



THE VOTER

LWV

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

<https://lwvnorthpinellas.org>

email: lwvnpc.info@gmail.com

(727) 386-8525 | PO Box 7867, Clearwater, FL 33758

July-August 2023

State of Florida Admits Diminishment of Black Voting Power in Redistricting Case, Agrees to Path for New Remedial Map for 2024

August 12, 2023 TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — The legal challenge against Florida’s congressional map in *Black Voters Matter Capacity Building Institute v. Byrd*, which includes the League of Women Voters of Florida, has been significantly strengthened as a result of an agreement between the parties.

Specifically, as part of the agreement, Florida’s Secretary of State, the Florida House of Representatives, and the Florida Senate have admitted that the state’s congressional map diminishes the voting power of Black Floridians and prevents them from electing a candidate of their choice in Florida’s 5th Congressional District. In doing so, this admission supports the plaintiffs’ argument that Florida’s congressional map violates Article III, § 20 of the Florida Constitution known as the Fair Districts Amendment, which states that redistricting plans are prohibited from being drawn to diminish minority voters’ ability to elect representatives of their choice. Additionally, today’s agreement states that if the plaintiffs prevail, a new remedial plan will be in place in time for the 2024 primary elections.

The earlier version of the Fifth Congressional District, which allowed Black voters to elect candidates of their choice, was ordered by the Florida Supreme Court as a result of a legal challenge to the state’s 2012-drawn map. The current congressional map, promoted by Governor Ron DeSantis, violates the Fair Districts Amendment by diminishing the ability of Black voters to elect representatives of their choice.

Black Voters Matter Capacity Building Institute v. Byrd was filed in the Circuit Court of Leon County by a group of individual voters and the community-based organizations Black Voters Matter, Equal Ground, the League of Women Voters of Florida, and Florida Rising, all supported by the National Redistricting Foundation (NRF). To continue reading this article, go to: <https://lwvfl.org/state-of-florida-admits-diminishment-of-black-voting-power-in-redistricting-case-agrees-to-path-for-new-remedial-map-for-2024/>

Editor’s Note: In a related article: <https://apnews.com/article/florida-redistricting-desantis-race-civil-rights-2f97367f325a77aca00701b08e9d22a4>, it was stated that the litigation continues, with the lawsuit narrowing its focus to the fifth Congressional District and “will drop similar concerns for redrawn congressional districts in central Florida and the Tampa Bay area. It also will abandon two other claims.” Arguments will be heard on August 24, 2023. Watch for the decision in the coming weeks.

Federal Judge Declines to Temporarily Block Two Anti-Voter Provisions of Florida's Senate

July 12, 2023

A federal judge has declined to block enforcement of two provisions of a Florida anti-voter law, Senate Bill 7050, [challenged](#) by the League of Women Voters of Florida (LWVFL). Campaign Legal Center (CLC) is representing LWVFL in the [lawsuit](#).

One of the provisions allowed to remain in effect fines nonpartisan civic engagement groups \$50,000 every time a volunteer with certain felony convictions helps register a voter. The other requires volunteers to provide a detailed receipt to those who fill out voter registration forms, and each receipt must contain the volunteer's full name. Both provisions have the potential to severely impact the availability of individuals who register voters in often-overlooked communities.

In response to the order, CLC and LWVFL issued the following statement:

"We are disappointed by this decision, which will severely curtail the ability of nonpartisan civic engagement groups like LWVFL to engage with and educate voters. In the past, the League has relied on volunteers with felony convictions to assist in engaging other persons with felony convictions to learn about their eligibility to register to vote. This ruling leaves in place the barriers that prevent persons with felony convictions from assisting with voter registration.

