



# The **VOTER**

**February 2009  
Volume 45 Issue 2**

*The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan political organization dedicated to promoting political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government and to acting on selected government issues.*

2008-2009  
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Committee  
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The **VOTER**  
Kim Noyes

League of Women  
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## Food for Thought

**Wednesday, February 11**

**Kathy Dent**  
Supervisor of Elections  
*"Looking forward to 2009"*

**9 - 10:00 a.m. \$3.00**

**Waterside Estates**  
4540 Bee Ridge Road  
*(just past the light at McIntosh going east or  
just before the light going west. South side of  
Bee Ridge)*

**Please RSVP to Kim Noyes,  
at 921-9778 or  
lwvsc@comcast.net**

**RESERVATIONS REQUIRED**



## Hot Topics

**Monday, February 23**

**Sarah Blanchard**  
Senior Planner, Sarasota County  
*Status and Future of Public Transportation*

**11:30 a.m. \$15.00**

**Mattison's Forty-One**  
7275 S Tamiami Trail @ 11:30 a.m.

**Reserve with your luncheon choice:  
Turkey Bacon Wrap  
or Blackened Mahi Mahi Sandwich**

**Please RSVP BY February 19  
to Kim Noyes at 921-9778 or  
lwvsc@comcast.net**

**RESERVATIONS REQUIRED**

### **A message from your Sarasota County League President...**

These are intense times. Like most of America, our recent presidential election and inauguration filled me with pride for our county and our system of orderly change of leadership. At the same time, however, I felt a deep concern about the numerous serious challenges our country must confront. As pointed out by our new President, this is a time to "pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off and begin the work of remaking America."

President Obama has called our nation to commit to volunteering for service in our communities. Our national League president, Mary G. Wilson urges Leagues to join in making this call to service. We need to re-ignite the nation's spirit of volunteerism and community service. This new effort, "Renew America Together", is not just about stepping up to serve for a single day, but rather a commitment to serve our communities throughout the year. The League of Women Voters joins other organizations in urging our members to sign up to volunteer and to pass that message on to family, friends and neighbors.



Continued on page two...

**Presidents Message continued...**

As you all know, there are many, many opportunities to volunteer in Sarasota County - opportunities that appeal to a vast variety of talents and interests. As an organization our local league is committed to among other election and lobbying objectives, informing members of our community on important issues of the day, with health care being a priority this year.

Check out a new, interactive Web site, USASERVICE.ORG, which enables Americans in every state to find a volunteer opportunity in their neighborhood, or to create and host an event on their own. Also check out the Sarasota Herald Tribune's DoGood Channel online, [www.heraldtribune.com/dogood](http://www.heraldtribune.com/dogood). This new internet link connects people with causes where there will be thousands of ideas on how you can make a difference in your community. Let's all do our part!

*Cindy Quest*

**Membership Chair...Andrea Rogers**

The New Member Welcome Reception has been rescheduled to the end of March/early April. The exact date is pending, so please stay tuned for more information.



The Membership Committee has set forth an ambitious agenda geared toward enhancing League members' experiences, and increasing membership involvement in our local League events, educational opportunities and committees. But, six of us cannot do it all by ourselves. **We want you!** There are membership materials to be managed, people needed to welcome members and guests at events & functions, people to help at event registrations – and just plain fun to be had!

Helping out on a committee – especially the Membership Committee – is a great way to connect with other League members and get to know each other better. It is also a great way to have a sneak preview of what's coming up in our League chapter, and to influence the course of some of our League's activities and commitments. So, expect to see more of us and hear more from us in the up-coming months. Our meetings are relaxed yet engaging, congenial yet purposeful. We do hope you will say **YES** and join us!

**WANTED... Board Member Nominations!**

If you or someone you know would like to work on the League Board, please contact Kerly Sekera at 921-1590 or [ksekera@yahoo.com](mailto:ksekera@yahoo.com) The League's Board works on a wide variety of projects and is always in need of people to organize events, oversee newsletter publication, webpage content, monitor legislative action, and more.

