



The VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF THE PENSACOLA BAY AREA

Volume 57, Issue 5
January 2008

Local League Immigration Study

Saturday, January 19, 2008
Program time changed to 9:00 am
Institute for Human and Machine
Cognition (IHMC)
40 S. Alcaniz Street

Prepare for Immigration Consensus

League members will meet on January 19th to consider the consensus questions on immigration. Leagues all over the nation are following a similar process of study and consensus, the results of which will be sent to LWVUS. League positions on immigration will be determined following this study. Over the last months, we have been studying various aspects of the immigration issue. The immigration committee members, Gene Feicht, Gloria Dawson, Don Freeman, Nancie Lake and Bea Belous have been leading us in our exploration of the underlying values and principles; reasons for immigration; federal immigration policy; and impact of immigration.

All members are urged to attend this meeting and help us reach consensus or find common ground and agreement. To prepare, read or review the background articles found in the March through September local Voters, National Voters or go to www.lwv.org/ImmigrationStudy/. Bring the consensus questions, printed in the October Voter, to the January meeting. The meeting will begin promptly at 9:00 am so that sufficient time will be available for discussion of the questions. ♦

Vote January 29
Presidential Preference
Primary;
Property Tax Amendment

Property Tax Amendment Forum

Thursday, January 10, 6:00 pm
PJC Milton Campus, Building 4200
(Student Center)

The League of Women Voters of the Pensacola Bay Area will hold a special public forum on the property tax amendment which will appear on the January 29, 2008 ballot.

Greg Brown, Santa Rosa Property Appraiser, will explain the referendum: Assessments, Exemptions, Limitations, and Homesteads.

Carolann Holmes, League President, will present the pros and cons of the amendment.

For your information, the property appraisers in Santa Rosa and Escambia Counties have included easily understood explanations of the property tax amendment on their websites. See www.escpa.org, and www.srcpa.org. ♦

Redistricting Reform is Back!

LWV Florida and Common Cause Florida recently announced a new effort to reform the redistricting process. Under the current system, the Florida Legislative can draw bizarrely shaped districts that divide Florida's cities, counties and communities solely for political reasons. These gerrymandered districts discourage challengers and ensure that incumbent members of Congress and the legislature face little or no opposition.

The League has supported reform of the redistricting process for over 30 years and is now an integral part of the new campaign for redistricting reform in Florida. The legal team for the "Fair Districts Florida" political action committee has drafted two amendments to the Florida Constitution – to be placed on the Ballot in November 2010 – that would establish new requirements for drawing congressional and legislative districts. If the proposed constitutional amendments are adopted by Florida voters, congressional and legislative districts could not be drawn to favor incumbents or political parties. Districts would have to ensure that racial or language minorities have the opportunity to fully participate in the political process and elect representatives of their choice. Districts would also have to be compact, contiguous and within existing city, county and geographical boundaries.

Petitions must be circulated and sufficient signatures gathered to earn a spot on the 2010 ballot. The petitions will give Florida voters the opportunity to end the legislature's manipulation of districts to protect incumbents and enhance political party power. For more information visit www.FairDistrictsFlorida.org.

Please join this campaign. The current redistricting process places the concept of "one person, one vote" in jeopardy! The League and the citizens of Florida are counting on you! ♦

[Source: LWV Okaloosa County Voter, December 2007 issue.]

President's Message

The Holiday Season allowed us to direct our time toward family, friends and annual traditions. The League holiday party attracted forty members and guests, who enjoyed an afternoon in the comfortable Perdido home of our gracious hosts, Ron and Ellen Roston. League committee work was replaced with delicious holiday treats as well as the renewal and nurture of friendships. Please take time to help our League family grow so that the League mission may continue ever stronger. Invite a friend to attend a League function or pass on your copy of our local Voter.

