



The VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF THE PENSACOLA BAY AREA

Volume 57, Issue 4
November 2007

Local League Immigration Study

Saturday, November 17, 2007

**Note: Time changed to 9:00 am for the program
Institute for Human and Machine Cognition
(IHMC) 40 S. Alcaniz Street**

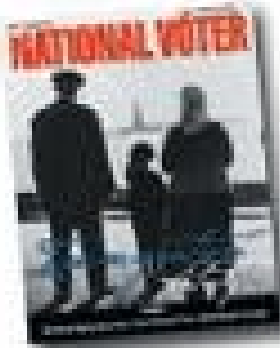
Immigration will be the topic of the November 17 League program. Locally our League is participating in the LWVUS Immigration study, which has been underway for the last two years.

Immigration is currently a hot-button issue in our nation and its resolution is truly complicated. The United States is a nation of laws and, as such, these laws should be enforced to protect the rights and property of all citizens. At the same time, both legal and illegal immigrants, seeking a better life and jobs, are lured to this country.

How can these conflicts be resolved?

Join us as Don Freeman, Gene Feicht, Rosemary Hays-Thomas, Nancie Lake, Gloria Dawson and Bea Belous present various aspects of the controversial issue of immigration.

The November 17 meeting will begin promptly at 9:00 am so that sufficient time will be available for the presentations. On January 19, 2008, the monthly meeting will be devoted to the immigration consensus questions from LWVUS. At that time, members are encouraged to express their opinions on the wide range of questions that will form the consensus from our League and become part of the overall LWVUS program. ♦



EQUITABLE TAXATION

The League supports a state fiscal structure that is equitable in its distribution of the tax responsibility and responsive to public needs.

The LWV will support tax legislation that:

- Focuses more on ability to pay,
- Does not jeopardize local services,
- Addresses Florida's infrastructure deficit,
- Enhances Floridians' quality of life,
- Removes unfair tax exemptions that hinder the State's or local governments' ability to serve Floridians.

The LWV will oppose tax legislation that:

- Does not provide true, fair tax relief to Floridians.
- Further burdens the State's or local governments' ability to serve Floridians.

Special Event with Former Senator Bob Graham

This is a reminder for those of you who hold a reservation to attend our special event with Sen. Bob Graham on Tuesday, November 27, at IHMC. There will be a reception at 5:00 pm and presentation from 5:30 - 7:00 pm.

Senator Graham will speak to the League and their guests on "Civic Education Initiatives". This engagement has been on our agenda since March 2005, when Sen. Graham was in town on a book signing tour for "Intelligence Matters".

Attendance for this event is by reservation. If you are not able to attend, please contact Betty Enfinger at 438-2842 or bettyenfinger@cox.net regarding your cancellation. ♦

Preparing a New Generation for Self-Government

by Annette Boyd Pitts

Most Americans do not understand our most basic constitutional principles and are disengaging from civic and political life. Voter turnout, especially among young voters, continues to reflect an indifference to the importance of participation in American democracy.

In December 2005, the Florida Bar conducted a poll of Floridians to determine public knowledge of basic democratic principles. The results reinforced a national poll conducted by the American Bar Association. Fewer than 60 percent of adults could identify the three branches of government, even in a multiple choice test; and less than half understood the concepts of separation of powers and checks and balances.

More recently, the national Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania found one-third of adult Americans were not able to identify even one of the three branches of government.

Possibly even more troublesome, is the latest report from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in its Civics Report Card. NAEP is the only Congressionally mandated sampling of student achievement in the nation. The 2006 test results, which were released in May, revealed serious deficiencies among our nation's students. The 2006 NAEP measured the civic knowledge and skills of students in grades 4, 8 and 12. The assessment is organized in three main components including civic knowledge, intellectual skills and civic dispositions.

Continued on page 2, ... Self-Government

President's Message

One thing that has impressed me about the League of Women Voters Pensacola Bay Area is that individual members function well as a team and many members contribute to the running of the League day-to-day business. Different members check the post office mailbox, listen to the voice mail and forward website e-mail; volunteers welcome and orient new members; dedicated individuals inform through the phonetree and committee members rally attendance at community meetings. Institutional knowledge guides the publishing, proof reading, printing, folding, labeling and mailing of the Voter. Such tasks have contributed over the years to League success, and that success will continue because of the dedication of many.

