a conservative," Corcoran said.

Corcoran is hoping to rein in what he sees as a rogue judiciary system. He has his eye on past Supreme Court rulings he disagrees with, on school choice and congressional redistricting. But FSU political scientist Carol Weissert says state lawmakers should stay out of it.

"I think the legislature has its own ability. The legislative referral process is theirs for the taking. So it seems to me any ideas they wanted to do, let them put it on the constitution through the legislative referral process," she said. "But this process is one that we can actually have some input on and get some ideas across."

Sandy D'Alemberte wants commissioners of good faith, with open minds.

"By announcing that they're going to appoint people with an agenda, they're going to taint the process from the very beginning," he said. "People, once they hear arguments, make up their own minds. They are truly independent. If you have people of intelligence and integrity, which I hope we'll have, instructing them may be a fool's errand."

Carol Weissert says the CRC should be an opportunity to explore controversial issues the Legislature won't touch.

"We have a closed primary and Florida. And I don't think the Legislature is going to change this. This would be a good thing for the Constitution Revision Commission to take up, to make it an open primary or a semi-open primary," Weissert said.

But, optimistic as some may be, Christopher Emmanuel says it'll be difficult to separate this process from the political environment. He's a policy analyst for the Florida Chamber of Commerce.

"You're going into this into one of the most partisan environments we've seen in modern political history," Emmanuel said.

Onlookers hope the commission will be as diverse as possible, with different ideologies, ages, races, and regions represented. If the commission looks like the state as a whole, it could have a better shot at offering changes sixty percent of voters will approve. That's the bar they have to clear in order to amend the constitution. But the 2018 ballot is already filling up.

"We've got about six amendments that are collect signatures right now to get on by citizen petition. You're going to have all four cabinet officers, and you're going to have a US senate race. In addition to your local house race and most likely your local senate race," Emmanuel said. "So they're going to have to go all the way down the ballot to get to the measure. And then they're going to have to like it."

More than two hundred people have submitted applications. Many are current or former elected officials or attorneys, though there are some professors and even a genomics scientist. We should know who's on the commission by early March, just in time for the 2017 legislative session.

Legislative Update from our State League Legislative Advocate



Kelly Quintero

This week, we only saw a few of the bills and issues we're tracking, but that doesn't mean we aren't keeping an eye on all of our legislative priorities...and more! In fact, we're keeping track of over 200 bills this session already. Legislators have until March 7th to file bills so there may be a few more bills that we add to each priority every week until then.

EDUCATION

This week, the House PreK-12 Quality Subcommittee was given a presentation on Civics Education in the state of Florida by the Lou Frey Institute at the University of Central Florida, the Florida Law Related Education Association and the Legislature's Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability. In the 2015-16 School Year, there was an average of 1,000 teachers per year in face to face classes and approximately 6,400 online teacher sessions per month. Read up more on it here: <http://bit.ly/FLCivicsEdu>

ELECTIONS & ETHICS

Proposed Committee Bill (PCB) PIE 17-03 – *Local Government Ethics Reform* was presented by Rep. Larry Metz and falls in line with Speaker Richard Corcoran's emphasis on ethics reform. The proposed bill requires all municipal officials, special district officials (water management districts and any other special districts) to increase their financial disclosure, disclose potential conflicts of interest, expands who must receive an annual ethics training, and creates a local government lobbyist registration fund. At this point the League has no position on this bill, but is monitoring it closely. Read more here: <http://bit.ly/PCBEthics>
Minority Leader Rep. Janet Cruz has proposed HB 105 that clarifies the process for mismatched signatures on vote-by-mail ballots. It provides each Supervisor of Election flexibility on how to notify voters that their signatures are mismatched (email, phone, or mail, etc). The House Oversight, Transparency Administration Subcommittee voted unanimously on it and now goes to the House Government Accountability Committee. This is a top priority for the League and we are in support of this bill. Thank you to the Lobby Corps for waiving in support of this bill. Find it here: <http://bit.ly/VBMHouse>

GUN SAFETY

- This year's legislature is riddled with gun bills. Last night, the following bills were referred to committees but have not been scheduled as of today. The League stands in opposition to all of these bills:
 - SB 618 – Concealed Weapons in Airports
 - SB 620 – Concealed Weapons in Government buildings and meetings
 - SB 622 – Campus Carry and also SB 644 and SB 646 – Open Carry

(See next page)

Legislative Update Continued:

HEALTHCARE

ICYMI: The Florida Supreme Court blocked the 24 hour waiting period in a 4-2 decision on Thursday, leaving the 10 month old block in place. The court cited there's a strong possibility that a lower court will find the waiting period is unconstitutional. The League is in support of this decision. Read about it here: <http://bit.ly/24Block>

NATURAL RESOURCES

- While we are keeping an eye on all Natural Resources bills, there were none in front of committees this week.

