MISSION STATEMENT:

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

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Welcome New Members

Board of Directors

13 Proposed Constitutional Amendments

Along with voting for Governor, Senator, Attorney General, state representatives, etc., and local candidates, there will be thirteen amendments to the Florida Constitution on the November ballot. In some cases, it is difficult to know exactly what effect an amendment will have; we are fortunate to have Annette Boyd Pitts, an attorney extremely knowledgeable in this area, to inform us about the latest proposed amendments. Many were put on the ballot by the Constitution Revision Commission last spring; they meet every 20 years. Others were put on by the legislature or through citizen initiative. Be prepared; bring your note pads and pens. November will be here before we know it.

Annette Boyd Pitts is the principal author of The Florida Bar Benchmarks Adult Civic Education Program. Working with the Constitutional Judiciary Committee, and The Florida Bar Law Related Education Committee, Pitts has designed a wide range of law-focused civic learning programs and resources to educate students and adults about the courts and the Constitution. She is a veteran civics, government and law trainer and entrepreneur working with teachers, attorneys, judges, and the public.

Date: Wednesday, August 22
Time: 5:30 p.m.--7:00 p.m.
Location: Four Points by Sheraton
316 West Tennessee Street
Menu: Slow braised Zinfandel boneless beef ribs or Spinach over dried tomato and poblano penne pasta
Cost: Members - $22  Nonmembers - $25
President’s Message

So much for lazy summer days! Our dedicated volunteers have been working hard for the past several months on what we do best: registering and informing voters. And the election season has only just begun.

By the time you read this, we will be finished with with our primary election candidate forums and constitutional amendments presentations. THE best place to learn more about candidates, our online voter guide Vote411.org is now live. There are plenty of opportunities to help out this election season, and we welcome your involvement.

Many thanks to all of those who staff the market tables on weekends, who volunteered at our forums, agreed to be candidate liaisons, thought up questions for candidates, painted “Get Out the Vote Rocks,” and continue with all the other great League work. Even if all you do is encourage your friends and neighbors to register, get informed, and vote, you are doing the League’s work. Now is the time that we shine, and I couldn’t be more proud of our League.

There is a lot of great news to share with you in this issue of The Voter. I was honored to represent Tallahassee at the national League convention in Chicago last month. I offer a brief summary of that inspiring event elsewhere in this newsletter. Mark your calendars now for the Centennial Convention which will be held in Washington D.C. June 25 -- 28, 2020.

Your new Board of Directors met for the first time in May and held their annual planning meeting on July 29. The board is looking to strengthen support to our committees, where the work of our organization is done. We are also discussing new ways to engage members, improve internal business processes, and scheduling events for the coming year. Speaking of events, we reinitiate our Hot Topics after the summer hiatus on August 22 at 5:30--7:00 pm. Hope to see you there.

Thank you for reading this newsletter, and for all that you do to advance our mission of encouraging informed participation of citizens in government.

In League,

Teri Cleeland, President
League of Women Voters of Tallahassee
The League's 53rd National Convention

I am still processing the informative and inspirational four days of the League's national convention held in late June in Chicago, Illinois. Past president Marilynn Wills and I were proud to represent Tallahassee in a large Florida delegation. Scores of concurrent caucuses, workshops and information sessions were held daily starting at 7:30 am and ending at 9:30 pm covering a multitude of interest areas. During the plenary sessions, the over 1,000 attendees were inspired by speakers on defending the integrity of the election process, the benefits of diversity, and the power of women to bring change.

And what would a League gathering be without a march? Time was made available for attendees to make signs for the "Families Belong Together March" in downtown Chicago, where we joined tens of thousands of advocates to make our voices heard.

If you have three minutes and want to be reminded of our collective impact, check out this new introductory League video. You can find much more about the Convention on the national website here.

Since the last convention two years ago, the League has embarked on what it calls a Transformation Journey to improve both processes and culture.

Although the League is about 60,000 members strong, membership has steadily decreased by about one-third in the past decades. The environment in which we work has changed—the League is not the only organization working for voting rights—and leaders are focused on making our culture more welcoming by emphasizing diversity, equity, and inclusion. We have to look at new ways to involve people, including those who might not want to become members. Waiving student fees and reducing requirements to form new leagues are two measures taken by the national office to increase our reach. We have a limited opportunity to make a good impression on our new student members—how will we do it?

There will be a major overhaul of the information technology system to reduce administrative burden and improve data access and exchange. It starts with a new national website that has a variety of league management tools and templates to guide local activities. Look for training in volunteer management and diversity and inclusion in the coming year.

The League's financial health is strong, and per member payments will remain the same for the next two years. The League will focus on its transformation priorities: technical improvements, diversity and inclusion, and telling our story (supported by data collection).

Delegates voted on the priorities that the national organization should focus on for the next biennium. Dubbed "The Campaign for Making Democracy Work®," it includes ensuring a free, fair, and accessible electoral system for all eligible voters by focusing on voting rights, Improving elections, and advocacy for the National Popular Interstate Vote Compact, campaign finance reform, and redistricting.