Last month I attended the naturalization ceremony at the Pensacola Federal Courthouse. Member Doris Lea coordinates League participation; LWVPBA sends two representatives and contributes copies of Escambia County/Santa Rosa County *Guide to Elected Officials* for inclusion in the welcome packets. Laurie McBee and I witnessed nearly one hundred individuals pledge allegiances to their new country while friends and family supported them. Several members of the armed forces were initiated into citizenship, having sworn to serve and protect the United States of America even before becoming citizens. The experience helps to reaffirm love of this country and its opportunities. I felt a connection with my own immigrant grandparents and their motivations to become Americans.

I challenge League members to invite new members to join in observing government. Bring a friend. Simply attend a meeting while wearing a LWV button. Show a presence to our elected officials and that presence will encourage openness in government.

Carolann, 477-6141

Continued from page 1, ... Self-Government

The assessment found:

- Only 28 percent of 8th graders could explain the historic purpose of the Declaration of Independence;
- Only 14 percent of 4th graders knew that defendants have the right to a lawyer;
- Only 22 percent of 8th graders scored at or above the "proficient" level;
- Only 27 percent of 12th graders scored at or above the "proficient" level.

While there is much to be done to improve student knowledge and skills in civics and government, Florida is making some progress.

As part of a nationwide campaign to advance civics and government in our public schools, the Florida Law Related Education Association, Inc. (FLREA) is working

with the Center for Civic education and the Campaign to Promote Civic Education to spearhead efforts in Florida. Together with the League of Women Voters, the Florida Bar and Common Cause, FLREA surveyed school districts in Florida and found that less than 10 percent required the teaching of civics and government as a stand alone course in middle school. Middle school became the primary focus of efforts in the Florida legislative campaign last year. In 2006, the Florida legislature passed a requirement for students to take a semester of civics prior to exiting 8th grade.

Standards and testing are two major priorities during 2007 and will continue in 2008. New standards are being developed for all social studies courses in Florida. The Florida Department of Education has assembled a group of framers and writers to develop standards and benchmarks for all grade levels. Civics and government is one of the subject areas addressed in the standards. A wide range of groups and individuals, such as former Senator Bob Graham and former Congressman Lou Frey, are spearheading efforts to include civics and government as an FCAT assessment area.

Florida also has a number of programs to assist school districts in meeting the new mandate and strengthening district level civics and government initiatives. FLREA administers the "We the People...the Citizens and the Constitution" curriculum and a mock congressional hearing program in each of the state's school districts. The organization also administers Project Citizen, a companion program for middle school students to actively engage in solving community problems through public policy. Other initiatives in the state include academic competitions, democracy camps, professional development institutes for teachers and partnerships between the judicial and education communities to help strengthen school-based civic education efforts.

These new public policy initiatives are paving the way for Florida to be in the forefront of the nationwide campaign to advance civics and government in our state's public schools and to raise this valuable instructional area to its rightful status.



Annette Boyd Pitts is the founding executive director of the Florida Law Related Education Association, Inc. She is the recipient of the National Improvements in Justice Award and has worked in more than 20 different countries to advance education for democracy. She is a member of the LWV of Tallahassee and crafted this most

informative article on Civic education needs in Florida. ◇

Report of October League Meeting

by Ina Freeman,

Cate Jordan, Executive Director of Families Count, spoke at the October LWVPBA meeting. Incorporated in 1993, Families Count is a non-profit, charitable organization made up of social workers, nurses and other professionals. It operates service programs and Family Resource Centers in Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton and Bay counties.

In order to understand the role of Families Count, one needs to be reminded that the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) was partially privatized by the Jeb Bush administration. In our area, Lakeview was awarded the contract to provide some services, known as Families First Network, which were previously part of DCF.