The New Year will bring a variety of opportunities to engage our members and possibly attract new ones. Interviews with our local legislative delegation members will be conducted in January and February in preparation for the March, 2008 Florida Legislative Session as well as the League Legislative Seminar. Grassroots lobbying is one of our strengths and meeting with our legislators on home ground is where we really can effect change. Please consider volunteering to conduct an interview. Experienced mentors will lead our novice members through this process. **Please contact Betty Einfinger, 438-2842, to participate in an interview.**

Once the Legislative Session begins, much of the planning has occurred and League action becomes reactive rather than proactive. LWVF depends on your generous financial contributions to the Lobby Fund in order to engage our professional lobbyist to promote League program positions at the Capitol.

Another LWVPBA tradition is sponsoring new members to attend Legislative Seminar in Tallahassee. Please mark your calendar for March 16-18. This is a most inspiring opportunity to develop interest in observing and participating in government. LWVF provides remarkable speakers on issues and guidance on League Program.

Please take advantage of League membership benefits. New members joining in January have added incentive of an 18-month membership instead of the usual 12-month. Ask a friend to consider joining the League or give a membership to a friend.

Carolann, 477-6141

Lobby Fund Challenge

A member of the Pensacola Bay Area League has donated \$100 to the LWVF Lobby Fund and is challenging other members to contribute toward a goal of \$800, representing \$5 per member from our chapter. LWVF has not raised dues in several years. At the same time, contributions to support the League lobbying effort have not kept pace and, in an attempt to offset the shortfall, LWVF is asking each local League to donate \$5 per member. Although this fund is not tax deductible, it is crucial as the League continues its fight for good government for all Florida residents.

Donations may be sent to LWVPBA Treasurer, P.O. Box 2023, Pensacola FL 32513 or brought to the regular monthly meetings in January and February.

Thank you for your support!



League opposes proposed property tax amendment

The League of Women Voters of Florida opposes the proposed state constitutional amendment on the January 29, 2008, special election ballot because it would:

- ✓ Add limitations and exemptions regarding revenue sources in the Florida Constitution;
- ✓ Extend and increase homestead tax limitations without regard to the ability of homeowners to pay;
- ✓ Extend the inequities created through Save Our Homes by allowing homeowners to transfer its benefits; and
- ✓ Worsen Florida's current infrastructure deficit and the decline in the level of state services and in our quality of life.

The LWVF position holds that tax sources and revenues should not be specified, limited, exempted or prohibited in the state constitution and that local governments in Florida should have available a variety of options for generating revenues to meet local needs.

In addition, the LWVF believes that property taxes in Florida should be levied based on ability to pay, and that tax relief or circuit breakers should be provided for all low-income persons who own or rent property regardless of age.

Finally, the League of Women Voters of Florida believes that our state has a present infrastructure deficit, and state service levels and our quality of life are declining. The League's position is that sufficient state taxes should be levied to reverse the decline in levels of service and improve the quality of life for all Floridians. According to the Legislature's own calculations, passage of the amendment will result in revenue losses of \$12.4 billion in the next 5 years. These losses are in addition to the already mandated revenue cap passed by the Legislature during its earlier special legislative session. ◇

Are You Ready For...Recycling? Curbside Recycling?

Muriel Wagner 476-2188 & Carolyn Kolb 939-8653
Landfill Study Co-Chairs



Muriel Wagner and Carolyn Kolb, members of the Natural Resources Committee, visited the Perdido Landfill in September in order to get an update on recycling activities in Escambia County. They were aware that Gulf Breeze currently has curbside recycling, and at one time it was available at Tiger Point.

In an on-site interview with Jim Howes, Escambia County's manager of recycling, they learned that Howes is among a growing number who would like to see curbside recycling in the county. They observed the results of the voluntary recycling program in use today: tons of material being recycled that otherwise would have gone to the landfill cells. They learned:

- Disposal cells (term used to describe sections/areas where waste is deposited) need both clay and plastic liners. Perdido is located above a natural layer of clay so they are using two plastic liners with a layer of sand between liner and waste. Old unlined cells are being 'mined', i.e., dug up and the sand reclaimed. Items, such as heavy metals that should never have been placed there, are extracted in order to bring the landfill up to the latest state and federal standards.
- Leachate (liquid that collects in cells) is sent to ECUA. Methane gas is captured and sold to International Paper. Stormwater goes into a basin with artificial wetlands.
- Yard waste is dried, chipped and is available to the public...free. Clean yard waste (without plastic bags) is used for compost and 'dirty' yard waste is used daily for covering cell slopes.
- There are twelve active waste incinerators in the state. Ash from them is often hazardous. "Plasma burn" is a newer incinerating system which is safer

and yields less toxic waste. There are no plans for either type of incinerator in Escambia County.