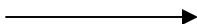
This is a great opportunity to meet and work with a very dynamic and engaged group of people. The League of Women Voters is a highly respected community organization working alone and with other individuals and groups on important social and political issues that affect the quality of life of our community.

**Great News! The Supreme Court clears Fair Districts amendments for the ballot!**

**Note:**

The Supreme court has cleared our amendments for the ballot. You can read the opinion at <http://www.floridasupremecourt.org/decisions/2009/sc08-986.pdf> .

**F Y I**



Election	Election Day	Last day to register
City of Sarasota Regular	March 10, 2009	February 9, 2009
Town of Longboat Key General	March 17, 2009	February 17, 2009
City of Sarasota Second Election (If necessary)	April 14, 2009	March 16, 2009
City of Venice	November 3, 2009	October 5, 2009



## Curbing Greenhouse Gas Emissions — Two Approaches

By Eleanor Revelle (LWVIL and LWVUS Climate Change Task Force Member)

Facing the growing evidence that burning fossil fuels is contributing significantly to global climate change, policymakers are evaluating strategies for reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. They have two general approaches to consider.

### Cap-and-Trade

With a cap-and-trade system, policymakers set a limit on the quantity of a pollutant (e.g., CO<sub>2</sub>) that can be emitted in a given period. The total emissions allowed under this cap are divided into permits representing the right to emit a given amount (e.g., one ton of CO<sub>2</sub>). The permits are then allocated to the sources covered by the program (e.g., power plants). At the end of the compliance period, each source must report all emissions and surrender an equivalent number of permits.

Since the number of permits is limited, they have financial value. Companies able to reduce their emissions at low cost can sell the permits they don't need to companies for whom the cost of reducing emissions is high. Each company has the flexibility to choose how to meet its emissions target, but market incentives encourage them to develop new, cleaner technologies. Over time, the cap is lowered to achieve more aggressive emissions-reduction goals.

### Carbon Tax

A carbon tax is imposed on fossil fuel suppliers at a rate that reflects the amount of carbon that will be emitted when the fuel is combusted. The tax is included in the price of the coal, oil, and natural gas supplied to wholesale users and ultimately is passed on to consumers in the price of electricity, gasoline and other energy-intensive products. By raising the price of carbon-based energy, the tax creates incentives to reduce energy use, stimulates demand for more energy-efficient products, and promotes a shift to cleaner fuels and renewable energy.

### Emissions Certainty

The strength of the **cap-and-trade** approach is that it sets firm limits on emissions. The cap is set at a level designed to achieve a desired environmental outcome (e.g., a reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to 80 percent of 1990 levels by 2050).

A **carbon tax** allows the quantity of emissions to fluctuate as the demand for energy rises or falls. Allowing emissions to vary from year to year gives firms the flexibility to abate less and pay more in taxes when abatement costs are unusually high (and vice-versa when abatement costs are low). In order to achieve climatic goals, the tax rate can be adjusted over time to attain greater emissions reductions.

### Price Predictability

The advantage of a **carbon tax** is that it fixes the price of carbon emissions. It creates a permanent incentive to reduce emissions, thereby encouraging investment in alternative fuels and energy-efficient technologies that have high up-front costs.

Under a **cap-and-trade** system, the price of emissions permits may vary considerably from year to year. An especially cold winter, for example, could increase the demand for energy and cause a spike in the price of permits. This volatility could weaken incentives to invest in cleaner technologies.

For illustrative purposes, this paper focuses on a cap-and-trade system for carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>).

To address volatility, most cap-and-trade proposals include cost-control mechanisms.

- Safety valve—establishes a ceiling on the price of permits. If the price reaches this level, the government can sell additional permits at this price to the capped entities.
- Circuit breaker—freezes a gradually declining emissions cap if the permit price rises above a predetermined level.
- Banking—allows companies to save unused allowances for future years.
- Borrowing—allows companies to borrow permits from future years and pay them back, with interest, later.

Offsets—allow companies to cover some of their emissions by purchasing credits created by carbon mitigation projects (e.g., tree planting) from sources outside the cap-and-trade system.

