



THE VOTER



*The official newsletter of
the League of Women Voters
of North Pinellas County*

<https://lwvnorthpinellas.org>

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September–October 2022

Want to Empower Voters and Defend Democracy?

Most League of Women Voters members profess a deep commitment to protecting democracy, educating voters, and helping to ensure that all Americans can freely exercise their right to vote—in fact, that’s what drives so many of us to join the League.

VOTER SERVICE



Want to get involved? There are plenty of opportunities to help in the coming weeks:

Election Protection: The State League is recruiting volunteers for the Election Protection project, which is led by the Common Cause Education Fund. As an Election Protection volunteer you will receive training to serve as voters’ first line of defense against confusing voting rules, outdated infrastructure, misinformation, and obstacles to the ballot box. There are opportunities to serve as poll monitors, Canvassing Board monitors, recorders, and guides to answer questions from the field when challenges arise. These volunteer positions are performed in four-hour shifts, and some can be done from your home. To learn more and get involved, visit https://protectthevote.net/?utm_source=leaguewvfl

Social media monitors: The State League is also recruiting volunteers to help scan popular social media sites for mis- and dis-information related to the 2022 election and in some cases identify voters who are posting about problems voting, in order to connect them to resources and support. Monitors look for and track information related to election administration (voting, ballots, election workers, etc.). All monitors work from home, in shifts, and are given live training and detailed instructions to guide their searches. To sign up, please email info@lwvfl.org.

Help promote Vote411.org. Nationwide, the LWV offers a “one stop” nonpartisan guide to voters in partnership with state and local Leagues. Vote411.org contains information about your local ballot, including candidates running for office and descriptions of ballot measures in plain language, among other benefits. You can help by promoting Vote411.org through your social media channels. We are also distributing a print version in English and Spanish through local libraries and other venues.

Want to join the Voter Services Committee? Contact Laurie Meggesin at laurie.meggesin@gmail.com to get on the email list to learn about upcoming committee meetings and volunteer opportunities.



Julie Marcus
PINELLAS COUNTY SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS

BECOME AN ELECTION WORKER

The Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections Office is always looking for election workers to help conduct fair and accurate elections. Election workers serve as the foundation of our representative democracy.

If you are interested in making a difference in your community and country, please consider becoming an election worker.

Election work can take many forms:

- Poll Workers – Each poll worker is assigned to work at a specific polling location on Election Day. Poll workers must be available to set up their sites before the polls open and must remain at the polling place until after the polls close

[Click here for more information about becoming a poll worker.](#)

- Early Voting Workers – Before all state and federal elections, the Supervisor of Elections staffs 3 to 5 early voting sites for voters who wish to cast their ballots prior to Election Day. Early Voting can begin from 10 to 15 days before the election and last from 8 to 14 days. Early voting hours range from 8 to 12 hours a day.
- Other Election Work – The Elections Office relies on temporary election workers to help answer phones in a Call Center environment; open mail ballots; sort and count ballots for the post-election audit; process petitions for future ballot contests and initiatives; and perform other clerical tasks in support of upcoming elections. Also available are positions for electronic testing of election equipment in a warehouse environment, lifting up to 45 lbs.

ELECTION WORKER APPLICATION

Questions?
(727) 464-6110
pollworker@votepinellas.gov

From Our President: Marti's Musings



We applaud, encourage and appreciate members sharing their time and expertise working for the mission of the League - "Empowering Voters, Defending Democracy". This takes many forms both as individuals and as a community. Currently many are working to continue free and fair elections by being poll workers and poll watchers. Trust in our elections and the people who run them is essential.

My wish for you is that, as you approach your vote you may remain clear-headed in sorting the barrage of misinformation, disinformation, and sometimes honest information swirling around us. Often the League can help us do that.

Regardless of the results of the November 8 elections, there will be work for us to do as individuals and as an organization. I look forward to working with you,

Martha (Marti) Folwell
President, LWVNPC



Speakers Bureau Update: Florida Amendments 2022

Our "**DECISION 2022 - (2022 AMENDMENTS PRESENTATION)**" and the coinciding recorded training are now available within the LWVFL Speaker Bureau Toolbox.

