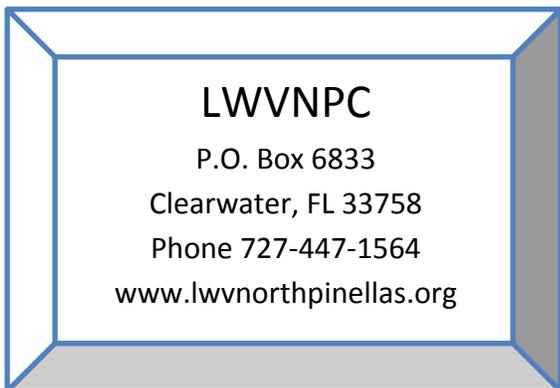


**FEBRUARY 2018 VOTER**



**OFFICERS**

- President: Karen Karinja & Voter Services
- 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President: Beth Hovind & Poverty/Health
- 2nd Vice President: Eliseo Santana & Membership
- Secretary: Vicki Cohen
- Treasurer: Marti Folwell

**Directors**

- Whit Blanton, Transportation
  - Rita Garvey, Parliamentarian
  - Judy McSwine, International Relations
  - Eliseo Santana, Membership
  - Peggy Toohey, Voter
- Off Board Chairs**
- Pona Piekarski, Education
  - Carol Bailey, Historian
  - David Sillman, Natural Resources

**Informed and Active Citizen Participation**

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

*From the President*



The LWVNPC nomination committee is requesting from the membership for nominations for the Board of Directors for 2018-2020, especially treasurer. Also nominations for the nominating committee.

If you have any nomination suggestions, either yourself or another member in mind, please send them to Pat Budlong at [PJANBUD@yahoo.com](mailto:PJANBUD@yahoo.com), or call her at 727-789-9243. We thank you in advance for your assistance.

**Hot Topic March 17 Dunedin Public Library 10 am National Popular Vote Interstate Compact**



Deb Mazzaferro is an experienced speaker and has had the super idea of working with Lifelong Learning to reach Floridians who need to understand what NPVIC is and how the Electoral College and NPVIC work. She's promised to update us on this endeavor.

## CONSTITUTION REVISION COMMITTEE

### AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION – FOR THE WORSE?

#### League of Women Voters Florida, coalition partners highlight worst of the worst proposed amendments before the CRC

TALLAHASSEE, FLA. — The League of Women Voters Florida (LWVFL) joined with allied organizations in Tallahassee to alert Floridians to a host of bad ideas that could be on the ballot when they go to the polls this fall.

“There are a handful of good proposals still alive before the Constitution Revision Commission (CRC), but they are overshadowed by numerous proposals seeking to strip away constitutional protections,” said Pamela Goodman, President of the League of Women Voters of Florida. “As commissioners travel the state for a second round of public hearings, Floridians need to make their voices heard in opposition to these harmful proposals.”

The CRC is convened once every 20 years to conduct a thorough review and propose amendments to the Florida Constitution. The amendments that the commission approves will go directly on the ballot next November for voters to decide.

“The League of Women Voters has not submitted or endorsed any proposals. We’ve joined with a broad coalition of organizations working to promote transparency and hold the commission accountable to the citizens of Florida,” Goodman explained. “The commission’s failure to adopt rules in a timely manner and a continuing tendency to ignore their own rules of procedure are a serious concern. But even more concerning at this point is a very clear agenda unfolding for the CRC that mirrors the legislature.”

Flanked by representatives of coalition partner organizations including American Civil Liberties Union Florida, Anti-Defamation League, Common Cause Florida, Florida Policy Institute, Florida Education Association, SEIU Florida, Florida Alliance of Planned Parenthood Affiliates, Progress Florida, Florida NOW, For Our Future, Florida PTA, Florida AFL-CIO, Sierra Club, Southern Poverty Law Center, Florida Public Defender Association, Equality Florida and Florida First Amendment Foundation during a press conference on the capitol steps, Goodman questioned whether the appointed commission was acting independently or under the control of their appointing authorities.

“With so many bills mirroring CRC proposals moving through the legislature, it begs the question of who is really in control,” Goodman said.

Coalition partners highlighted what they consider to be the “worst of the worst” proposals under consideration by the CRC. Most of the measures making the “Terrible Ten” list have the common goal of restricting or eliminating protections currently provided by the Florida Constitution.