These mechanisms (with the exception of banking) could delay emissions reductions and undermine the integrity of the cap.

### Environmental Effectiveness

The impact of a **cap-and-trade** system depends on a number of factors. How stringent is the emissions target? How will baseline emissions be measured and a corresponding and appropriate number of emissions permits be determined and distributed? Will the cap be applied economy-wide or only to certain sectors? Does it include cost-control measures that are likely to break the emissions cap?

**Curbing Greenhouse Gas Emissions...continued from page 3**

The impact of a **carbon tax** depends in large part on whether the tax rate is set high enough to create real market incentives to develop and adopt climate-friendly technologies. Although a carbon tax does not establish a firm limit on emissions, it applies economy-wide and provides a constant incentive for companies to make carbon-saving investments. The tax rate can be increased over time to provide stronger incentives to reduce emissions.

**Equity**

Under many **cap-and-trade** proposals, a substantial portion of the emissions permits are to be distributed free to the capped entities. Research indicates that only a modest portion of the permit value is needed to offset the costs of the cap, but the full amount is passed along in increased prices to consumers. This would disproportionately affect lower-income households because they tend to spend a larger fraction of their income than do higher-income households and because energy products make up a bigger share of their spending.

A **carbon tax** directly raises substantial revenues. These could be used in part to fund "progressive" tax-shifting policies that would reduce the burden of higher energy costs on lower-income groups.

**Simplicity and Transparency**

A **cap-and-trade** system requires new institutions (e.g., a system to allocate permits, markets where firms can buy and sell permits, a means of monitoring emissions and trades). Auctioning permits rather than distributing them free could help promote simplicity and transparency.

A **carbon tax** can be levied and collected via existing institutions with experience in enforcing compliance. It is simpler and less expensive to administer and enforce than a cap-and-trade system. Its underlying premise—the price of energy should include the environmental costs associated with its production—is transparent and readily understood.

**National Popular Vote Compact Study** - There is still time to join our committee to do a study and consensus on this timely proposal. The committee will be meeting during the month of February. Contact Cindy Guest at 922-0585 or at [cguest01@yahoo.com](mailto:cguest01@yahoo.com) if you have questions for are interested in participating.

**Our Tea Bag contribution list is growing! Special thanks to the following lightening fast contributors!**

- Helen Janssen ..... Marilyn Gerkin
- Pat Price ..... Dot and Frank Moore
- Millie Headdy ..... Ann Hardy
- Mimi Mendelson ..... Susan Chapman
- Ida levy.....Cindy Guest.....Jean Slocum
- Patty Schreiber.....Corky Pezzati...Ginny Tarika...Tom Brannin...
- Pat Moberg...Shirley Brown...Mary Lou Rohrer...Andrea Rogers

**Keep 'em coming!**

**It's time to plan the ...**

**THE STATE LEAGUE PROGRAM!**

The LWVF Program planning process is powered by local leagues. It is a reflection of what local leagues believe should be the priorities of the state league for the upcoming 2 years. Local league members recommend to their local league board the issues that they believe should be acted upon or studied in the upcoming 2-year period. Local league boards consolidate members' recommendations and decide what issues have the most support, are the most timely, and are most appropriate for league activity. These recommendations are due to the state board by February 27, 2009.

A LWV Program can include current positions, issues for actions, ongoing studies, and new studies and/or concurrences. LWVF action is based on program and principles. The following are the types of actions the LWVF may take based on the Program that is adopted by the membership at the Convention and the Principles that are contained in Issues and Action:

**Proposed State Legislation:** Board approved legislative advocacy, Board approved testimony, and LWVF Action Alerts.

**Other Issues:** Board approved litigation, Op/Ed articles, Letters to the Editor, citizen education and public forums

Submit your ideas to [cguest01@yahoo.com](mailto:cguest01@yahoo.com) or use the forms included in this newsletter and send to 6120 S. Lockwood Ridge Road, Sarasota, FL 34231. If you have any questions, call Cindy Guest at 922-0585.



**Healthcare Committee Update...By Millie Headdy**



The Healthcare Committee is continuing its research and discussion of insurance issues including Medicare and Medicaid. A prior Hot Topics forum focused on Medicare and its effects on doctors and hospitals.