To access the new presentation, the training and any other previous Speakers Bureau presentations please utilize the "League Management" portion of our website which can always be accessed via the bottom of the homepage of LWVFL.org

For those simply interested in the League's positions on the three amendments and not actually presenting this presentation, [click here to access our recently launched amendment landing page.](#)



In Vienna, Austria, 60% of residents live in city-owned, mixed-income "social housing." Shown above is the Alt-Erlaa, a municipal housing complex in Vienna. Rent is charged based on ability to pay, so no one is overburdened.

Tampa Bay Opinion

(Thursday, Aug 25, 2022)

Before the advent of public sewer and water systems, America's cities struggled to solve problems we rarely think about today.

Excrement flowed through the streets of Manhattan while cholera and typhoid flourished. The wealthy had plumbing and drank water provided by private companies, but the poor and working class were left to use chamber pots and drink well water of dubious quality. Finally, in the 1840s

after a cholera outbreak, New York piped clean water into the city and constructed its municipal sewer system. These investments in public infrastructure were costly, but essential to the functioning and health of the city.

Today we face a similar need for public investment in Tampa Bay. The housing crisis is out of control. According to a study released by the city of St. Petersburg, almost half of all renters were spending a burdensome amount on housing in 2020. Things have gotten worse since then; from 2021-2022, rental prices are up 31.1% according to Realtor.com.

Read the full article here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Pu6LKe1l65e29xn32SBWtfDEYtBsXAM5/view?usp=sharing>

Carson v Makin, Court Case

*Why Public Tax Dollars are Now Funding Private, Faith-Based Schools.
...and Why It's Legal*

By Dr. Vivian Posey



During my elementary school years, my parents chose to send each of their four children to a private, parochial school near our home in Cincinnati, Ohio. Affording the cost of this education, though slim by today's standards, was not easy for them at the time, they believed they were making the right choice for their family. There was never any discussion or expectation they would be reimbursed monetarily for the cost of tuition, uniforms, or supplies, as that clearly would have violated the law of separation of church and state.

Fast-forward to 2022, and the landscape around affordability of private, religious education has definitely changed. On June 21, 2022 the Supreme Court held in Carson v. Makin, that the state of Maine violated the Free Exercise Clause by excluding certain religious schools from a state program that allowed parents to use state funds to pay for tuition for their children to attend private, religious schools, even if the curriculum was clearly sectarian or religion based.

To continue Dr. Posey's article, click this link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bxf3uBJYK16Dn8p8jUIPSQz0gOyJt3Js/view?usp=sharing>

20 people arrested for voter fraud by the Florida Election Crimes Unit

By Teresa Willatt



In a press conference on Aug. 18, 2022, Gov. DeSantis announced to a crowd of supporters that the election crimes unit was charging 20 people across the state with voting illegally. "They were disqualified from voting because they have been convicted of either murder or sexual assault and they do not have the right to vote," DeSantis said of the 20 people charged. "They have been disenfranchised under Florida law."

State lawmakers passed legislation earlier this year, known as Senate Bill 524, that created the policing force. The legislation followed pressure from DeSantis for the state to spend more resources on combating alleged voter fraud, which experts say remains rare in American elections.

Many of the individuals recently charged by Florida new election crimes unit told investigators they had no idea that with their felony convictions, they were unable to vote when they cast ballots in the 2020 election. According to court documents, a lot of these folks thought that they were eligible because election officials sent them a voter registration card. They assumed officials were checking if they were eligible. Some folks even told police they registered to vote as a way of checking to see if they had their voting rights restored.