Looking for a specific bill or issue that you think the League should take a position on? LWVF prides itself on being a grassroots organization and receives suggestions on which issues we should make a priority from local league each year. From this list we're able to create a comprehensive list of priorities and lobby for or against these issues in the Capital.

Questions, comments or concerns? Don't hesitate to send Kelly an email at LWVFAdvocacy@gmail.com.

YOU can be an advocate!

Join other LWVNPC League members on March 28 and 29 in Tallahassee for State LWV Lobby Day. Contact one of the Board Members if you wish to go.

Can't Go to Tallahassee?

You can write or call:

Senator



Jack Latvala Dist. 16
Senate Office Bldg
404 South Monroe St.
Tallahassee 32399-1100
850-487-5016



Darryl Rousen Dist. 19
212 Senate Office Building
404 South Monroe St.
Tallahassee 32399-1100
850-487-5019

Senator



Jeff Brandes Dist. 24
416 Senate Office Bldg
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, 32399-1100
(850) 487-5024



Representative
Wengay Newton, Sr. Dist. 70
1302 The Capitol
402 South Monroe St.
Tallahassee, 32399-1300
850-717-5070

Representative



Larry Ahern Dist. 66
222 The Capitol
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, 32399-1300
Phone: (850) 717-5066



Representative
Chris Sprowls Dist. 65
412 House Office Bldg
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, 32399-1300
850-717-5065

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Representative

Kathleen Peters Dist. 69

303 House Office Building
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300
Phone: (850) 717-5069



Representative

Ben Diamond Dist. 68

1402 The Capitol
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300
Phone: 850-717-5068



Representative

James W. Grant Dist. 64

1301 The Capitol
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300
Phone: (850) 717-5064



Representative

Chris Latvala Dist. 67

313 House Office Bldg.
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300
Phone: 850-717-5067

Clicking on the picture of each legislator will take you to his/her webpage where you can choose to email him or her.

Our League Speaks Up at a Town Hall Meeting

Below is what our LWVNPC Health Care Committee Chair said at U. S. Congressman Gus Bilirakis' Forum at Palm Harbor Centre on February 4, 2017

Hello, my name is Beth Hovind, and I am from the League of Women Voters of North Pinellas County. I am here today because we are very concerned about the future of health care for the residents in our communities.

As you are aware, Florida has over one million people on the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare. In addition, we have over 600,000 people who are totally uncovered by any insurance at all as Florida has chosen not to increase eligibility for Medicaid for the past several years.

These are already desperate health times for many of your constituents. With the threat of the dismembering of Obamacare, the threat is greatly increased.

Some of the benefits of the Affordable Care Act that we have to be careful not to lose:

- 1) funding of preventive care,
- 2) funding of youth on their parents policies to age 26,
- 3) pregnancy services,
- 4) coverage of pre-existing conditions,
- 5) financial assistance to make the cost of insurance affordable, and
- 6) no lifetime limit on benefits

The League of Women Voters believes that adequate health care should be accessible to every American, and we encourage you to work to make this happen. Without a significant replacement, the increased cost of medical care for the uncovered will be born on those who can afford insurance, dramatically increasing their rates as well.

We are aware that you have been working on pharmaceutical services. Your efforts on the health sub-committee will make a difference for all of us.

Thank-you for holding these forums and for your commitment to improved health care.



Speak Up for Children and Youth!

The FL LWV Juvenile Justice Committee wants you to contact
your legislators about these bills:



CIVIL CITATION: SENATE BILL 196

Law enforcement jurisdictions have the option of using a civil citation process for actions conducted by a youth under 18 that are not a threat to the community, such as minor theft, assault and battery misdemeanor (a fight without injury), or a misdemeanor drug charge, among others. The youth is issued a citation listing the efforts he or she must go through to avoid a delinquency charge, such as counseling or community service. Used by law enforcement in the street setting as well as the school settings, early studies indicate that not only is the cost of juvenile enforcement reduced, but more importantly youth, after receiving services, are more likely not to reoffend and in addition, will not have a permanent record of delinquency, which may harm future ability to find work, etc.