To read the entire article, go to <https://lwwfl.org/federal-judge-declines-to-temporarily-block-two-anti-voter-provisions-of-floridas-senate-bill-7050/>

Editor's Note: The Florida Rights Coalition, on behalf of citizens with felony convictions, has filed a federal lawsuit against the State of Florida stating that "the State of Florida has failed to realize the promise of Amendment 4, which restored the rights of returning citizens, providing all fees and fines associated with their case." Problematically, the state has not created a central database for returning citizens to determine what they owe, and citizens were recently arrested for voting even after they received voting cards from the state. To read more about it:

<https://www.tampabay.com/news/florida-politics/2023/07/19/florida-vote-felon-restoration-amendment-4-desantis/>

<https://www.axios.com/2023/07/20/desantis-lawsuit-florida-voting-rights-felons>



From Our President: Marti's Musings

TRUST and TRUTH are necessary for our democracy to thrive. We must be able to trust our basic institutions and the people who inhabit them. Major examples are our election systems at all levels, our courts and justice system (including the FBI), and our taxing systems. Other examples are our banks, our transportation systems, our health care systems, our food delivery systems, our public schools, and our news media. A simple, basic everyday example is that we trust others to drive in the correct traffic lane, in the correct direction at a reasonable speed.

Democracy depends on responsible people (citizens and others) doing their jobs and activities competently and conscientiously. We would hope that people would value facts and the truth in all their dealings. In our current world these things are not always true, and some people bend the truth for their own selfish purposes.

The League of Women Voters is populated with people using their talents and energy to "do the right thing" for the general welfare and encouraging our public servants to do likewise.

Thank you to our members; we appreciate you and your contributions of time, talent and effort.



Martha (Marti) Folwell, President, LWVNPC

Coming
Soon!

New & Improved Website

The LWVNPC website is undergoing a makeover! Stay tuned for emails announcing when the website is ready for members. The new website will have many new capabilities, such as links to different social media sites, forms, plus making it easier join, renew, and make payments online. Many thanks to Jody Calder at **JP Global Marketing, Inc.** who has worked tirelessly on this project. Jody can be reached at <https://jpglobalmarketing.com> 727-808-6199.

Pinellas Trail Adopt-A-Mile Program

On September 23rd, the LWVNPC will be participating in the Adopt A Mile Program. This program is sponsored by Keep Pinellas Beautiful and allows individuals and organizations to adopt an area and participate in clean-up and beautification four times yearly. This is a great opportunity for our members to be visible in the community while helping our environment. Our mile is **Union Street from Douglas Avenue to Powderhorn Drive in Clearwater**. Stay tuned for instructions via email. For more information, contact Tanya Landry at tlandry@conquestsystems.com



Celebrating National Voter Registration Day on Tuesday, September 19, 2023

Submitted By Vivian Posey



"National Voter Registration Day is a day of civic unity. It's an opportunity to set aside differences; enjoy the rights, responsibilities, and opportunities we all share as Americans; and celebrate our democracy together."

<https://nationalvoterregistrationday.org/about/>

National Voter Registration Day is an annual nonpartisan civic holiday that was first observed in 2012. Since then, it has quickly gained momentum and now has over 80 partners including the National

Association of Secretaries of State, the National Association of Election Officials, the American Library Association, Goodwill Industries, Microsoft, and of course, the League of Women Voters!

On National Voter Registration Day, volunteers and organizations from all over the country organize registration events, post messages to encourage voter registration, and host voter information presentations that are designed to create a broad awareness of voter registration opportunities and to reach tens of thousands of voters who may not register otherwise.

Watch for more information about events scheduled in Pinellas County in recognition of National Voter Registration Day or contact LWWNPC Voter Services Chair, Linda Metzkwow, (lindametzkwow@tampabay.rr.com) to plan and organize your own event in your own Pinellas County neighborhood!

From the media, you may like ...



The Earth Is Dancing Too Close to a Temperature Tipping Point

"Between this summer's biblical floods, apocalyptic fires, and life-threatening heat domes, people are starting to wonder whether we've lurched over some sort of climate tipping point. Climate scientists and ecologists who study tipping points say what we're seeing are merely extreme events amplified by global warming. But they've been warning about the risk of climate tipping points for years. Now people are listening."

Read the article at

https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2023/07/19/climate-change-has-earth-reached-a-tipping-point-on-warming/20574d62-2622-11ee-9201-826e5bb78fa1_story.html

On July 28th, Florida This Week featured a segment on the Amendment to Limit Government Interference With Abortion, which the LWWFL supports. Abortion rights supporters say they are halfway to getting enough signatures to put a pro-choice amendment on next year's ballot. Watch it at: <https://video.wedu.org/video/jul-28-2023-a6hehh/> at minute 2.00.

