



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF TALLAHASSEE

New Member Handbook 2017-2018

www.lwvtallahassee.org

**LWVT, P.O. Box 10216
Tallahassee, FL 32302-2216**

850-309-3005

Introduction to the League of Women Voters

Congratulations on your decision to join the League of Women Voters. We are happy to welcome you as a member of the Tallahassee League (LWVT), the League of Women Voters of Florida (LWVF) and the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS). You now belong to one of the nation's most widely recognized, respected and effective citizen organizations.

In the League, we are not all organizers or speakers. We don't all think alike or support the same political party. Most of us have little spare time. At different times in our lives we have different assets to offer. But together we have the intelligence, skills, energy and enough time that, when put together, make up an important, effective and purposeful organization. The League can help you be an interested, informed and effective citizen and you can help the League. This is your League. The more time and talent you are willing to invest, the more you will gain from being a member. Be active. Get involved. There is no shortage of opportunities.

Purposes and Principles

- **League of Women Voters Mission Statement**
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.
- **League of Women Voters Education Fund Mission Statement**
The League of Women Voters Education Fund works to encourage the active and informed participation of citizens in government and to increase understanding of major public policy issues. Donations to the Education Fund are tax deductible.

In addition to these stated purposes the League adheres to principles or concepts of government. The League Principles serve two functions: 1) authorization for adoption of national, state and local program; and 2) as a basis for taking action at the national, state and local level. The Principles are in Appendix One of this handbook.

Nonpartisan Policy

In 1920, The League of Women Voters made a choice: The League would neither support nor oppose any political party or candidate for public office. This decision continues today to ensure that the League's voice is heard above the tumult of party politics. This nonpartisan policy has added strength to the League's positions on issues and has made wide acceptance of League voter service and other educational activities possible.

At the same time, the League is a political organization and encourages members to participate fully in the political party of their choice, to run for office, to contribute their time, finances, energy in support of candidates as well as to be active generally in the governmental process. It is an advantage to the League to have politically active members. For its active members, it can be a personally satisfying experience.

Our nonpartisan policy is the cornerstone of our Voter Service program: candidates appear at our events because they trust our forums will be fair and impartial and they know they will be treated with respect. Candidates give information to the League because they know it will not be used for partisan purposes. This reputation for fairness and independence accounts for the confidence placed in our positions by interested citizens, other organizations, and the media.

While the League urges its members to be politically active, certain constraints are necessary in order to maintain our nonpartisan policy, which has always been a major source of strength for the League. For example, members should refrain from wearing the League button while attending a campaign rally for a candidate or working for the candidate.

Nonpartisan Policy Applicable to Board Members

Individual Board members must recognize that as a result of close identification with the League, each board member has a special responsibility to see that his/her activities do not create a partisan impression.

- **Elected Office.** Board members may not run for nor hold any elective office.
- **Political Party Office.** No member of the Board shall serve in any elected position in a political party.
- **Campaign Contributions.** The President, Vice-President, and the Voter Services and Local Government Chairs may not attend fundraising events or make campaign contributions for candidates. Other Board members may attend fundraising events and make campaign contributions for candidates at any level.
- **Political Campaigns.** The President, Vice-President, and the Voter Services and Local Government Chairs shall not chair or administer fundraising or political campaigns, chair a campaign event or work in a significant way in the campaign of a candidate for office at any level. Other Board members may not undertake such activities for candidates for local office, but may do so for candidates for federal or state office.

- **Social and Other Media.** No Board member shall indicate her/his political affiliation or candidate preferences at any level of government in the media, including on social networking sites or other public venues that also prominently identify her/him as a member of the LWVT Board. No Board member shall publicly endorse any candidate at any level (such as displaying a yard sign or a bumper sticker).

The President, Vice-President and the Voter Services and Local Government chairs may attend free political party events for information only.

The political activity of a spouse or relative of a Board member is considered separate and distinct from the activities of the Board member.

Board members shall present questions about specific situations to the Board if this policy does not resolve the question.

(Adopted 8-16-2017)

Membership

- Open to any person, male or female.
- Minimum age for membership is sixteen.
- Joining automatically makes you a member at the local, state and national levels and a large portion of your dues goes to support the state and national levels through per member payment (PMP) made by your local League.