Elections were held, and notably, Tallahassee member and past Florida League ED Jessica Lowe-Minor was elected as Treasurer of the League of Women Voters. We're proud of you, Jessica! Chris Carson, elected to another two-year term as President, introduced the new CEO Virginia Kase. I have more confidence than ever in the national leadership and direction of the League.

In two years, we celebrate our 100th anniversary in Washington D.C. June 25-28, 2020. I hope that Tallahassee can send more delegates to this convention, and that you will consider going. I guarantee that you will gain knowledge, energy and inspiration from your fellow League members.

Teri Cleeland
Hot Topic Last May
We had really good attendance - about 65--70 people!

We had a field trip to the Leon County Supervisor of Elections Office where we were treated to a tour of the facility and had a good look at what happens to the ballot after it's swallowed up by the big black box. We also learned about the outreach projects undertaken by the SOE to encourage citizens to register and vote and the measures taken to make sure our elections are very secure.

Thank you, Mark Earley, Chris Moore, and Susie Caplowe! We appreciate all you do and enjoy working with you to promote democracy!

*Linda Davis*
League of Women Voters Plays Vital Role in Environmental Issues
This is year three of stinky algae blooms choking our waterways

This year is probably the worst despite all the actions undertaken during last year’s legislative session when Senate President Joe Negron outlined a plan to “fix” Lake Okeechobee discharges of blue-green algae.

The League of Women Voters of Lee County helped spearhead the Conservation 20/20 initiative, as well as the US Army Corps of Engineers’ Southwest Environmental Impact Study (EIS). We will continue to monitor and lobby for our environment in addition to assessing local, state and federal elected officials and candidates on environmental issues.

For more on this vital issue, go to: https://www.news-press.com/story/opinion/contributors/2018/07/28/league-women-voters-plays-vital-role-environmental-issues/840609002

Linda Lee

Climate Change and Sustainability

The Climate Change & Sustainability group is planning a “Saving Wakulla Springs Tour” on Thursday, September 20, in lieu of its regular meeting. Our tour leader will be Jim Stevenson, who was the chief naturalist of Florida's state parks for 20 years, the former coordinator of the Wakulla Springs Basin Working Group, and former chairman of the Florida Springs Task Force. All are welcome to join us for this very special tour: “Saving Wakulla Spring” is a car caravan/hiking tour. The tour departs from Cascades Park at 8:00 a.m. and ends at the tower overlooking the spring at 12:00 noon. Each tour is limited to 20 participants and carpools are strongly encouraged. (Some of the visit sites have very limited parking).

We are making arrangements now and if you would like to go, please contact Steve Carter by August 1 to reserve your place.

His phone number is 850-597-9985 (H) or 850-320-4298 (C)

You will need to pay him $15 by check or cash. You can mail it to him (6480 Tracy Lane, 32309) or pay him at our next meeting at Beans at Betton & Thomasville Rd. on August 16 at 10:30 am.

Linda Lee, Chair
CC/S Action & Study Group

Vote Rocks!

Local League members and others working to get out the vote for the 2018 primary and general elections have been busy painting GOTV rocks in recent months. This fun and creative project, launched by League member Kris Ellington, builds off the international craze of kindness rocks. About 150 rocks painted with a variety of voting designs and messages, dates for both elections, and various links and hashtags are being "hidden in plain sight" in areas of town (parks, libraries, college campuses, apartment complexes, ...) where an extra encouragement to vote might help. Keep an eye out! #TLHRocks @LeonVotes Vote411.org
Campaign Contribution Refund Program

Here's a reminder that City residents who donate to local elections could receive a refund of up to $25.00. With support from the League of Women Voters, in November 2014 city voters passed a City Charter amendment that established the Independent Ethics Board and the refund program for voters in city elections. The objective of the program is to enhance small-donor participation in the local election process. This program is the first of its kind in the nation.

Learn the details at http://talgov.com/main/ethics-corp.aspx

Teri Cleeland

Help Wanted: Membership Committee!

Our League membership is growing and we could use some help with welcoming new members and engaging all members. All new members receive a welcome package in the mail with their League button and information. Natholyn Harris has done this for the past two years, for which we thank her as she "retires" from that duty. We need someone willing to work with our roster manager Peggy Ramsey to compile and mail these packages. The work occurs throughout the year, although we are especially busy this election season, and you can work independently from your location. If you're interested, please contact Peggy at ramsey020@comcast.net or 850-443-3187.

We also could use more help with new member orientation and providing more opportunities for members to engage socially in informal settings. Are you a social person? Have ideas on how we can have fun while sharing the League's mission? Want to get creative to involve our new student members? Contact membership chair Teri Cleeland at tcleeland@embarqmail.com or 703-201-1391.