Update: LWVNPC continues to collect petitions to get the Right to Clean Water (RTCW) initiative on the 2024 ballot. Despite having a comprehensive body of state environmental laws and regulations, the condition of Florida waters continues to decline. If the measure to amend the state constitution passes, *“it creates a fundamental right to clean and healthy waters, clarifies prohibited actions and inactions that harm (or threaten to harm) waters, and defines important terms. It also allows Floridians to enforce this right through the ability to sue state executive agencies that violate this right.* “This grassroots movement needs approximately 900,000 verified petition signatures by February 2024 to get on the 2024 ballot. At this point, there are between 80,000 signed petitions, so there is much work to be done.



**To sign the petition or for more information go to <https://www.floridarighttocleanwater.org/>

LWVNPC Members in Action



Economic Equity Chair Mina Harkins visited East Community Library at St. Petersburg College on July 15, 2023, where she provided information and opportunities to sign The Amendment to Limit Government Interference on Abortion petition, which the LWVFL is supporting. Here she is pictured with member Evy Bernstein. To learn more about the proposed amendment and/or to sign the petition, go to: <https://floridiansprotectingfreedom.com/>

Alianza for Progress

Submitted by Cathy Protopapas



Bomba Body Dance and Drum Co

Eliseo Santana (LWVNPC Member and past Vice President), current Florida Director of LULAC, (League of United Latin American Citizens) coordinated with *Alianza for Progress*, an organization advancing the power of Puerto Ricans and Latinxs by creating winning campaigns that amplify community voices and advance progressive causes. *Alianza* embraces the quest for freedom, equality, and justice. Using a variety of tactics, the organization provides ways for their community to take action on issues they care about most, catapulting issues into the limelight. The organization's efforts have increased diversity in government representation, amplified community needs and causes, and elected 25 representatives from Orlando and surrounding areas.

On July 7th, 2023, leaders from as far as Orlando and Hillsborough County gathered at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Clearwater for a special event that highlighted civic and cultural accomplishments. Cultural music, food and friendship, leadership awards, and civic engagement were in abundance. Presenters included *Alianza for Progress* Executive Director Marcos Vilar; Karen Perez, Hillsborough County School Board member District 6; Kathleen Beckman, Clearwater City Councilmember and LWVNPC member; Linda Perez-Davilla, President of *Boricuas De Corazon* which helps victims of natural disasters link to resources; and Myriam Irizarry, previous County Court Judge, Group 9, Pinellas County and author of '*The Power of Perseverance*'. Cathy Protopapas and Mina Harkin of LWVNPC attended to provide information about voter registration and opportunities to sign two petitions: the Florida's Right to Clean Water Amendment and Amendment to Limit Government Interference with Abortion.



Eliseo Santana, Cathy Protopapas, Mina Harkin

More information can be found at <https://alianza.org/>.

True Life Testimony Christian Outreach Center, New Port Richey, Annual Back-to-School event Saturday, July 22, 2023.



Pastor of True-Life Testimony Christian Outreach Center, Dr. Rebecca McKay, invited the LWVNPC to their annual Back-to-School event and barbecue. They graciously provided a wonderful (and cool) environment for Voter Services Chair Linda Metzkwow, and members Nancy Sidrow and Jacqueline Farrell to offer information on voter registration, and opportunities to sign two petitions endorsed by the League: The Amendment to Limit Government Interference with Abortion and the Florida's Right to Clean Water Amendment. Dr. McKay and members also offered information from the Supervisor of Elections of Pasco County.

Pictured left to right: Linda Metzkwow, Nancy Sidrow, Dr. Rebecca McKay, and Jacqueline Farrell

Recently, LWVNPC member Dennis McDermott composed a letter to Representative Anna Paulina Luna on July 4th, 2023. He shared his written thoughts with the Board of Directors, who considered it a model of constructive and respectful communication with an elected official. It is reprinted here, with his permission.