LWV of Tallahassee Board

At all levels of the League, boards are elected to manage activities. At the local level an Annual Meeting is held in late April or early May to elect officers and directors, set the budget and approve the program for the coming year. The Tallahassee League elects ten board members: president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary and six directors. The board can appoint up to six additional directors. A list of board members is in Appendix Two of this Handbook.

What the League Does

Program

While the League is an action group it may take action only on issues that have been studied and on which the members are agreed. This approach to action is responsible for the League's reputation for thorough study, a reputation that is pivotal to our political effectiveness. Every local League decides each year on an action agenda which is called the program and is developed by an *ad hoc* committee which presents it to the board for review. The last step in developing the year's program is to present it to members at the Annual Meeting for member approval. The current LWV Tallahassee Program is in Appendix Three.

National and state Leagues also develop programs but these span several years. You can find the national and state programs online at:

- *Impact on Issues* – <http://lwv.org/content/impact-issues-online-edition>
- *Impact on Florida* -- <http://thefloridavoter.org/about/impact-on-florida>
- *Study and Action 2015-2017* http://thefloridavoter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/2015_17_Study-Action-Book-FINAL.pdf

Study and Action Groups

The Tallahassee League has four study and action groups. Any member may participate in one or more simply by attending meetings, which are announced in the League monthly publication, *The Voter*. These groups participate in program development and then, along with the board are responsible for carrying out the studies and actions described in the program. The groups also consider the program of state and national League in determining the issues they will address. A list of the Tallahassee League groups with contact information is in Appendix Four of this Handbook.

Study, Consensus and Concurrence

Local Leagues often participate in national and state studies or conduct studies of their own to determine a League position on issues. Any member may participate in a study; these small groups provide wonderful opportunities for learning, networking and friendships.

Unlike many other public-interest organizations, the League does not rely on majority votes for decision-making related to study results. Rather, it seeks consensus through member discussion of specific key questions. Once consensus is ratified by the board the decision becomes a League position and can be used to direct action.

A League can also take action by concurrence. A League's membership or its board may concur with the recommendations of a task force, a League committee, decision statements formulated by League boards, or positions reached by other Leagues.

Speaking for the League

Only the president or president's representative speaks in the name of the League. Individual members may not put forth League positions in public testimony or publications but may suggest the president do so. However, members are encouraged to speak or write as informed individual citizens.

League Action on Issues

League action takes many forms – lobbying, monitoring meetings, sending digital communications, social networking, polling citizens, circulating petitions, developing and publishing documents, forming coalitions and other activities. Actions are based on the League program and are intended to:

- increase public awareness of an issue and
- achieve a resolution of it consistent with League goals.

Lobby Corps

Because they live in the capital city of Florida, Tallahassee League members are able to support the LWV of Florida lobbyist at the Capitol during legislative sessions. Lobby Corps members are trained and then able to respond to requests for assistance at the Capitol.

Voter Service

This very important area of League activity is often what the community thinks of first when the League is mentioned. Voter service activities take many forms: sponsoring candidates meetings, debates and interviews; publishing candidate responses to questionnaires; registering citizens to vote; making voting information available; sponsoring and participating in get-out-the-vote campaigns; and publishing background materials on current public issues and lists of sources of information on these issues.

The Tallahassee League is very active in voter services. Our website, [Vote 411 Leon](#), is an important candidate information resource for local voters. We partner with other groups to present candidate forums, sometimes taking the lead and sometimes handling one component of an event. Election years are very busy for League members.

Citizen Information

League citizen information activities raise issues and provide information on all sides of an issue. These activities also help citizens understand public issues and reach their own decisions. They are distinct from the League's action agenda, which may call for work towards a particular resolution of an issue.

Meetings and Regularly Scheduled Events

Board Meetings

Board meetings are monthly, August through May, on the third Wednesday of the month, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m. The board meetings are at the Greater Frenchtown Marketplace & Heritage Hub at 524 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd . Members are welcome and invited to attend meetings. Notice of each meeting is published in *The Voter*.