“We are calling upon the members of the CRC to use the public tour that launched yesterday to really listen and act on what Floridians want in their constitution,” Goodman urged. “If they don’t, Florida voters will have no trouble saying NO in November.”

### CONSTITUTION REVISION COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING

**The Constitution Revision Commission is holding a Public Hearing in the Tampa Bay Area on March 13<sup>th</sup> at USF St. Petersburg from 1:00pm-7:00pm at the Student Center. There are currently 103 proposals in front of the commission. Six are from the public and the bulk are from the commission itself. Currently they are reviewing the proposals in committee. The commission will submit their proposals for amendments to the constitution in May, and at the end of May (the 28<sup>th</sup>) the language for the amendments will be filed with the Secretary of State to be on the ballot in November. For more on how the CRC works go to [ProtectFLDemocracy.org](http://ProtectFLDemocracy.org) (sponsored by the Florida Bar Association).**

**If you are interested in attending the March 13<sup>th</sup> meeting, please contact Ellen Siegman at [ellenisiegman@gmail.com](mailto:ellenisiegman@gmail.com).**

# National Popular Vote!

## Florida National Popular Vote Campaign Information from Palm Beach County

### Messages from our Legislative Team:

Palm Beach County has a bi-partisan delegation of legislators, and an active county lobbyist who runs legislative hearings across the county prior to the start of each legislative session. Citizens and interest groups can register and speak to the legislators on issues of interest to the county delegation.

Following preliminaries including acknowledgement of other politicians and legislative aides attending, 25 presenters spoke on their issues for 3 minutes and took a few questions.

Kathleen Crampton announced that a NPVIC bill would be submitted for consideration during the coming session by Representative Joe Geller in the next couple of weeks. She encouraged members to review the bill and support holding hearings on this increasingly emerging and important issue. Given that Florida votes are marginalized by the current Electoral College system, she asked the Delegation to support the NPVIC bill which would give every voter an equal voice in selecting the President.

Watch Kathleen here: <https://www.lwvpsc.org/video-npvi-kathleen-crampton/>

Gaining Support in Florida, State Senator Jeff Clemens, District 31 (Lake Worth) supports the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact.

Senator Clemens met with Helen Ostrowski and Kathleen Crampton on Thursday, September 28, 2017 in his office in Lake Worth. He opened the meeting by reaffirming his commitment to the NPVIC. He complimented the League on striking the right message for Florida Legislators: Florida's inequitable position in the Electoral College, when compared with smaller states like Wyoming, puts our state in a marginalized position. He said that this message is one which will resonate with Legislators.

As the new minority leader in the Senate, he said 2018 would be very busy for him; but he said he would provide support to any efforts to get the NPVIC bills hearings this coming session. The LWV looks forward to working with Senator Clemens and all the members of our Florida Legislature.

The National Popular Vote interstate compact would guarantee the Presidency to the candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The National Popular Vote bill has been enacted by 11 jurisdictions possessing 165 electoral votes—61% of the 270 electoral votes necessary to activate it, including four small jurisdictions (RI, VT, HI, DC), three medium-size states (MD, MA, WA), and four big states (NJ, IL, NY, CA). The bill has passed a total of 35 legislative chambers in 23 states—most recently by a 40–16 vote in the Arizona House, a 28–18 vote in the Oklahoma Senate, a 57–4 vote in New York Senate, a 37–21 vote in Oregon House, and a 26-16 vote in the New Mexico Senate. A total of 3,055 state legislators have either sponsored or cast a recorded vote for the bill.

The shortcomings of the current system of electing the President stem from *state* winner-take-all statutes (i.e., state laws that award all of a state's electoral votes to the candidate receiving the most popular votes in each *separate* state). Because of these state winner-take-all statutes, presidential candidates have no reason to pay attention to the issues of concern to voters in states where the statewide outcome is a foregone conclusion. As shown on the map, two-thirds of the 2012 general-election campaign events (176 of 253) were in just 4 states (Ohio, Florida, Virginia, and Iowa). Thirty-eight states were ignored.