On this special day, I write to share with you some personal thoughts on what I and many of my neighbors hope to see from you as our elected representative in Congress.

The most important things you can do to represent those of us who live in Florida's 13th Congressional district are to communicate with us; to learn about our priorities; and to focus on supporting positive and sustainable solutions which support our priorities.

Most of your constituents are genuinely concerned about financial and economic inequality and resulting economic inequities. Directly or indirectly, we see several critical issues which threaten our entire nation, and which pose enhanced risks to our local social and economic viability, among which include:

- *A housing affordability crisis which threatens everyone – with disparate impact on low-to-moderate households, including teachers, health care workers, public safety workers, and the entire hospitality industry, the very backbone of the Pinellas County economy.*
- *Extreme disparities in healthcare delivery, a by-product of divisive and absurd partisan federal policy debate and actions over the past 15 years, or more.*
- *Reproductive health has become a false religious battle, and Congress has refused to embrace common sense federal legislation focused on: Ensuring open access to contraception and birth control; Providing a guarantee that every person -- women included -- can travel freely across state lines for health care (including abortions); and Protecting doctors and other medical professionals from local or state*

retribution for providing necessary and medically appropriate reproductive health care, including abortion care.

- An urgent need for a rational federal guest worker/ immigration policy which addresses the need for workers in critical industries – agriculture, food services, construction, hospitality and entertainment (to name a few) – vital sectors of Florida’s economy.
- Mass shootings and resulting mayhem as a result of NRA-inspired propaganda to eliminate civilian possession of military-style weapons and ammunition. Congress has a duty to create permanent federal legislation to mirror the 1994 Federal Assault Weapons Ban, a law which expired in 2004 despite clear and irrefutable evidence of its efficacy in reducing gun violence.

Thank you for your service to represent our district in Congress, and for making time to more fully understand our priorities to best represent the interests of your constituents.

Spotlight Tampa Bay

Submitted by Mina Harkins



The *Tampa Bay Times* launched a community series last week called **Spotlight Tampa Bay** “that invites residents to discuss hot topics with Times journalists and experts and thought leaders.” Economic Equity Chair **Mina Harkins** attended and submitted this report.

As an attendee at the recent *Tampa Bay Times* Spotlight on Tampa Bay, that focused its inaugural community event on housing issues, I felt as if “what needs to happen” was discussed more than “how to get things done.” Speakers Jeff Brandes, a former Florida legislator from the area, Bob Buckhorn, former Tampa mayor, Melissa

Zornitta, Hillsborough Planning Commission Executive Director, and Rebecca Liebson, Times’ real estate reporter, all agreed that housing is a serious issue and offered a number of good perspectives.

After hearing about the prospect of 1000 people moving to Florida daily, all panelists agreed that any and all housing will help. The focus should be on supply, not usage, but planned usage. Of course, developers only want to build high end units, but they can be incentivized to do otherwise. The idea that affordable housing reduces property values was debunked by citing past examples that proved blended communities can be successful for everyone. During Q and A, constituents impacted by the rising cost and shortage of housing came forward. They included returning college graduates, families with children reunited after foster care, artists and entrepreneurs, returning citizens, the formerly evicted, and everyone who can no longer keep up with rising insurance rates.

One thumbs up for the Florida’s legislature, was passing legislation aimed at stabilizing the property insurance market. Nationally Florida has had 8% of the claims, but 80% of the litigation, thanks to Florida’s previous insurance guidelines and one-way litigation fees. Unfortunately, the impact of the new laws will take time to have full effect, possibly not until 2025. Once there are more insurance choices, and a reversal of full replacement policies with cash value equivalent policies, rates should go down. A good progress monitor is the number of policyholders carried by last resort insurer Citizens Property Insurance.

The state was also criticized on several points. The state Office of Community Affairs has been eliminated. For the most part, local government actions have been preempted by the state. The toolbox available to local authorities

has been reduced, so that those who know their localities best are not able to focus finances where focus is needed. The new Live Local law, for instance, preempts local government from setting height limits. State lawmakers seem more driven to take control of localities than working with them. Proposed projects often qualify for financing with federal and/or state support but elected local boards block projects because nearby residents protest. Good pre-planning and communicating fact-based data to those residents can encourage acceptance.