To continue reading this article, click this link:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/19VRmDiBnKtnXvfWesl4tY_KK84X - sGG/edit?usp=sharing&oid=103420404673271060330&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/document/d/19VRmDiBnKtnXvfWesl4tY_KK84X-sGG/edit?usp=sharing&oid=103420404673271060330&rtpof=true&sd=true)



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

Banned in Florida: Ranked Choice Voting

By Lorraine Kuenzel

This past April, The League of Women Voters of Florida [came out against Senate Bill 524](#) which was signed into law by Governor DeSantis. The League believes this law – with its proposed creation of an election-centered police force and increased criminal penalties against legitimate third-party voter registration organizations – “adds a number of unnecessary hurdles that will deter voters from participating in the

democratic process.”

Also tucked inside the bill was a ban on ranked choice voting (RCV), which deprives Florida voters and local governments the right to choose this form of democratic election in the future.

What is RCV?

The League of Women Voters of Maine – the first state to use RCV in a presidential election – [provides the following helpful information on their website:](#)

How it works:

- Voters rank candidates in the order of their preference: first choice, second choice, third choice, and so on.
- When all the ballots are counted, if one candidate gets more than 50% of the first-choice votes, they win.
- If no candidate receives more than 50% of first choice votes, the candidate with fewest votes is considered defeated.
- Voters who ranked the defeated candidate as their first choice have their votes counted for their second choice.
- This is repeated until only two candidates remain. The one with the most votes wins.

To continue reading about Ranked Choice Voting, click this link:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mfxw2fKK9uWo_vp_GBsrjTwzZBaq3Y8/view?usp=sharing

Watching Your Tax Dollars... Our League Is Hard at Work!

By Dr. Vivian Posey

Since 2004 teachers and students in Pinellas County public schools have benefited from a half penny of every property tax (ad valorem) dollar to supplement salaries, provide classroom technology, and enhance reading and arts education. This is known as “referendum” funding, and it is so well thought by citizens of Pinellas County that it has passed in every election since its inception and was overwhelmingly reapproved by the voters in 2020.

Reasons for the popularity of the referendum in Pinellas County include the many innovative programs that are made available to students that result directly from this additional funding and, most importantly, the outstanding record of accountability and transparency for the use of referendum funds by school district officials. (continued)

Continue the article by clicking on this logo



Membership Happy Hour September 12, 2022.

On September 12th, thirteen League members and friends got together for drinks and food at Grillsmith, Countryside. The agenda was purely social! We met new friends, swapped stories, shared an ice breaker, and celebrated being back to live events within an enclosed setting. Grillsmith did a great job of giving us our own space and table. Our Membership committee looks forward to planning more events in the near future. You do not have to be a member to attend. Ideas? We would LOVE to hear them. Contact jacquelinefarrell20@gmail.com, nblarson@gmail.com, or tlandry@conquestsystems.com □

Want to continue the fun?



Mina Harkins, Chris Taylor, Teresa Willat and Karen Owen

League member Beth Hovind has issued a challenge to all North Pinellas League members to support the election through volunteering or serving as poll workers. She encourages poll workers to donate their earnings to the League. All League members who serve will be invited to a party that Beth will throw in your honor. Contact Beth at bethse@gmail.com if you would like to participate.

New Members

Amanda Ortscheid
Debbie and Eddie Entreken
Phoebe Tave





Carolina Tave and Ellen Woll Registering voters on Voter Registration Day, September 20, 2022



Beth Hovind and Hailey Scheinman Registering Voters at Largo High School September 10, Pinellas County Council Fall Workshop

LEAGUE MEMBERS AT WORK

Dunedin Candidate Forum:

The North Pinellas League was pleased to cosponsor the Dunedin City Commissioner Candidate Forum in partnership with the Dunedin Chamber of Commerce on September 14, to a standing room only crowd of over 200 residents. Many thanks to former League president Bill Jonson for moderating, and to Beth Hovind, Sue Cornett, Tanya Landry, Ann Decker, and Mary Sanders for supporting the event.



Bill Jonson, Moderator



Candidates Stephanie Jones, Robert Walker, Jeff Gow



League members Mary Sanders and Laurie Meggesin

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Board Meeting - members welcome!