Annual Meeting

An annual meeting is held in April to elect officers and directors, set the budget and approve the program for the coming year.

Holiday Luncheon

League members look forward to the December Holiday Luncheon when we have a fundraising activity and hear from a speaker.

Hot Topic Lunch

Hot Topic events are usually luncheons or dinners with a speaker. Look for an announcement in *The Voter*. This is an opportunity to meet people, talk about League business, hear important announcements and become active in the League.

- Monthly except June and July on the fourth Wednesday of the month, usually 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. or 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
- Held at Four Points by Sheraton located at 316 West Tennessee Street
- Cost: \$22 for members, \$25 for nonmembers

Hot Topic events are a great way to introduce your friends to the League.

Outreach

LWVT participates in the Saturday Downtown Marketplace, the Frenchtown Market, and occasionally at other locations with a League of Women Voters table at which member volunteers offer information about the League and issues supported by the League. We also register people to vote. League members must be certified to register people to vote through the Florida League's certification process which can be found on the state League's web site (<http://www.lwvfl.org/>).

Communications and Publications

- *The Voter*, a newsletter published monthly except in June and July in print and digital format, is edited by Stuart Baker (bakers@radicalbleedingheart.net or sbaker@fsu.edu) and proofread by Jan RuBino (rubinojan@yahoo.com). If you do not have Internet access and need a paper copy mailed to you, please contact Stuart. The [current and back issues](#) are available online.
- Constant Contact, an online emailing service, is the means by which both the Tallahassee and state Leagues send information to members who have email addresses. New members are automatically added to the address list.
- Website - www.lwvtallahassee.org is an excellent source of information about the Tallahassee League. The League of Women Voters of Florida's website is at <http://thefloridavoter.org/> and the LWVUS website is at <http://lwv.org/>. Erin Edwards (erinedwards22@comcast.net) is our web master.



- Action alerts are emails sent by the national or state League asking members to contact elected officials about current issues and Florida Legislative and national Congressional votes.
- [Know Your Public Officials](#), a list of national, state and local elected officials, is published in both online and print format. Print copies are made available at the Leon County Supervisor of Elections Office and local libraries.
- Our Facebook page is administered by Maggie Lawrence and she welcomes submission of photos and other posts (madoublegie@gmail.com). The page is found at www.facebook.com/LWVTallahassee. Please "like" us and feel free to "share" posts.



- Our Twitter account is also administered by Maggie Lawrence (madoublegie@gmail.com) and is found at LWV Tallahassee @LWVTallahassee
- Our phone number is 850-309-3005. Leave a message because this phone is not answered but messages are retrieved regularly.
- Our email address is LWVTallahassee@gmail.com.
- Our mailing address is LWVT, P.O. Box 10216, Tallahassee, FL 32302-2216.

Appendix One: League Principles

The League of Women Voters believes in representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States. The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that all powers of the U.S. government should be exercised within the constitutional framework of a balance among the three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial.

The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active participation in government and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible.

The League of Women Voters believes that every citizen's right to vote should be protected; that every person should have access to free public education that provides equal opportunity for all; and that no person or group should suffer legal, economic, or administrative discrimination.

The League of Women Voters believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing, and coordination among the different agencies and levels of government.

The League of Women Voters believes that responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people; that government should maintain an equitable and flexible system of taxation, promote the conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest, share in the solution of economic and social problems that affect the general welfare, promote a sound economy and adopt domestic policies that facilitate the solution of international problems.

The League of Women Voters believes that cooperation with other nations is essential in the search for solutions to world problems and that development of international organization and international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.