- Santa Rosa, Escambia and Okaloosa counties have received grants for 'end of life' electronic programs.
- Paint that comes to the landfill is decanted, strained, mixed and offered free to the public. Habitat for Humanity has used it. Jim Howes is considering a swap/resale shop for salvageable construction items.
- Prisoners are employed in part of the recycling program, separating large boxes and baling them. Women are hired on another line separating plastics, glass and paper. These are sent down chutes where they are smashed and baled.
- Recycling is not a money maker per-se. There is a complicated financial system that has recycling paying various costs at the landfill. Tipping fees (determined by weight of vehicles entering and leaving the landfill) are \$14 for organics and \$28 for household waste. These fees pay for code enforcement. Insurance is \$85,000 per year and comes out of the budget. There are large overhead costs for electronics and tires but, with planned changes, these expenses may be reduced greatly.

The overwhelming support of the bin recycling is one indication that the public may be ready for curbside recycling. Howes's program includes educational outreach and a public opinion poll to see if, indeed, Escambia is ready for curbside recycling. ◇

Escambia County Legislative Delegation Meeting

Betty Enfinger, Government Observer Corps

Three members of the Northwest Florida Legislative Delegation led the Escambia County delegation meeting on December 6, at the Amos Auditorium at WSRE-TV. Representative Greg Evers presided as Chair and was joined by Representative Dave Murzin and Senator Don Gaetz.

The Speakers and organizations they represented were the following:

Dr. John Cavanaugh, UWF; Dick Baker, Pensacola Bay Area Chamber of Commerce; Bob McLaughlin, Acting Escambia County Administrator; Escambia Sheriff's Department, Partners in Crises; Donna Stapleton, ERA; and Lauri Garrett, American Lung Association.

Although Rep. Evers announced that no new or additional money was available for items in the state budget, Bob McLaughlin asked for additional funding for Escambia County. Other requests that will require additional money included replacing ten bridges that are close to schools, PCB remediation of Pensacola Bay, and converting the old Molino School to an emergency center. ◇

Democracy is not a Spectator Sport

Report on Senator Graham's visit with the League

Deborah Nelson, 981-2462

In 2005, Bob Graham, former Florida Governor and U.S. Senator, retired from a 40-year career in public office. Now, Graham is focusing on preparing future generations to be participating democratic citizens. The Senator spoke to the League of Women Voters of the Pensacola Bay Area on November 27.

Bob Graham, who also served in Florida's House and Senate, says he fears today's young people are being reared to be 'spectators' in their own government processes. Many, he observed, are illiterate about the basic principles of public responsibility. "Democracy was never intended to be a spectator sport; it was intended to be a participatory activity," he noted.

If young people don't learn to oversee their own governance, the country could end up in hot water, according to Graham. Although there have been thirteen generations since our country was founded, there is a risk of losing our democracy if indifference continues to dominate. Democracy will not be defeated by outside invasion; rather it can be destroyed by indifference. Graham stated that the schools do not have the total responsibility for forming good citizens and identified two other entities that are contributing to a declining interest in our democratic system:

- the media, which is a captive of big corporations and offers very little local news;
- political parties, which no longer concentrate on expanding their membership but instead concentrate on their base of support..

I don't think there's been any organization in Florida over the [time] I've been involved in politics that's had such a transformational effect as the League of Women Voters," Graham remarked. It was a League humanities seminar at the Florida Legislature that first inspired Graham's 'Workday' program. The seminar, on Greek democracy, mentioned that Athenian parliament members sometimes took menial jobs to stay in touch with the people. No task was too great or too small for an Athenian citizen to undertake.