The LWWNP Board meets the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 4:00pm. Minutes for the September 2022 meeting can be found at:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-Udd11CHMvv57aGw6RxB17ZMF3lBt3uE/view?usp=sharing>

Please join us for any upcoming Board meeting to learn how you can participate more fully. Contact Gayla Larson (nbslarson@gmail.com) to obtain the link to join these informative and busy meetings.

Economic Equity Committee



BIG NEWS from the Economic Equity Committee!

We have a new chairperson: Mina Harkins. Mina is a relatively new member to our League, but has an extremely impressive background, especially in health care. (Read about her in the July and August Edition of the Voter in Spotlight.) Mina will be planning for the duration of October, and the

committee will reconvene in November. We are always looking for new people to join us, and you don't need to be a member.

Besides having a new chair, the committee held a successful Hot Topic Event on Affordable Housing on October 6th at the North Greenwood Recreation Center (see article in this issue.) Need more information: Contact Jacqueline Farrell at Jacquelinefarrell20@gmail.com or Barbara Letvin at bletvin@hotmail.com.

Education Committee



Today's Students, Tomorrow's Voters

On September 20th, the Education Committee helped celebrate National Voter Registration Day by hosting a Hot Topic titled, "Today's Students, Tomorrow's Voters: Preparing High School Students to Become Lifelong Voters." This virtual event was designed to inform parents, educators, and the community of what is being done in Pinellas County Schools to motivate students to pre-register to vote at age 16 and then vote in all elections once they reach the age of 18. Panelists

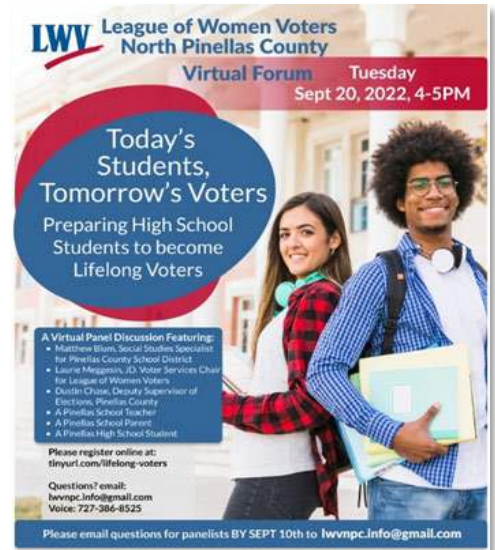
for this event included St. Petersburg College student, Chloe Smith, Largo High School teacher, Scott Kaplan, and District Social Studies Specialist, Matthew Blum. In addition to these experts, the panel also included parent, Angela Rouson and Deputy Supervisor of Elections, Dustin Chase.

The inspiration for this event was the work done by League member Laurie Meggesin, (Chair, My Vote Counts Committee), whose research into the voting behaviors of young Americans, ages 18-24, showed an alarming gap in the rate of voter participation between older and younger Americans. Her research has also led to several initiatives conducted by Education Committee members recently to encourage more participation among young voters in Pinellas County.

Many thanks to the members of the Education Committee for designing and hosting this important conversation! If you were not able to attend this virtual event, the link to the recording is:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tWb-HxGNsWGoAk6Wn38tVpRviYABclQL/view?usp=sharing>

If you want to do more to engage young voters in Pinellas County and reduce the participation gap between the voting age groups, contact Chair, Vivian Posey (vivposey@mail.com) and join the Education Committee! We need you!



Affordable Housing in Pinellas? Moving Forward

By Barbara Letvin

Approximately 55 people attended the LWVNPC's hot topic, "Affordable Housing in Pinellas, Moving Forward," held on October 6, 2022, at Clearwater's North Greenwood Rec Center. Zeb Atkinson, President of the NAACP Clearwater, moderated. Four panelists, representing both government and private entities, responded to questions about housing costs, zoning issues and rising rent.