Appendix Two: LWVT 2016-2017 Board of Directors

Officers

President:	Linda Davis	lgdavis75@gmail.com
Vice-President:	Teri Cleeland	tcleeland@embarqmail.com
Secretary:	Margaret Boeth	rmbt1947@gmail.com
Treasurer:	Peggy Ramsey	ramsey020@comcast.net

Elected Directors

Liz Holifield	lizholifield@yahoo.com
Margie Thomas	margie.thomas2010@comcast.net
Erin Edwards	erinedwards22@comcast.net
Joan Kanan	joankanan03@yahoo.com
Sandra Kendall	fitzkendall841@gmail.com

Appointed Directors

Carol Weissert	carolweissert@gmail.com
Steve Urse	surse2@comcast.net
Sabrina Hartley	sabrina.hartley878@yahoo.com
Linda Howard	lschaden@comcast.net

Appendix Three: LWVT 2017-18 Program

Voter Service

Register and educate voters during the Saturday Downtown Market, at League activities, and by tabling at allied organization functions and community events. Educate the public on voter registration changes, voter systems and voter rights. Work with Leon County Supervisor of Elections to advance election reform. Support efforts to restore voting rights of convicted felons who have completed their sentences.

Promote Political Responsibility

Continue to inform members and the public about civic responsibilities and issues through monthly Hot Topic meetings as well as through a variety of community events. Promote League positions taken on proposed constitutional amendments. Support anti-corruption legislation. Hold workshops on how to advocate with elected officials using the speakers' bureau. Encourage citizen participation at Constitutional Revision Commission hearings.

Local Government

Engage with elected and appointed officials and staff members of local governmental entities in order to be informed of and investigate issues related to the League program that are of interest to members. Monitor City of Tallahassee and County Commission agendas and minutes to be alert to evolving issues and to promote efficient and responsible local governments. Participate in related state and national League studies. Study the current city and county land use and zoning planning criteria and process to determine the impact on quality of life in Leon County.

Education

Continually monitor Leon County Schools to determine the extent to which students in the county have access to a free public school system, in keeping with LWVUS and LWVF policy and position statements. This would include monitoring standardized testing reduction efforts, the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program (vouchers), the privatization of public education, early childhood education, and defacto segregation in our county school system.

Health Care

Support, monitor, and take action for ongoing national, state, and local physical and mental health care policies with educational and legislative initiatives that promote socio-economic, racial, ethnic, age and disability equity in accessing affordable, quality health

care for all and control of costs. Provide information on the Affordable Care Act and potential changes to the Act. Support funding for providers of health care for the uninsured and initiatives to reduce infant mortality and food insecurity. Support accreditation of local hospitals and birthing centers as Baby Friendly. Advocate for mental health courts and crisis intervention training. Support women's reproductive rights.

Climate Change and Sustainability

Educate League members and the community on climate and environmental sustainability issues. Promote local and regional initiatives to ameliorate climate change and enhance long-term sustainability. Support increased use of solar energy.

Social and Economic Justice

Promote existing League positions and activities that address economic disparity. Seek to enhance educational and economic opportunity, education reform, progressive taxation, children and families, juvenile justice and access to health care and affordable housing in the local area. Promote the expansion of the City of Tallahassee's digital canopy to low-income areas including South City and Frenchtown. Support initiatives to identify and prosecute human trafficking.

Lobby Corps

Continue to support the LWVF's legislative advocacy effort at the Capitol by training volunteers in citizen advocacy, including monitoring and reporting on state legislative action of specific interest to the LWVF, such as health care, women's health and reproductive rights, gun safety, education, energy, land use, natural resources (especially water), taxation, and election law.

Appendix Four: Recommended Positions for Adoption

Transportation

July 1994, the LWVT supports a transportation system that protects the environment and neighborhoods and gives incentives for multi-person transit. To this end, LWVT supports parking limitations, dedicated high occupancy vehicle lanes, Transportation Demand Management strategies such as flex-time, telecommuting and ride-sharing. The LWVT agrees that consideration should be given to a light rail system.

The LWVT supports establishment of a countywide bicycle and pedestrian system of bike lanes, bike paths and sidewalks to facilitate motor-free transportation. The LWVT supports creation of a balanced transportation system that emphasizes protection of the environment and underscores the need for alternatives to single occupancy vehicles.

Emphasis is placed on accommodating people who cannot or choose not to drive an automobile.

April, 2012, the LWVT supports a safer environment for pedestrians and bikers on Tennessee Street. The League supports a reduction in the number of lanes for cars to four, with turn lanes, where the remaining two lanes are designated as bus lanes also available to bicycle traffic that separate pedestrians from fast-moving automobile traffic. The League supports “Moving Tallahassee: Cars Optional,” the creation of an eighteen-square-mile area in the heart of Tallahassee dedicated to creating a safe environment for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users.