Families Count is a local provider committed to helping children grow physically and emotionally by providing families with quality services that prevent, diagnose and treat child abuse and neglect. This group serves 10,000 kids annually and is funded by the state, grants and private sources.

The agency focuses on:

- preventing child abuse and neglect;
- providing early intervention services;
- assisting families in obtaining access to resources;
- promoting safety and permanency in homes;
- strengthening parenting skills among caregivers;
- building the capacity of communities to address the needs of children, youth and families.

Families Count programs include:

A) *Family Place on the Square*

Family Place on the Square is designed to help working families in crisis. Last year this agency provided more than \$50,000 to help needy families stay together, meet basic needs and achieve economic self-sufficiency. It is funded by private donations. "Every decision that Families Count makes is rooted in the best interest of the child," according to Ms. Jordan. Every effort is made to keep the child in a stable environment.

B) *Kid/Care*

This program provides health insurance for children whose families cannot afford health insurance but do not qualify for Medicaid. The cost for Kid/Care insurance is \$15-\$20 monthly per child. The annual federal funding for this program (SCHIP) is \$25 Billion and Florida received \$296 Million of that total last year. However, the funding formula provides 70% federal money with a required 30% state match.

Last year, a total of 226,000 children in our state were enrolled, with 2800 of these in Escambia County. The problem is that locally 9000 kids qualify for the program but are not enrolled due to rule changes in the program.

C) *Families Count College*

This program provides training to staff members and volunteers and is funded by private donations.

D) *Healthy Families*

This program is a child abuse and neglect prevention program that works with pregnant women and their children up to the age of 5 years.

E) *Redirecting Children's Behavior*

This positive parenting program is designed to provide new tools for today's tough problems in rearing children.

F) *Children's Medical Foster Care*

Medical foster parents provide transitional homes for medically complex children and care for their needs. The program operates with Children's Medical Services and is funded by Florida Department of Health.

G) *Forensic Services*

This program is operated in conjunction with Gulf Coast Kids House, Emerald Coast Children's Advocacy Center and Santa Rosa Kids House. Its purpose is to interview, assess and diagnose child abuse in the four westernmost counties.

The Family Support Team is a home visiting program that works with families after an abuse hotline report has been made. The goal is to stop child abuse and promote a safe, healthy family environment. In 2006, this vital program helped 2279 abused children.

Ms. Jordan left us with the questions: Why don't we put prevention first? Aren't our children worth it?

For more information contact Families Count, 4400 Bayou Boulevard, Suite 46, Pensacola, FL 32503 or familiescount@familiescount.net



Calendar

November

8 Thursday, 4pm **Education Committee**, Terrace 1 at Azalea Trace. The committee will review Santa Rosa and Escambia Counties 2006 data on third grade retention. Contact Barbara Goggins, gog@att.net.

General Meeting at IHMC
Saturday, November 17, 2007
9:00 am program
Local League Immigration Study
League Member Panel

19 Monday, 10 am **International Relations Committee**, Azalea Trace, Leader, Naomi Liles *Mexico: Neighbor in Turmoil*
20 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

Senator Graham to speak on "Civic Education Initiatives" at **Special November 27th Meeting at IHMC**, 5:00 pm reception, 5:30 - 7 pm presentation
Contact Betty Enfinger, 438-2842 or bettyenfinger@cox.net

Join the League of Women Voters today!

It's easy! Just send your check to:

League of Women Voters, P O Box2023, Pensacola FL 32513

\$50 Individual membership ● + \$25 each additional household member ● \$25 student membership

Also, here's my extra contribution to the League \$ _____

I'm renewing my membership

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____ Business Phone _____

Email Address _____

Member Updates

Welcome to:
Bob Ogden 4741 Kitty Hawk Circle Gulf Breeze 32563
850-932-0944 robert.c.ogden@gmail.com

Roster Changes:
Annabeth Carter - 111 E. Wright St Apt 118, 32501

Lucie Wade's new email: luluwade@bellsouth.net



League of Women Voters ®
of the Pensacola Bay Area
P.O. Box 2023 Pensacola, FL 32513

Non-profit orgn.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Pensacola, FL
Permit No. 203