The Implementation: Florida joins 44 other states in providing for civil citations. All but 2 counties have civil citation policies. Implementation is uneven between jurisdictions, within counties and between counties. An annual report, "Stepping Up" conducted by Dewey and Associates and available at iamforkids.org documents the progress being made. For example in Dade County, almost all law enforcement units are using civil citations when applicable, but Pasco County varies from 10% usage and 67% usage. A juvenile committing the same act in one jurisdiction will be charged with a delinquency offence while in another county will be given a civil citation and a chance to redeem their record. This is patently unfair and results in the creation in unnecessary delinquents. Ignoring the availability of civil citations in schools contributes to the "school to prison pipeline."

Some advocates are encouraging mandating the use of civil citations statewide to ensure equal protection for all juveniles. Others suggest that educating law enforcement and civil governments in the appropriate benefits to civil citations will greatly increase usage. The Juvenile Justice Committee strongly favors their usage and encourages local Leagues to study and advocate for their use in their home counties.

It is a win-win for everyone. The county saves on delinquency and court costs. Law enforcement can immediately get the youth the help they may need. And the youth has a second chance to change their behavior--something all of us probably needed at one time or another.

DIRECT FILE FOR JUVENILES: SENATE BILL 192

The Law: Florida Statute 985.556 and 985.557

98% of juveniles who are referred to adult court at the age of 14 or older are there at the discretion of the prosecutor's office without any judicial oversight. Human Right Watch studies show that the use of direct file varies by prosecutor, and judicial circuit. They further suggest that racial bias influences the outcomes, leading to unequal outcomes. While International law requires that children be treated as children, these youthful offenders are housed in prisons designed for adult behavior, not to provide the rehabilitation the youth may need.

Most states do not allow direct file, which is a remnant of the "super predator" laws created out of fear of surging juvenile crime, which has since been denigrated. Florida continues the practice which denies juveniles the benefit of a judicial hearing with legal representation to challenge this discretionary assignment.

The Issues:

1. Fairness: Differences in usage across state: By race; by crime
2. Appropriateness of adult facility for develop juvenile: Physical/Mental/Emotional
3. Adequate legal representation in process



We encourage local leagues to study the use of this practice in their counties and join the Juvenile Justice Committee as we make recommendations for state wide practice.

2017 Legislative Priorities

The League of Women Voters of Florida is a grassroots organization, and as such, we focus on the issues that our members care the most about.

Each year, our membership is polled to see which issues are most important to them. Every local league submits priorities. After tabulating each local league's submissions, the top five areas become priorities for the Legislative Session.

Here are the **2017 Legislative Priorities**:

1. Education

- Restore district authorization to levy 2.0 mills for capital outlay funding for school facilities construction and renovation.
- Increase operational funding to pre-2008 levels so that districts may increase the school day and curriculum choices.
- Revise the sole focus of the state accountability system from test scores to measures that more accurately reflect districts' progress in raising student achievement, meet the needs of diverse students and improve access to high quality academic and career programs for all students.
- Improve fiscal and operational oversight of charter schools by increasing transparency in student admission and retention data, ensuring the independence of charter boards from charter management companies and providing guidelines to reduce self-dealing opportunities in real estate transactions and other charter services.
- Eliminate the growth of corporate-tax credit scholarships to private schools and require private schools currently receiving these scholarships to participate in the state accountability system.

2. Election Law

- Support the automatic restoration of voting rights for former felony offenders, including support for a constitutional amendment to achieve same.
- Support legislation to reduce from 29 days to 19 days the time voter registration books must be closed before each election.
- Support legislation to restrict the ability of an elector to file as a write-in candidate, the goal being to minimize what has become a problem, as "ghost candidates" file in order to close primary elections.
- Monitor and support the progress of online voter registration implementation to ensure that it meets its 2017 deadline, and adopt legislation for Florida to join the at least 26 other states that are members of the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) " statewide.

(Continued on next 2 pages)

- Support legislation necessary for Florida to join the at least 10 other states that are members of the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact (NPVIC), so that Florida's Presidential Electors would be required to award all their votes to the candidate who wins the overall popular vote in the 50 states and District of Columbia.
- Ensure the adoption by Florida of the National Voter Registration Act ("Motor-Voter" law) requirement that every citizen be automatically provided voter registration update services when she/he applies for, renews or changes her/his address on a driver's license or state-issued identification card.

3. Gun Safety

- Support proposals that would expand background checks in Florida, thereby closing the gun show and Internet loopholes.
- Support proposals that would impose a statewide ban on semi-automatic assault weapons and large capacity magazines.
- Oppose any proposals that would make it legal for those with concealed weapons permits to carry firearms on Florida's public college and university campuses.
- Oppose any proposals that would make it legal for those with concealed weapons permits to carry openly firearms in public places.
- Oppose any proposals that would permit Floridians to carry concealed weapons without a permit.
- Oppose any proposals that would expand the current "Stand Your Ground" law.
- Oppose any proposals that would permit Florida School Boards or School Superintendents to designate employees or others to carry concealed firearms, for security purposes, on school grounds at K-12 schools.