Graham's 'Workdays' began in 1974, when he was challenged to teach a semester of civics to twelfth-grade students. It proved to be a major inspiration and he became passionate about the idea of preparing young people for citizenship.

Florida Center for Citizenship

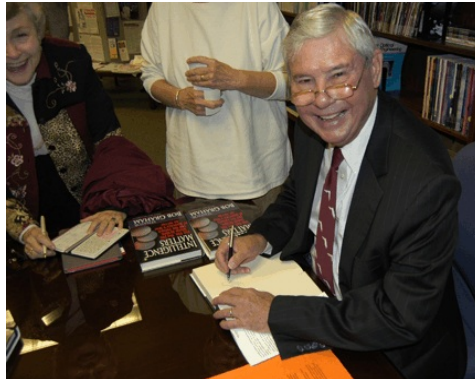
In partnership with former U.S. Representative Lou Frey, Graham is working on a program to make civics lessons relevant to tomorrow's citizens. The Florida Center for

Citizenship program is anticipating a half-million dollar grant to train middle-school teachers and provide instructional materials.

Standard civics programs often focus on theory and Federal processes. Graham believes that is the reverse order of how governments impact people's lives. The Center for Citizenship begins by focusing on how local governments work because that is where government really touches people.

Graham hopes that by making government processes relevant and interesting, students will become interested. The program includes off-campus work designed to give young people a chance to make a difference in their communities.

Although some attendees expressed concern about the difficulty of getting the public involved, there was overall enthusiasm about the program to make civic education an important part of our schools and communities.



Senator Graham signs his latest book for Dr. Rosemary Hays-Thomas.

Registration Update

Following the talk by former Senator Bob Graham, some League members wanted current information on the registration of high school students as they approach voting age. Representatives of the Voter Service committee met with the Supervisors of Elections in Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties to find out how voter registration is encouraged and conducted in the high schools. Our purpose was to determine if the League needed to resume high school registration as had been done in the past.

David Stafford, Supervisor of Elections for Escambia County, sends a member of his staff each year to all Escambia County high schools to pre-register the 17 year old students. This activity is coordinated with the appropriate teachers and is generally conducted during the lunch periods. When the student turns 18, Stafford's office automatically mails a voter registration card, welcoming the student as a voter. Mr. Stafford also participates in Civics and Government classes when requested by individual teachers.

In the fall, Mr. Stafford will be joining forces with the Pensacola News Journal Education program to conduct an online election for students at the same time the national election is conducted. He has invited the League to participate in this program. The election will be preceded by a weekly curriculum, beginning in September, which provides lesson plans about elections in accordance with the Sunshine State Standards.

Continued on page 5, Registration Update

Registration Update, from page 4

In Santa Rosa County, Ann Bodenstein, Supervisor of Elections, sends two representatives from her office twice a year to every high school in Santa Rosa.

Additionally, her office mails a voter registration application, with return postage, to every senior. All Government teachers in the schools give extra credit to students who register to vote during their class term. Bodenstein also accepts many invitations from schools to speak about voting, even to kindergarten classes.

The Voter Service representatives concluded that both Supervisors of Election are enthusiastically involved in efforts to get high school students registered to vote and the program in each county is effective.

On Friday, December 28, representatives of the League Voter Service committee conducted last-minute voter registration for the public at WalMart on Creighton Road in Pensacola. Marilyn Badessa, Vivian Faircloth, Emily Head and Janet deLorge completed 13 registrations during 2 ½ hours, with weather conditions that featured strong winds, heat, sun and rain. It is anticipated that five additional registration forms will be returned to the Supervisor of Elections.

New Florida Law:

The Florida Legislature has passed a law, effective January, 2008, that allows young people to pre-register to vote when they apply for drivers' licenses. This change in the law means that youths can pre-register at 16 years of age. ◇

League Action News

Letter To the Board of County Commissioners, Escambia County

December 13, 2007

The League of Women Voters of Florida and the League of Women Voters of the Pensacola Bay Area have been involved in the development of the Comprehensive Plan since its inception. Over the years, we have testified before the Escambia County Commission about the problems associated with development on barrier islands.