### Hot Topic March 17 Dunedin Public Library 10 am National Popular Vote Interstate Compact

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## POVERTY ACTION TEAM WEBINAR

Rescheduled for Tuesday, March 13 at 5:30 p.m Register at the State League Office

Join us in this first Webinar on Poverty in Florida. Be a part of the Poverty Action Team to better the lives of our fellow Floridians. From our beginnings at the LWVFL convention last year, we are now ready to initiate a statewide effort. Dr. Norin Dollard and Dr. Susan Greenbaum, both from the University of South Florida and experts in the field will present a current review of Florida's poverty status relative to other states. Barbara Letvin and Beth Hovind, co-chairs of the North Pinellas LWV, will discuss current national and state league policies in this area. As a group we will all determine how we can best work on a statewide basis to secure a better future for our fellow citizens.

If you have any questions, contact Beth Hovind at 727-938-9809.

## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NORTH PINELLAS COUNTY POVERTY AGENDA

### **1. Increase the cash benefit level for families on TANF (Temporary Aid to Needy Families) to a livable and realistic level.**

Currently a mother with 2 children receives \$303-\$353/month. This is decided by the state legislature and has not been increased since 2008.

### **2. Advocate for employment at a livable wage for all workers.**

12% of families in Pinellas and Pasco live in poverty. 24% of our children. 69% of all jobs in Florida pay less than \$20/hour, less than the survival budget for a family of 4.

### **3. Increase the supply of affordable housing. Prevent the transfer of Sadowski Funds for uses other than affordable housing. Utilize Pennies for Pinellas to build affordable housing.**

In 2011 the average rent for a one bedroom apartment was \$765. In 2016 this cost was \$1031, a 30% increase. The Governor's budget is currently recommending taking funds from the funds Sadowski Fund for other uses. 5,000 families in Pinellas Co. are on waiting lists for housing assistance.

### **4. Ensure every child has affordable and competent early learning/childcare.**

Only 55% of children receive quality child care, and often low income children do not.

### **5. Maintain current health care and improve access for those not covered by insurance or Medicaid. Improve access to clinics.**

Florida has the second highest number of uninsured in the United States: 1 in 5 adults and 1 in 10 children. As ACA diminishes, this number will increase.

### **6. Support a competent, efficient and adequate county/regional mass transit system.**

Low income people are severely limited without public transportation.

### **7. Expand the Earned Income Tax Credit Program which rewards workers.**

15% of persons eligible for the program are not utilizing it.

### **8. Increase the use of Civil Citations for juveniles and increase judicial oversight of Direct File which transfers juvenile offenders directly into adult court.**

Change Florida statutes to require the use of civil citations for less serious offences and require legal representation for any youth where Direct File is an option prior to the decision. Currently, youth in different counties are treated differently.

### **9. Restore rights to felons who have served their sentences.**

1.7 million former felons cannot vote in Florida. They are also precluded from most forms of public assistance which could help them return to a regular life.

## Poverty Position to state; edited 1-11-2018

The League of Women Voters of North Pinellas County strongly supports the search for statewide solutions to the problems of poverty that persist in the state of Florida, including Pinellas and Pasco counties.

We are concerned about the many issues that surround poverty. Especially concerning is the impact on children and single parent families. In studying the issue, we find it impossible to isolate one cause as there are so many factors which need to be resolved.

There is much disagreement about how to solve poverty. Studies show that the poor are not that much different from you and I, just without the resources to live as we do. Much attention is paid to the culture of poverty--little is paid to the culture of wealth which continually blames the poor for their status.

In our study, we are finding that in this day of increasing economic prosperity, the ability to find reasonably priced housing is all but impossible in Pinellas County. At a recent forum held by our League, representatives from United Way, the Pinellas Housing Authority and Bright Community Trust estimated that as many as 5,000 low income and working families are still in need of housing that does not cost more than 1/3 of their income---an established standard for determining the percentage of income relegated to housing costs. In addition, our state is seeing increasing housing competition for low income housing from Puerto Ricans escaping the devastation of their homeland--50,000 to date.

Another concern for low income households is the availability of public transportation. Reliable and adequate public transportation is a must to access childcare, education and employment---three necessities needed to rise above poverty in our society. A recent Harvard study found that "access to quality transportation is one of the single strongest factors in whether someone can escape poverty...the longer your commute takes, the less likely you are to move up the income ladder." (TBT 2/19/17)

Jobs and wages are very important. 12% of Pinellas and Pasco County residents live in poverty, 24% of our children. Another 34% live below the income level needed for basic survival. 69% of all jobs in Florida pay less than \$20/hour or \$40,000 a year while the annual survival budget, as calculated by the United Way ALICE Project for a family of four is \$47,000.

