Empowering Voters, Defending Democracy

This week we bring you two more of our esteemed board members. Sandra arranges for League members to witness naturalization ceremonies at the Federal Courthouse. After the ceremony, Sandra and those members become a welcome wagon and a source of information about the League for the brand new citizens.

And, in case you weren’t aware of it, the League has welcomed men as members since 1974. We proudly present Barry Munroe, currently our only male board member. Though men are still vastly outnumbered by women in the League, LWVT counts many men as members, has had a number of male board members, and even has had a male president. There is even a special button for men that proclaims, “The League of Women Voters Where Men are In.”

Sandra Kendall

I was born and raised in Montgomery, AL, but I lived in Mobile for most of my adult life. I obtained Bachelor’s and Master’s Degrees in Psychology from the University of South Alabama in Mobile. After graduation I was licensed by the State of Alabama as a Licensed Professional Counselor. I worked as an adolescent therapist for Mobile Mental Health until I became a court therapist for the Juvenile Court of Mobile County.

I joined the League of Women Voters originally in Mobile, but I have been interested in politics since I participated in the Youth Legislature when I was in high school in Montgomery. I moved to Tallahassee after I retired, and I immediately transferred my membership to the League of Women Voters in Tallahassee. I am honored to be serving on the board for the second time. The League’s mission of defending democracy by registering and encouraging all people to vote as well as providing nonpartisan information so people will be educated voters is near and dear to my heart.

Barry Munroe
I came to Tallahassee several decades ago to complete an internship with the Florida House of Representatives and landed a job which I have thoroughly enjoyed as an analyst/attorney with the Florida Senate. I worked on various substantive committees in the Florida Senate and later worked at a state agency that provides services to developmentally disabled individuals and their families. I retired two years ago and have volunteered for various organizations. My membership in these organizations allow me to engage in issues related to racial justice, environmental justice, women’s rights, voting rights, LGBTQ+ rights, and the preservation of our country’s social safety net.

I love the efforts that the League of Women Voters has made to educate voters and engage the community. I would like to strengthen the League’s action to target underserved minority communities in voter registration and education.

**Good News on Amendment 4**

In 2018, Florida voters approved Amendment 4 which “restores the voting rights of Floridians with felony convictions after they complete all terms of their sentence including parole or probation.” (It excluded those convicted of murder or felony sexual offense.) But in June 2019, Governor DeSantis signed Senate Bill 7066 which defined “all terms of their sentence” as including court fees, costs, fines, and restitution. The LWVFL, seventeen individual plaintiffs, and NAACP sued. The attorneys were from ACLU, NAACP Legal Defense, SPLC, Paul Weiss, Campaign Legal Center, and Brennan Center for Justice. Their lawsuit challenged the constitutionality of SB 7066. The LWVFL was among the plaintiffs because our ability to register voters has been impeded by the difficulty of determining how much someone owed. On May 24, 2020, Judge Hinkle issued a final ruling, which is summarized below.

- Court fees and costs (which are used to fund criminal justice system) function like taxes. Thus, requiring their payment before one can vote violates the
The State can require payment of fines and restitution prior to restoring voting rights, but only if the returning citizen (former felon) is able to pay. Requiring payment by someone unable to pay violates the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment.

Guidelines were provided for returning citizens to determine if they would be considered unable to pay, such as whether they had a public defender at their last felony, and whether the judge converted what they owed to a civil lien.

Returning citizens who are unsure what they owe for fines or restitution and/or are unsure if they are considered unable to pay can request an Advisory Opinion from the Florida Division of Elections. If they don’t receive an answer within 21 days, they can register and vote.

The State’s new voter registration form violates the National Voter Registration Act (1993) because its new felony-related questions are confusing and unnecessary.

Currently, the LWVFL is developing guidelines for implementing the ruling which is seen as an important victory for voting rights. On June 2, 2020, the State appealed.

Voter Services

New Members

Pamela Marsh
Barbara and Byron Ehlmann
Jana McConnaughhay
Charlene Frank
Deborah Berlinger

SBA Members

Thanks to all who have renewed, and a special thank-you to those (listed below) who recently joined or renewed at the SBA level:

Peggy Ball and Morgan Higman
Pamela Marsh
Gregory Cowan
What's Happening this Week

N.B.: Even if not so noted, many of these may be virtual meetings. Always check.

15 Monday. 12:00 p.m. Tallahassee Downtown Improvement Authority Meeting. Virtual Meeting.

15 Monday. 1:30 p.m. Capital Region Transportation Planning Agency (CRTPA). City Hall. 300 S. Adams Street.

16 Tuesday. 3:00 p.m. Board of County Commissioners Regular Meeting. Virtual Meeting. Public comments may be made at http://leoncountyfl.gov/PublicComments. Agenda available on line.

16 Tuesday. 4:30 p.m. Tallahassee Independent Ethics Board. Virtual Meeting. Meeting materials available at boarddocs.com.

16 Tuesday. 5:30 p.m. Transit Advisory Committee Meeting. Gemini Building, 408 North Adams Street.

16 Tuesday. 6:00 p.m. Leon County School Board Business Meeting. Virtual Meeting. Regular School Board Meeting on June 23, 2020.

16 Tuesday/ 6:30 p.m. Code Board Public Hearing. Renaissance Center. 435 North Macomb Street.

17 Wednesday. 3:00 p.m. City Commission Meeting. Virtual Meeting.

17 Wednesday. 6:00 p.m. Tallahassee Human Relations Council. City Hall. 300 S. Adams Street.

19 Friday. 11:30 a.m. Tallahassee/Leon County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls (CSWG). Virtual Meeting.

Join Us!

Or contact us at lwvtallahassee@gmail.com
850-309-3005

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