Charter Government

July 2000, LWVT supports charter governments in Leon County. We support charter review committees that review charters periodically and that have the power to propose amendments to the charter for direct placement on the ballot at the next general election. We believe all amendments to the charter should be accomplished by a simple majority vote. We support “an achievable percentage” of registered voters to bring about citizen petition; we oppose requiring 10% of registered voters from each district for citizen initiatives. We support establishing oversight of constitutional officers. We oppose allowing county ordinances to supersede city ordinances.

In 2002, Leon County became a charter county; LWVT supported the amendment. We support a non-partisan election of the Supervisory of Elections, city and county commissioners.

We support fair and equitable representation.

We support the removal of non-judicial functions from the Clerk of the Circuit Court position.

In 2010, both the city and the county appointed charter review committees; LWVT was represented on both committees.

Comprehensive Plan

In 1960-1961, LWVT supports measures in the Tallahassee Comprehensive Plan leading to long range City and County planning.

February 1964, LWVT advocates continued attention be paid to community planning with support of measures that will provide the best long range comprehensive planning for the community.

1979, LWVT commits to actively participating in the Comprehensive Plan decision making process and commits to encouraging citizen input. We support full implementation of the official comprehensive land use plan.

Consolidation

October 1971, LWVT reaches consensus in support of the consolidation charter. (Charter failed)

April 1973, LWVT supports the new Charter for Consolidation including changes made by the Charter Commission. They include: (1) addition of a Department of Planning (2) procedural change in the recall of elective officials, by increasing the percentage of qualified officials electors who must sign a petition from 10% to 20% (3) accountability for county officials (all officials would be required by the commission to submit “uniform estimates or budgets for the operation of their offices...”) and, (4) taxation rate: “The commission shall provide and maintain a fair and just differential between the tax levy in city and county”. (Charter failed)

September 1991, LWVT supports the concept of consolidation if it provides for efficient and accountable government, including support for citizen initiative, referendum, and recall. Under consolidation, we support: a reduction of duplication of services; an appointed, qualified administrator with clearly defined lines of authority and responsibility and the power to appoint and fire department heads; coordinated countywide law enforcement; adequate and equitable revenue sources with tax in proportion to service provided. (Charter failed)

LWVT has supported consolidation of city and county governments since 1968. However, public support has never reached the threshold needed to adopt the consolidation measures on the ballot. While the two governments have never merged, there has been some functional consolidation in the areas of storm water, growth management, planning, parks and recreation, animal control, fire departments, and a joint dispatch center for emergency services. LWVT continues to support functional consolidation that provides for efficient and accountable government, that reduces duplication of services, and improves coordination of law enforcement countywide.

Appendix Five: LWVT Study & Action Groups, Committees, other Leaders 2017-18

Climate Change & Sustainability

Linda Lee, Chair
leelindalw@gmail.com
 850-894-0080

Communications Committee

Linda Davis
lgdavis75@gmail.com
 878-7320 or 559-09835

Health Care

Kathy Winn, Chair
kathywinnclan@embarqmail.com
 877-0960 (H)

Lobby Corps

Jan RuBino, Chair
rubinojan@yahoo.com
 363-7799

Local Government

Joan Kanan, Chair
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 294-7763

The Voter

Stuart Baker, Editor
sbaker@fsu.edu
 386-1086

Public Education

Margie Thomas, Chair
Margie.thomas2010@comcast.net
 270-9750

Restoration of Felons' Rights

Barry Munroe
munroe.barry@icloud.com
 228-8379

Membership Committee

Teri Cleeland, Chair
tcleeland@embarqmail.com
 703-201-1391

Gun Safety

Sabrina Hartley
sabrina.hartley878@yahoo.com
 559-2027

Voter Services Committee

Margaret Boeth, Chair
Rmbt1947@gmail.com
 508-4800, 504-8492

National Popular Vote Interstate Compact

Steven Carter
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Barbara Licht, Co-Chair

Speakers Bureau

Stuart Baker, Chair
stuartb@radicalbleedingheart.net
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