We cannot overlook the current level of assistance allocated by the state of Florida to families who are without adequate employment, TANF. Our state legislature has determined that a mother with two children, living below the poverty level, will receive only \$303-353 month in cash assistance to meet her housing, transportation and household needs, an impossible feat. This benefit level has not changed since 2008. Also fewer families are being served by the TANF program. In 1995, 76% of families in poverty received cash assistance payments. In 2013, only 30% of families in poverty received financial assistance. This can be changed at the state level.

We join with others to bring the reality of living in poverty to the forefront--so the lives of families and children can be improved. We see great community efforts to help low income families through the setting up of food pantries, clothing giveaways, school and summer feeding programs, and weekend backpack food distributions. But this does not replace the income needed to purchase basic necessities on-going. We need to do more to help these families--at all levels--local, state and federal.

The League of Women Voters believes in meeting basic human needs, supporting programs and policies to prevent or reduce poverty and promoting self-sufficiency for individuals and families. We encourage others to join with us.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO JOIN OUR EFFORT, CONTACT BETH HOVIND; [bethse@gmail.com](mailto:bethse@gmail.com)



## LWV North Pinellas 2018 Calendar

- **February 21-23 FYI FREE St. Petersburg World Affairs Conference**, with outstanding speakers, USF Student Center, St. Petersburg, 200 Sixth Ave. S. Keynote speaker: Tuesday 6:30 pm  
Panel and other event 8:30 am-5 pm., Wednesday through Friday
- February 21 Poverty Committee meeting
- February 27 movie about Charter Schools St. Petersburg, 6:30-8:30pm
- March 2-3 Pinellas History Days
- March 5 International Relations, Geopolitics of Energy, Monday 2 pm Pinellas Park Library
- **POVERTY ACTION TEAM WEBINAR**  
Rescheduled for Tuesday, March 13 at 5:30 p.m Register at the State League Office  
If you have any questions, contact Beth Hovind at 727-938-9809.
- March 14 Board of Directors Meeting at Countryside Library 3:30 pm
- March 17 National Popular Vote, speaker Deb Mazzaferro, Dunedin Public Library 10 am
- March 22 Webinar-see Poverty Action Team Webinar on page 3
- April 2 International Relations, Saudi Arabia, Monday 2 pm Pinellas Park Library
- April 3 Voter Services Meeting at Karen K's, followed by anniversary meeting
- April 10 Board of Directors Meeting 3:30pm at Karen K
- ❖ **Saturday, April 28, 10-1. LWVNPC 2018 ANNUAL MEETING:** Jeff Johnson, Florida AARP State Director, at Countryside County Club, [3001 Countryside Blvd, Clearwater, FL 33761X](#), [727-796-2153](#). 10am Annual Meeting open to all LWVNPC members at no charge. Luncheon and speaker follows at a cost of \$30.00. Free valet parking. Additional information and reservation information will be sent to all members and available on our website: [LWVnorthpinellas.org](#)
- May 1 Voter Services meeting, followed by anniversary meeting
- May 8 Board meeting at Countryside Library
- May 18-19 LWV State Council, Orlando
- June 28-July 1 LWVUS National Convention in Chicago

## *Our 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*

The LWV North Pinellas Chapter will celebrate its 70th anniversary in 2018. This is a prime opportunity to highlight our chapter's achievements, past leadership and its role in the future of our county.

To bring many voices to this effort, Barbara Letvin has volunteered to steer the planning committee. She is interested in involving members who can suggest ideas, lunch venues, a prominent speaker, fundraising options, sponsors and anything that will personalize the celebrations. "I prefer to talk to members on the phone for ideas, email too, and occasional short, crisp meetings," she said. "Members have busy lives, so I will be flexible."

Barbara would like to hear from you! Call her at 727-858-1402 or email her at [bletvin64@hotmail.com](mailto:bletvin64@hotmail.com) with your thoughts. If you're interested in a short-term project and want to lend a hand, this committee might be for you. Your participation is important to bring greater visibility to our chapter, attract new members and strengthen its fiscal stability.