Following opening remarks by Tanya Landry, Mr. Atkinson directed prepared questions to panelists, then moved around the room taking audience questions about restrictions on housing occupancy levels, accessory dwelling units (mother-in-law houses), hedge fund companies buying homes to flip them at much higher prices, ways to appeal denied rental applications and more. Two people said they would be homeless by the end of the month because of higher rent or the lack of available Section 8 housing. At the conclusion panelists were asked to leave a message for the audience. Each of them emphasized the power of people and the importance of making their voices heard to press for more affordable housing with local and state officials. This brought applause and cheers from the room. The panelists were Elizabeth Abernethy, Director of Planning and Development, City of St. Petersburg Mark Van Lue, Housing Development Manager, Pinellas Housing and Community Development, Jacqueline Reyes, Lead Organizer, Faith and Action for Strength Together (FAST) and Jeffrey Lorick, Director, Pinellas Office of Human Rights. Kathryn Driver of the Pinellas County Finance Authority had a table of resources for those interested.

Thanks to League members who made this event happen: **Sue Cornett, Jacqueline Farrell, Marti Folwell, , Mina Harkins, Beth Hovind, Tanya Landry, Gayla Larson, Barbara Letvin, Laurie Meggesin, Judy Owen, Karen Owen, Vivian Posey, Cathy Protopapas, Susan Rishworth, and Chris Taylor.**

If you missed it, The program can be viewed at:

<https://www.facebook.com/LWVNPC/videos/1467544110377978>

Pictures from the event below:



Tanya Landry, Roz Atkinson, and Zeb Atkinson



League Member Tanya Landry



League Member Cathy Protopapas

Want to Help Register Voters?

It's an exciting time for League members. If you wish to become more involved, why not become League-certified to facilitate voter registration, VBM, (Vote by Mail) and getting-out-the-vote? One has to pass an 18-question quiz to become certified.

Go to <https://lwvfl.org/>.

Scroll down the page to a box that looks like this:



To obtain the password, please contact a League Board member. Click on the League Management box to enter a page that has lots of boxes including the Register Voters box.

Once the password is entered, one can read the 3 pages of training material to take the quiz repeatedly if necessary to score 100 percent on the quiz. Then you are good to register voters with a certified partner under the League auspices for the next year. See you in Voter Service soon!

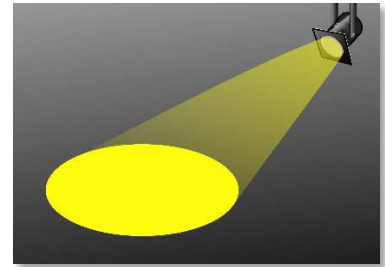
Thank you to North Pinellas League members who have volunteered their time and talent to date this election season to register, educate, and protect voters' rights:

Jill Armstrong, Sue Cornett, Peggi Crump, Ann Decker, Jacqui Farrell, Marti Folwell, Greg Hietpas, Beth Hovind, Mike Hughes, Kristin Jenkins, Bill Jonson, Cherri Klacsan, Lorraine Kuenzel, Tanya Landry, Barbara Letvin, Fran Mitchell, Linda Monroe, Miriam Benitez-Nixon, Joe Nixon, Amanda Ortscheid, Karen Owen, Vivian Posey, Cathy Protopapas, Jeanne Reynolds, Ruthann Richwine, Mary Sanders, Eliseo Santana, Hailey Scheinman, Ellen Seigman, Janet Skinner, Phil Stone, Carolina Tave, Joan Walko, Teresa Willatt, and Ellen Woll.

Spotlight: Introducing Laurie Meggesin



Anyone involved with Voter Services in recent months has had the pleasure of working with Laurie Meggesin. Laurie is currently the co-chair for Voter Services, the LWVNPC liaison for the GOTV project with the NAACP and is a force on the Education Committee.