Locally, Pinellas County is considered built-out. In Hillsborough County, infrastructure maintenance is far behind schedule. The area has moved from racially segregated to economically segregated. Much pre-planning is needed, so that development and redevelopment are not halted by the need for amenities, including schools, roads, and local businesses to support new communities.

A few new ideas proposed were: Manufactured housing and pre-set Additional Dwelling Unit (ADUs) plans allowing faster completion. Housing vouchers will help but the federal application process is back logged.

To read more about the event go to:

https://enewspaper.tampabay.com/infinity/article_popover_share.aspx?guid=9ac93bb0-e181-410a-86b7-d0897ed39e19



The next Spotlight Tampa Bay is scheduled for Jan. 30 at the Tampa Theatre from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. A panel of experts and *Times* journalists will take a closer look at our schools. Proceeds from the event will go to the Tampa Bay Journalism Fund.

Cocktails & Conversation

Whether you've been a member for a few days or a few years, LWVNPC invites you to join us for our "member orientation." We'll discuss how to best utilize your membership, who to contact, how to network, and much more.



Please join us on **Monday, September 11, 2023, at 5:30pm** for an in-person orientation presentation on your League. Our discussion will give you a better picture of what the League of Women Voters of North Pinellas County does and how **YOU** fit in. Plan to meet us at:

GrillSmith Countryside
2539 Countryside Boulevard, #6
Clearwater, FL 33761

We look forward to gathering with you at this in-person event. Please plan to attend. RSVP to nbslarson@gmail.com so we can send you the link and reminder for this meeting.





Terri Byrne
Nancy Sidrow
Evelyn Bernstein
Carolyn Sorice
Diana Carsey



LWVNPC is saying “Goodbye” to student member, **Hailey Scheinman**, who will be attending UCF as of August 19th. Hailey plans to join the collegiate chapter of LWV that has been established on the UCF campus in Orlando. Hailey has been a valued member of the Education Committee, and although we are sad to see her go, we know she has a wonderful future ahead!

COMMITTEE UPDATES

**Board Meeting -
members welcome!**



The LWVNP Board meets the 1st Wednesday of each month at 4:00pm. Minutes for the July 2023 meeting can be found at:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BFnnPDO2jAa8-V_eHAVBVmTw7v2ffouh/view?usp=sharing

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

Economic Equity Committee



Brandes (Florida Policy Project) might be a good speaker for a future Hot Topic on this subject.

The committee had a small call-to-action event at the East Clearwater Library for petition gathering with good results. Mina Harkins, committee chair, will be attending a community session in St. Petersburg on August 16, 2022, about affordable housing. She reported that the League is well represented in legal actions regarding redistricting and other litigation. There is a bill pending to protect lenders and work is being done on a renters' bill of rights. Mina further noted an NPR report which stated that Florida has removed 408,000 patients from Medicaid rolls. She remarked that Jeff

Education Committee



Florida Policy Institute Letter: The committee discussed a request from LWVFL for local leagues to sign the Florida Policy Institute authored letter to Florida Commissioner of Education, Manny Diaz. The letter requests additional information related to the number of students (300,000) who have applied to date for the tax-funded voucher to attend private schools and the financial impact of this program for fiscal year 23-24. The Education Committee received approval from President Folwell to sign this letter in support of this request for transparency and accountability related to HB-1.

July 29, 2023, Lunch 'n Learn: Comments from members who had attended the July 29th Lunch n' Learn (Topic-Young Adult Outreach in LWV) were discussed. The link to the recording of this Lunch n' Learn was shared with members who were not in attendance and can be found on the LWVFL site under League management

https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1tWpMAMIPMe6lxSfy-ua1S5UEWDv6Y_Pi

When you open the link, click on "S4-E14: Young Adult Recruitment.mp4.

Pinellas County School Board Meeting Report: Reports were provided by members who attended School Board meetings in June and July. Members were asked to sign up to attend the upcoming meetings, August 22nd and September 12th in order to represent LWVNPC.