4. Health Care

- Correct the Florida KidCare program's coverage so it will provide insurance to children ages 0 to 1-year old who are not eligible for Medicaid.
- Develop legislation to accept 2017 Medicaid expansion dollars for Florida, without being bound for future years, or develop a budget for a comprehensive plan to provide health insurance for working.
- Amend Florida's Public Health statute, Chapter 390, to remove the provision providing that a physician must delay at least 24 hours before terminating, with a pregnant woman's voluntary and informed written consent, her pregnancy.

5. Natural Resources

- Support sustainable energy solutions for Florida, including adoption of renewable energy standards and legislation promoting the expansion of solar energy.
- Support efforts to improve water quality of both surface water and aquifers through legislation to reduce pollution and excessive withdrawals, including prohibiting "fracking" statewide.

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- Support full funding of the Florida Forever land acquisition program and proper implementation of the Water and Land Legacy Conservation Amendment (Amendment 1) adopted in 2014.

CHECK THIS LINK FOR QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR LEGISLATORS EITHER IN PERSON OR VIA EMAIL: <http://thefloridavoter.org/issues-2/legislative-questions>

LWVNPC President Spoke to the Pinellas Legislative Delegation on January 31, 2017

Karen Karinja's remarks are below:

At the Legislative Delegation meeting in Tarpon Springs, I shared with you the priorities of the League of Women Voters of Florida. Today I share with you the following local issues which are of great concern to our expanding membership:

1. **Gun Safety:** As members of the Florida gun safety coalition, we support their two recommendations: 1) banning the sale of semiautomatic weapons and 2) bringing ALL gun sales under the umbrella of background checks. We are concerned that some of the proposed options for open carry in public and allowing guns on college campuses in the state will only INCREASE the gun deaths. NO OPEN CARRY. NO CAMPUS CARRY.
2. **Poverty:** State funding for families dependent on cash assistance is at the same level it was 10 years ago. A family of three cannot survive on \$303/month. This does not even cover rent, leading to insecure living situations. Who among us here could exist on this amount? THE LEAGUE SUPPORTS INCREASED FUNDING.
3. **Solar:** We urge the legislature to support efforts to form groups of household who can then bargain for a cooperative solar system, thus reducing carbon emissions in the state of Florida and lowering energy bills. LET SOLAR POWER FLORIDA!
4. **Felon Rights:** We support AUTOMATICALLY RESTORING voting rights to those who have paid their debt to society by completing their sentences. Florida is one of only three states that does not currently do this.
5. **Education:** Last but not least. We have watched with concern as charter schools absorb more of our tax dollars YET ARE NOT REQUIRED OR EVEN EXPECTED to meet the same standards as public schools. Even the definition of "innovative," a requirement for public funding of charter schools, is unclear. Also legislators with close financial ties to charter schools should NOT be involved in the discussion. It is our opinion that public schools need MORE, NOT LESS funding to meet the challenges of this generation of students.

We appreciate the time and effort that you give to these important quality of life issues for Floridians!

CANDIDATE FORUMS

The final Voter Service Candidate Forum before the March 14 election was held Tuesday, January 31 in Indian Rocks Beach. Four candidates are vying for 2 city commissioner seats. Our moderator was Beth Hovind, timing was done by Gladys Garcia and Arlette Limen, and Clare Dyer along with Kathy and Bill Masalski assisted. Gladys stepped up and nominated herself to take on Voter Services with Arlette serving as her assistant. They make a great team! Thank you both for volunteering.





A Message from Dave Sillman

Tel: 727.807.3911

Cell: 678.642.7305

[www/beyourbestinc.com](http://www.beyourbestinc.com)

Hi all,

I was reaching out to ask for a little help as we as we ramp up our NPLWV/FL Sun solar co-op. Specifically, I am hoping to tap into your experience & connections for suggestions on whom may be good -

- · Groups/people to target as Community Partners for our FL Sun group (details below).
- · Any potential volunteers to assist me in our effort

I can do the legwork to reach out – I could just use your help with a little brainstorming.