Teri Cleeland, Chair, Membership Committee

Health Care Study and Action

The Health Care Study and Action Group needs to meet to plan activities for the 2018-2019 League year. We're working on making that happen in mid-August. We will be considering sponsorship of the Y.O.U.T.H. Ten Toes Down meeting scheduled for September 22nd. The event focuses on helping empower young people to take charge of their own health. The League has sponsored this event in the past and we're hoping to hear from Quasimah Boston, the organizer of the annual event about our participation. We have heard that the budget prepared by the Board of County Commissioners includes a continuation of funding for the primary care programs serving the uninsured in Leon County. The group may be interested in examining how the Care Point Health & Wellness Center and a potential health care clinic operated by the FSU College of Medicine fit into services available in our community to provide for the health and mental health care needs of the uninsured. (Great idea for a future Hot Topic lunch or dinner panel discussion too.)

Interested in increasing access to health care and promoting health and mental health in our community? Join us! Just send an email message to Chair Kathy Winn.

Kathy Winn, Chair
Health Care Study and Action
Local Government Candidate Forums

Thursday, August 2, concluded the three-forum series of LWVT primary candidate forums held at the Leon County Courthouse. A tremendous amount of work went into producing these three forums and I take great pleasure in publicly thanking the members of the Local Government Study & Action Group who did just that.

But first, just so you have an idea of what it takes to produce successful forums, here are some of the tasks that must be accomplished: determine organizers, select dates, select and secure sites, identify and invite moderators, identify timer, write questions for each race, invite candidates, identify and secure community partners, publicity (including contacting newspaper, radio and TV stations, posting on community calendars, designing flyers and program), secure photographer and videographers, make sure room is arranged correctly each night and for each race, provide water for candidates and moderators, and prepare constitutional amendments presentation.

And the extremely capable and dedicated Leaguers who accomplished all this in a thorough and organized manner are: Stuart Baker, Christine Coble, Pat Curtis, Kim Dressel, Darwin Gamble, Beth Hollister, Danielle Irwin, Ramona Abernathy-Paine, and Ernie Paine. We were ably assisted by members of Voter Services: Margaret Boeth, Debbie Gibson, and Sandra Kendall. Our videographers from the FAMU School of Journalism were Gabrielle Olden, Diasha Henley, Maya Lune, Ahmon Lott, and Gayla Bush. Well done, folks!

On July 24 we hosted the County Commission District 3 race with five candidates with Dot Inman-Johnson serving as moderator. On July 26 we featured the nine candidates for School Board Districts 1, 3, and 5. Bob Sanchez was the moderator. The July forums also included a presentation on the Florida Constitutional amendments which will be on the November ballot. On August 2, we welcomed 14 candidates for City Commission Seats 3, 4, and 5 and moderator Ronald J. Ebben. All of the forums were well-attended, in spite of Tallahassee’s notorious thunderstorms doing their best to rain on our parade.

Watch for announcements about one or more candidate forums in the fall before the general election.

Linda Davis

Scenes From the Forums

School Board District 3
School Board District 5
City Commission Seat 4
City Commission Seat 5
About the Photos Above:
The candidates for School Board district 3 are Darryl Jones, Lynn Jones, Maggie Lewis-Butler, Charles Williams. Those for School Board district 5: Georgia "Joy" Bowen and Marcus Nicolas. Seat 4 (Mayor) candidates are Dustin Daniels, John Dailey, Carrie Litherland, Michelle Rehwinkle-Vasilinda, and Joe West and seat 5 candidates are Dianne Williams-Cox, Bob Lotane, Howard Kessler, and Henry Adelusi, Jr.

Mr. Sanchez moderated the School Board panels. The FAMU students are Ahmon Lott and Gayla Bush and the dedicated volunteers from our League are Christine Coble, Debbie Gibson, and Kim Dressel. There were many more.

Peggy Allen
Virginia Milne
Jeanne Kimball
Patience Gaia
Casey Laurienzo
Jill Ghini
Nastassia Janvier
Jasmine Ali
Kimberly Dressel
Ronald J. Ebben
Tom Enoch
Shana Geary
Kathy Carter
Marshelle Moreland
Jose Kropp
Abigail Kropp
Carol Heiman
Ray Crickenberger
Carmen Pulido
Samerra Shaik
Luke Solomon
Laura Malaket
Stephanie Caros
Gemma Sunnergren
Jerri Patterson
Susan Henderson
Holly Bernardo
Beverly Bass
Carly Lees
Cathleen Alfano
Mick Alfano
Amy Thorn
Sandra Howard
Dennis Howard
Joan Leggett
Pat Spears
Nick Prine
Rose O’Leary

Let's Carpool!
Anyone needing a ride or seeking to drive less, reduce their carbon footprint, or just get to know their fellow League members better can sign up for carpooling to Hot Topics or other League events by sending their name, address, phone number and/or email address to metaorleans@gmail.com. We need sufficient numbers to make this work. Thanks. You would be amazed at how many members practically live next door to each other, but we need your permission to put you together.
Voter Deadline

The next Voter will be the September Voter. The deadline for submission of material is August 28. Please e-mail your material to sbaker@fsu.edu

LWVT Board of Directors 2018-2019

(Board members are either elected or appointed. Those elected are so indicated by "E" and their term of office. Appointed members (A) serve one year but may be re-appointed. Officers are elected for one year.)

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