The Hot Topics at the Pines in January focused on Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements and how they affect nursing homes. The Pines was selected because it is a not-for-profit, long-term care community offering quality, compassionate care to seniors including those who may have outlived their financial resources.

JoAnn Westbrook, Director of the Pines Education Institute, explained the role of their Education Institute which includes continuing education. Suzanne Jones, Director of Marketing and Admissions, described their programs and services which includes a state of the art Rehabilitation/Therapy Center with total immersion pool and rehabilitation trail and a 45 bed Alzheimer's and Dementia Care unit.

Jane Lautner, Director of Development, told the story of the Pines. The Pines was founded by the Kiwanis Club in 1948 with 6 beds and is now a 280 bed facility. John Overton, CEO, responded to the recent effects of decreased Medicaid reimbursement which affects all nursing homes but in a greater degree to the Pines because they serve a larger number of Medicaid residents. He also discussed mandated staffing levels and the possibility of some financial relief with the federal stimulus program. He noted that the Pines does not receive any direct funding from the local, state and federal governments but relies on Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement and private pay, some grants, and philanthropic contributions from the public.

A question and answer period ensued. When asked how the League of Women Voters could help the Pines, Mr. Overton responded by saying that we could help by taking the story of the Pines to the public and to focus attention on the ramifications of decreased Medicaid reimbursement for the care of the elderly.

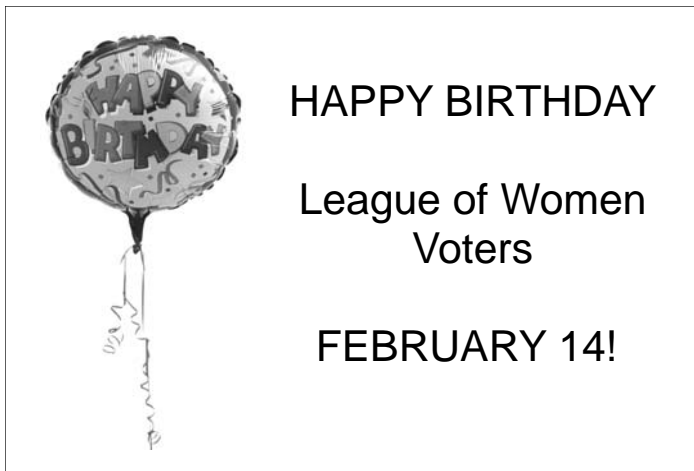
A tour of the new skilled nursing facility followed; 350 caring staff members, of which 40% have been with the Pines for over 5 years, serve the Pines which embraces the Eden Alternative Philosophy. Time constraints on the 17 acre property prevented us from visiting the assisted living facility, Alzheimer and dementia care unit, respite care, and child care center.

**Join Us**

**Great News! The Supreme Court clears FairDistricts amendments for the ballot!**

The Supreme court has cleared our amendments for the ballot. Read the full text here...

<http://www.floridasupremecourt.org/decisions/2009/sc08-986.pdf>



**Change in contact information?**

Be sure that the League office has your up-to-date contact information. Pass that on to us and we'll be sure to update the records for LWVUS.

Additionally, we'll be printing an updated Membership Directory for distribution in April. If there is any information you would prefer **NOT** be published, please let us know.

**Note: Facts for Citizens**

Calls are coming into the League office asking when a new "Facts for Citizens" will be published. Due to budget constraints in the County, there will not be an update. However, if you are looking for contact information for any elected official in the state, please let me know and I'll be happy to do the research for you.

*Kim Noyes*

941-921-9778  
lwvsc@comcast.net

**DIVERSITY MISSION STATEMENT:** The League of Women Voters of Sarasota County will promote, in all aspects of the League's activities, a philosophy of inclusion that reflects the diverse composition and issues of the community.

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League of Women Voters, Sarasota County  
6120 S Lockwood Ridge Rd.  
Sarasota, FL 34231

The League of Women Voters - Nationally Respected, Locally Engaged