VOTER SERVICE



Linda Metzkw reported on her committee, and Marti Folwell reported she has received about 100 cards in the mail for returning citizens. We need to decide how to distribute these cards.

The first registration event was held on July 22 when members were able to register a 21-year-old online, gave an application to another, and talked to a 16-year-old about registering at that age. The event coordinator offered lunch, and Jacqueline Farrell was able to secure signatures on many petitions. Regarding the nursing home situation, Linda Metzkw was told that by law the area agency on aging must notify people in nursing homes about the Vote by Mail ballot changes. Our committee will follow up to help with the outreach.

The next committee meeting will be Monday, August 21 via Zoom, when Tanya Landry and Ellen Siegman will discuss coordination to cover future candidate forums. Marti Folwell has timing signs for use at these forums. Bryan Beckman asked about voting data and whether such material is available to us.

Also coming in September! A postcard party to address Amendment 4 Postcards to mail to Returning Citizens. Date, time, and location to be announced later via email. For more information, contact lindametzkow@tampabay.rr.com

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION GROUP



Bryan Beckman reported that the Sierra Club held a social where the Pinellas County Sustainability/Resiliency manager provided an update on the new resiliency plans. Next month someone from Sierra Club Florida will talk about water. At the last Environmental Committee meeting, they discussed a possible Hot Topic on water to be held in October. With the board's encouragement, Bryan Beckman will pursue this action. Part of this action would be to prepare a

letter template for attendees to use in contacting their representatives requesting specific actions.

The next meeting is August 30, 2023 via Zoom. For more information, contact Bryan at bryanbeckman63@gmail.com



Education Committee Alert --

Vivian Posey, Chairperson of the Education Committee, is asking for volunteers. Please mark your calendars with these dates, and contact Vivian to let her know your preferred event and time by email: vivposey@gmail.com or by calling/texting Vivian at (239-281-0954).

- Saturday, September 16th Largo High School
Pinellas County Council PTA Fall Workshop (7:00 am -2:00 pm)
Time Slots: 7:00-9:30 am, 9:30-11:30am, or 11:30-2:00 pm (2 volunteers needed for each shift)
- Wednesday, September 20th-Eckerd College, (St. Petersburg campus)
Reflective Service-Learning Fair 11:00am-2:00 pm (2 volunteers needed)

- Monday October 2nd-Countryside High School
College and Career Fair 4:00-7:30 pm-Dinner provided. (2-3 volunteers needed)

All materials for each event will be provided for you, so there is no need to purchase anything in preparation to volunteer. The only things needed are enthusiasm and your great smiles!

Thank you for considering participating in one of all of these events to represent the League of Women Voters. Your help is so appreciated!

Voter Services Committee Alert:

We are looking for a **Candidate Forum chairperson**. Responsibilities include working with the municipality and/or local chamber of commerce; filling positions such as timekeeper, moderator; assisting in developing questions if needed, and being familiar with procedures, which are documented. Outgoing chair Ellen Siegman will train replacement. Contact: ellenisiegman@gmail.com

Are you tech savvy? Like to do Graphic Design? Chairperson Linda Metzkwow is in need of someone to help with creating QR Codes, flyers, brochures and graphics for the Voter Services Committee. Contact: lindametzkwow@tampabay.rr.com

Wanted: LWV Members



For: Sharing What You Know and Love!

Do you have a special skill or talent? Did you travel to a unique location this summer? Are you engaged in community service or have an occupation that teens will find interesting? If so, the Take Stock in Children virtual mentoring program is a great place to share what you know with some exceptionally talented students in Pinellas County schools.

The Take Stock in Children (TSIC) Scholarship is a statewide program supported by the Florida Department of Education that awards college scholarships to qualified, often first in the family to attend college, Pinellas County students. The program is funded through the Pinellas Education Foundation. The students who are accepted into TSIC attend weekly 30-minute virtual meetings to learn about their community, careers, and future opportunities to help others.