Laurie is from the Chicago area. She recalls her interest in social justice issues began as a teenager, when she became involved with the large Latino community in her hometown. She was alarmed at the many inequities Latinos faced, including substandard housing. At Columbia College in Chicago, Laurie majored in Creative Writing. Following college she moved to Bogota, Colombia for a year, to teach English. It was a very turbulent time for Colombia, and in an effort to blend in, Laurie learned to perfect her language skills and her accent. Following that year, she moved to Dallas and worked for non-profit organizations, teaching recent immigrants English, job skills, GED, and U.S. history and government for those seeking to qualify for permanent residency.

Laurie chose to return to school in her 30's and earned a law degree from the University of Texas Law School. Following graduation, she worked as an attorney and partner of a law firm that represented communities and workers who had suffered injuries caused by exposure to environmental toxins.

Laurie and her husband moved to Clearwater seventeen years ago. They were attracted to not only the beauty of the area, but also the diversity of Tampa Bay, particularly the Latino community. Here, she became Executive Director of the Florida College Access Network, whose mission is to lead the collaborative movement to ensure that every Floridian can achieve an education beyond high school and a rewarding career. Her passion for expanding access to education to underrepresented populations fueled her interest in turning students into voters, which she does today as part of her work on the Education Committee.

Laurie joined the LWVNPC following the 2020 election. When she is not working hard for the League, she and her husband are ardent campers, and love the state and national parks.

DATES TO REMEMBER

September 21, 2022
Wednesday

Vote411.org is LIVE

October 11, 2022
Tuesday

Deadline for Voter Registration

October 24 –
November 6, 2022
Monday - Sunday

Early Voting

November 8, 2022
Tuesday

General Election



Need a Ride? Check our Transit Guide

PINELLAS COUNTY TRANSIT SERVICES



Free Community
Guide Created by
LWVNPC!

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-OSYB3axU7d8QjbpkV1Vpwt99wevqFai/view?usp=sharing>
(Spanish printable version)

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1A4lrxUGoBaB2G_ONyKvCq4ZvpGKiLPuh/view?usp=sharing (Spanish digital version)

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1i906OQr7Eex6hezTZ43qHOP-sXqLI_Zc/view?ths=true (English printable version)

https://my.lwv.org/sites/default/files/transportation_guide_digital_9-27-21.pdf (English digital version)

Reflections:

By: *Jacqueline Farrell*

For two weeks in September, my husband and I travelled to Eastern Europe. We started in Berlin, and journeyed through Poland, Hungary, Austria, the Czech Republic, and finally back to Berlin via Dresden, Germany. We also visited the Auschwitz-Buchenwald concentration camp. The eerie thing about Auschwitz is how benign it looked from the outside. One of our tour members commented that it almost looked like a site for a corporate retreat: red brick buildings, tree lined paths, green lawns. It was when we went inside the buildings that we saw the relics of horror.



Schönbrunn Palace, Vienna, Austria

In the cities, there were charming old streets and celestial churches, many rebuilt following World War II (with the use of pictures) shops and malls, peaceful green parks and myriads of buses, cars, trams and subways. There were also too many monuments to those who were murdered, because of ethnicity, religion, political views, age, and disabilities. Once the unspeakable crimes of the Nazi regime ended, all of these places with the exception of West Berlin and Austria were behind the Iron Curtain. Again, times when brave people stood in city squares and demanded freedom, only to be met by subsequent crackdowns, tanks, arrests, and even executions.

I want to remind myself as often as I can, that free and fair elections and democracy are precious and vulnerable. We must remember to do everything we can to preserve them, even by the smallest gestures. And most of all, we must exercise our most effective privilege: voting.

We would like to make Reflections a regular feature. Have a thought or epiphany you would like to share? This is the place. Contact nblarson@gmail.com or jacquelinefarrell20@gmail.com.

Happy Hour

Hosted by the Membership Team



RELAX AND ENJOY!



COCKTAILS & CONVERSATION

Crown & Bull Restaurant

319 Main Street, Dunedin, FL 34698



Monday, November 14, 2022

5:30 – 6:30 pm

Bring your favorite Thanksgiving recipe to share
with your friends – not the food, just the recipe!

Please RSVP to nbslarrison@gmail.com