Today the issue of removing the cap on development on Perdido Key once again compels us to express our concern. The League of Women Voters of the Pensacola Bay Area is opposed to lifting the cap on Perdido Key for the following reasons:

- 1) Perdido Key is a barrier island and as such it is in the Coastal High Hazard Area. Florida law states that population concentrations must be directed AWAY from the Coastal High Hazard Areas.
- 2) Population density should not be increased without first providing appropriate infrastructure including roads and sewer, especially in an area which requires periodic evacuation of residents due to hurricanes.
- 3) Florida law states that public funds should be limited for infrastructure projects in Coastal High Hazard Areas, where they are subject to continued threat from natural disasters making replacement frequent and costly.

For these reasons the League of Women Voters of the Pensacola Bay Area is strongly opposed to the removal of the density cap on Perdido Key.

Carolann Holmes, President

The LWVs of Indiana, Indianapolis and the LWVUS filed a joint [amicus brief](#) in the Supreme Court case that will determine the constitutionality of an Indiana law requiring voters to present photo ID at polling places. The brief details experiences of a number of Indiana voters whose votes were not counted or whose rights were denied, and points out that each and every individual has a fundamental right to vote.

LWVUS filed an [amicus brief](#) in the Supreme Court that will determine the rights of minority voters in North Carolina. The brief urges the Court to hear the case which will review the Voting Rights Act in relation to a 2003 redistricting in North Carolina.

LWVF Director Deirdre Macnab presented testimony at the Florida Taxation and Budget Reform Commission statewide public hearing in Orlando.

LWVF is a founding member of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRC), which is urging Governor Crist to direct the Office of Executive Clemency to include a Florida Voter registration application with the Certificate of Restoration of Civil Rights that goes out to each individual notifying them of restoration of their civil rights. FRRC is a coalition of over 40 national, state and local organizations dedicated to eradicating Florida's Reconstruction era civil rights ban. FRRC member organizations host Restoration of Civil Rights (RCR) workshops, lobby the Clemency Board and the legislature for RCR reform, and create public awareness of the unfair ban on civil rights, including voting rights, in Florida. Additional information is available at www.restorerights.org or at 877-826-8682.

LWVF joins grassroots coalition "Florida Is Our Home", a ballot initiative committee, to fight property tax vote on the January 29th ballot.

Calendar

January

No Education Committee meeting in January but February 7th. Contact Barbara Goggins, 478-2953, gog@att.net.

8 Tuesday, 5:30 pm **Board Meeting** Carolann Holmes, 477-6141, 9743 Creek Bridge Cir.

Special Meeting
Thursday, January 10, 2008 6:00 pm
Property Tax Amendment Forum
PJC Milton Campus
Building 4200 - Student Union

15 Tuesday, 5:30 pm **Natural Resources Committee** at **Village Inn on 9th Ave. near Cordova Mall**. Contact Annie Griffin, 492-1838 or Mary Gutierrez at mary.gutierrez@wfrpc.org

General Meeting at IHMC
Saturday, January 19, 2008
9:00 am program
Local League Immigration Study
Discussion of questions for consensus

21 Monday, 10 am **International Relations Committee**, Azalea Trace, Leader, Gene Feicht; bring news items for discussion. Great Decisions books are in.

Join the League of Women Voters today!

It's easy! Just send your check to:
League of Women Voters, P O Box 2023, Pensacola FL 32513
\$50 Individual membership ● + \$25 each additional household member ● \$25 student membership
Also, here's my extra contribution to the League \$ _____

My contribution to the Lobby Fund Challenge \$ _____
 I'm renewing my membership

Name(s) _____
Address _____
Home Phone _____ Business Phone _____
Email Address _____

Directions to PJC Milton campus:

Follow US 90 east from Pensacola toward Milton. PJC is located on north side of US90 at intersection with Avalon Boulevard, one mile west of downtown Milton.

For carpooling from University Mall area, contact Bea Belous, 476-0994. Departure time is at 5:15 pm from the Davis Highway side of JC Penny's.

Looking ahead to February
LWVUS Program Planning breakfast
Landfill Committee update
Look for information in the next local Voter.



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