The initial step in forming the co-op is to pursue Community Partners who will help us:

- · Market the program thru their memberships (preferably large)
- · Lend credibility thru their trusted names
- · Potentially provide venues for us to hold Solar Information meetings (where we welcome the public to come learn about the many advantages of residential solar)
- · In some case can provide funding to support the overall FL Sun program in its efforts to grow solar throughout the State ***though we do not need to seek funding as a part of our effort*

Examples of good partners are:

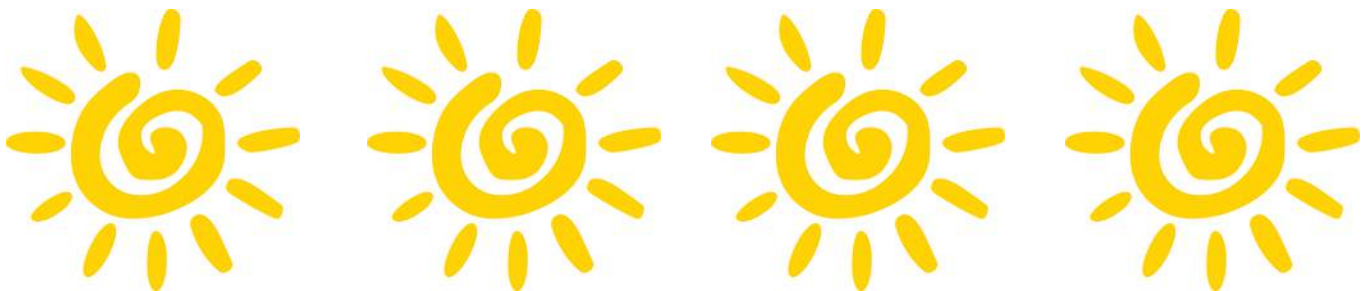
- · Environmental groups (ie Sierra Cub)
- · Community Foundations (ie Gulf Coast Community Foundation)
- · Local media
- · Civic organizations
- · Faith groups
- · City & County governments and local politicians
- · Anyone with a broad reach and trusted name

Here is a list of Partners we are targeting and/or have already reached out to:

- Sierra Club
- Southern Alliance For Clean Energy
- City of Dunedin Environmental Quality Commission
- Creative Loafing
- Physicians For Social Responsibility
- FL League of Cities
- County Commissions and Mayors offices, City Councils, Chambers of Commerce, etc of all the cities in our N. Pinellas geography.
- Church of the Ascension (Clearwater); Bayside Community Church (Safety Harbor)
- Colleges or (K-12) schools or school systems

Thanks in advance!

Check out the FL Sun website: <http://www.flsun.org/>



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

at Pinellas Park Library



QUESTIONS?

Contact Judy McSwine

727-447-5493

judymcswine@gmail.com

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS SCHEDULE

March 6	United Nations Post 2015 Linda McGeehan
April 3	Rise of Isis Judy McSwine
May 1	Korean Choices June Bedford



WELCOME, NEW LWVNPC MEMBERS!

****Diane Clayton***

****Christine Gasco***

****Lynn Harmon***

****Catherine and Charles Luthin***

****Karen McKenney***

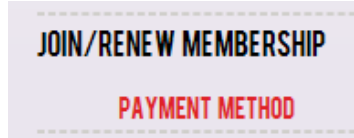
****Cyndi Silverman***

****Betty Ward***

IN MEMORIAM

Long time LWVNPC member **Carol Lushear** passed away on October 16, 2016 at Mease Manor. For years, she had been LWVNPC Natural Resource Chair and served on the City of Dunedin Environmental Committee. She represented our local League at legislative summits in Tallahassee during the presidency of Dianne Wheatley-Giliotti.

Now You Can Join the League Online...Just go to our Website



PayPal payment services are there for your convenience.

Just go to the [LWVNPC Website](#), select **Payment Method**, and follow the instructions.

NOTE: There is no extra charge to you for the PayPal service when you use your credit or debit card to pay LWVNPC membership dues.

You can also donate to the LWV Education Fund which is tax deductible. http://www.lwvnorthpinellas.org/donate_form.html

If you prefer to join via mail, here is the form to use:

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.

Dues are payable to the League of Women Voters of North Pinellas County on or before May 1 of each year.

Please mail the membership application & payment to: LWVNPC, P. O. Box 6833,
Clearwater, FL 33758 OR Join online at [LWVNPC!](#)

We are on Facebook!

go to:

League of Women Voters - North Pinellas County



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: Vicki Adelson

2nd Vice President: Beth Hovind

Secretary: Anne Decker

Treasurer: Marti Folwell

Directors

Rita Garvey

Judy McSwine

Lois Rogers-Watson

Peggy Toohey

Webmaster: Kay Pitchon

Speak up for Democracy.

Join the League!