Requirements Include:

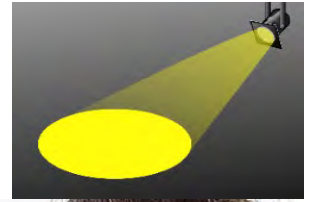
- ✓ 30 minutes of your time
- ✓ A computer, phone, or tablet with internet access
- ✓ An engaging presentation or "story"
- ✓ An interest in helping teens prepare for life after high school

You can schedule your 30-minute presentation on a day and time that is convenient for you. To find out more about the program, and to schedule a time to speak with a group of TSIC students, contact Patti Muscaro (727-488-4816), or Elizabethmuscaro@pinellaseducation.org.

Your time and expertise will be most appreciated by the Pinellas Education Foundation and these very deserving students!

Spotlight: Introducing Phil Stone

Many in the LWVNPC engage in social activism, but few can rival Phil Stone. Phil began his work in his native New York City, whereas a fourteen-year-old he visited local parks and gathered signatures on petitions to end the Vietnam War. Phil came from a family who was active in social causes, particularly his mother, and benefited from family support for his efforts.



Phil moved to New England for college and continued his work there. He organized food co-ops throughout Central Massachusetts. Following college, he supported himself by working in local factories and machine shops. His first paid organizing position was with the Clamshell Alliance (www.ClamshellAlliance.com), a New England coalition of anti-nuclear groups opposed to the construction of the Seabrook nuclear plants. Later, he worked for Physicians for Social Responsibility and Science for the People. Eventually, he felt the need for more income, and attended Northeastern University Law School in Boston.



During his entire professional career, he concentrated his practice in the area of bankruptcy and commercial litigation. His social activism continued; he organized protests at a local manufacturer of nuclear weapons and C3 components, and mobilized opposition to US wars in Central America, Iraq and Afghanistan. Along the way he served as President of the local chapter of the ACLU and served multiple terms on the Executive Committee of the county Bar Association. For a time, he worked for a law firm, but after seven years he went out on his own. He specialized in clients who were in danger of losing their homes and represented them in the Federal Bankruptcy Court. As Phil reported, “I didn’t make a lot of money, but I helped a lot of people.”

Phil served for more than 20 years on the Board of Worcester Common Ground, a local Community Development Corporation. He said he was most proud of creating over 200 units of affordable housing in Worcester, Massachusetts. Creating affordable housing led to creating a community, with gardens, playgrounds, parks, and youth programs.

Following a few years of “snowbirding,” Phil moved permanently to Florida in 2016. After 40 years of work in New England, where he was well known to people, it was challenging to come to a place where he knew no one. In time, he became interested in the NAACP and joined on. In 2021, he conceived the Get Out the Vote (GOTV) project in preparation for the 2022 election which focused on voter registration and education in historically low turnout voter precincts composed primarily of people of color. Part of the project included outreach to other organizations, which led the NAACP to partner with the LWVNPC. The relationship was mutually helpful in that the NAACP was able to provide access to voters and the League was able to provide training, education and voter registration.

Looking toward the future, Phil identifies four key issues: 1) protecting the environment, 2) reproductive rights including the right to a safe and legal abortion, 3) support for educators and public education and 4) affordable housing. As a private citizen, he is looking to support progressive candidates who support these issues in upcoming elections.

When Phil is not serving his community, he is an ardent gardener, active in his Quaker community, a “gym rat” according to his wife, and always an activist.

Reflections

My Civil Rights Tour

LWVNPC Member **Beth Hovind** recently embarked on a five day "Civil Rights Tour" which began and ended in Atlanta but wove through Georgia and Alabama and explored historic settings of the Civil Rights Movement of the 20th century. Her diary will educate and deepen our sensitivity to the racial struggles of Black Americans and is featured in installments in each Voter issue. Here is Day 3 of 5.

Tuskegee Airmen in 1943, c/o National Park Service

Tuskegee Airmen in 1943, c/o National Park Service



Thursday, January 12: Third Day

Heading down the road to Montgomery in heavy traffic, we decide our first stop will be the Tuskegee Airmen National Historic site. The federal government has done an excellent job preserving these early Civil Rights sites. Morton Field was developed by contract of the US Government with Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute. Built in 1941-1943, the purpose was to train Black pilots for WWII, as they had been systematically eliminated from flying in the Armed Services. Here they were trained for the Army Air Corp, who called it a "military experiment." Encouraged by Eleanor Roosevelt, FDR commissioned this experiment.

About 17,000 Black men and women were trained for service in the AAC,

including pilots and all of the associated services, such as mechanics, parachute riggers, cooks, etc. All were considered Tuskegee Airmen. By the end of the war, 994 pilots were trained and went on to record success on the battlefield. In 2007, they were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest civilian honor that can be awarded to American citizens. At least one woman was a licensed pilot but not allowed to fly with the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) because of her race. Equality for all races, creeds, colors, religions or national origins was ordered by President Truman in 1948. There is sadness that such a facility had to ever exist but also an elation for all that was achieved there. Another example of Black people succeeding in proving to themselves, and they would not allow their success to be stopped by intolerant prejudice. Tuskegee is also near the area of the fatal study of syphilis where Black people were not given the available cures.

Our next stop is to be Selma on the Freedom Trail to see the bridge of Bloody Sunday and a small museum there. We start to run into very stormy weather, increasing winds and tornado warnings. We tuned into local stations and found that Selma had suffered a hit by a mile wide tornado, uprooting trees, tearing off roofs and downing power lines. At least one death has been reported. Informed by the park service, we're very lucky not to be in Selma as the tornado hit. Statistics about the city of Selma are disheartening. 40% live below the poverty line due to white flight impacting city services and the educational system. The 17,000 residents of Selma are in difficult times and now this destruction. We decide to cancel that part of our trip as clean-up ensues.



TOMBOLO BOOKS PRESENTS

THE DEATH OF PUBLIC SCHOOL

A Conversation with
Cara Fitzpatrick

AUGUST 29, 2023
7pm ~ Tombolo Books
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THE DEATH OF PUBLIC SCHOOL

HOW CONSERVATIVES WON THE WAR OVER EDUCATION IN AMERICA

CARA FITZPATRICK
WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE

TOMBOLO BOOKS
ST. PETERSBURG, FL

Interview by Neil Brown



Advocates for Race Amity in Pinellas County (AFRA) will be showing the film "*An American Story: Race Amity and the other Tradition*" at the Center for Health Equity, or Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg, as people may know it on Tuesday, September 26th, 2023. Doors will open at 5:30pm. Feel free to bring a friend. The film identifies little known historical scenarios of

different allies working with BIPOC people. Following the film will be a feedback session regarding what we know as an audience about race amity. The address is 2333 34th Street South, Saint Petersburg, Florida 33711.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Tues, Aug 29, 7PM	The Death of Public School : Tombolo Books 2153 First Ave South, St. Petersburg, FL 33713 RSVP at tombolobooks.com
Wed, Aug 30, 6PM	Natural Resources Committee Meeting via Zoom
Thurs, Aug 31, 4:30 pm	Education Committee Monthly meeting via Zoom
Wed, Sept 6, 4 pm	LWVNPC Board Meeting Via Zoom
Mon, Sept 11, 5:30 pm	Cocktails and Conversation, Member Orientation and Social, Grillsmith, Countryside RSVP to nblarson@gmail.com
Thurs, Sept 14, 6:30 pm	Economic Equity Monthly Meeting via Zoom
Sat, Sept 16, (7:00 am -2:00 pm)	Largo High School Pinellas County Council PTA Fall Workshop
Tues, Sept 19, 2023	National Voter Registration Day
Wed, Sept 20, 11:00am-2:00 pm	Eckerd College, (St. Petersburg campus) Reflective Service Learning Fair
Sat, Sept 23, 9:30 AM	Adopt-A Mile Cleanup, League Volunteer Opportunity.
Tues, Sept 26, 5:30 pm	"An American Story: Race Amity and the other Tradition" at the Center for Health Equity, or Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg Free
Mon Oct 2 nd 4-7:30 pm	Countryside High School College and Career Fair Dinner provided

For Zoom links to meetings, please contact Gayla Larson @ nblarson@gmail.com