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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.

2007-2008
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Committee
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Upcoming Events

Pancakes and Politics!

At the December 7 Pancakes and Politics, we'll welcome

State Representatives
Doug Holder
and **Keith Fitzgerald**

The Fountains at Lake Pointe Woods
3240 Lake Pointe Blvd.
(1/2 mile north of Sarasota Square Mall
on the east side of U.S. 41)

Your \$3.00 donation covers breakfast
and benefits the LWVSC
9 to 10 a.m.

For reservations, contact Kim Noyes
at lwvsc@comcast.net or call the
League phone line 921-9778

Mark your calendar.....

December 13
Gulf Gate Library, 1:00
preliminary discussion on
Immigration

January 11
Pancakes & Politics

Robert Bartolotta,
New City Manager
"A City Overview"

A Message from your President

Cindy Guest



In reading of the recent passing of **Rebecca Eger**, I was reminded of my first experience with the League of Women Voters of Sarasota County. The first experience I had with the League was to attend an Education Committee meeting. **Giovanna Deveny, Pat Gardner, Dot Moore, Carl Olson, Alice Tippet, Sue Sherman, Claire Stern, Carol**

Nikla, Phyllis Duffy, Richard Holder and Rebecca Eger were members of this committee. It was evident from the beginning that this was a highly effective group of people. Their commitment to quality education was serious and their intent to make a difference was in earnest. These meetings were highly productive and became a high priority for me and along the way I learned how the League functions and all that it does.

One can simply look through our membership directory to see that our organization attracts dynamic, engaged citizens. Rebecca Eger was a great example of this. One need only to be on the receiving end of numerous requests from community groups for the League's support and input to understand the important role this organization can and does play in our community. We make very important contributions at the grass roots level and work on initiatives that are often implemented at state and national levels.

We have a lot of important work to do. At any one time the League is working on numerous issues and objectives. This year we are studying the immigration issue and local health care needs; we will be working on the re-districting issue again, tax reform and certainly have much to do on upcoming elections including encouraging citizens to participate in the electoral process.

We will need all of the help we can get. Please feel free to contact me or any member of our Board to talk about how you can become involved.

Have a wonderful holiday season,
In League, Cindy

The Recent Passing of a Friend...

Recently Sarasota County lost a very special person, former Tax Collector and LWV President Rebecca Eger.



The Herald Tribune reported that Rebecca was a community activist. That's true, but it doesn't begin to describe her impact on the lives of those around her. I'm just one person who benefited from Rebecca's generous spirit. I met her in the early 1970's, when I was new to Sarasota and she was President of the LWV. As a young person just starting out, I couldn't afford to pay the dues for League membership. Rebecca knew that and surprised me by

paying for my membership. That's the kind of thing she did; taking action because she saw a need. I can't imagine how many other people have a similar story. In 1975 she was appointed as Tax Collector by Gov. Reubin Askew. I went to the courthouse to apply for a job knowing what an opportunity it would be to be part of her staff. A few month's later, I was thrilled to be hired as a cashier. One thing led to another and in 1977 she named me as the Assistant Tax Collector. I had 7 years to work side by side with Rebecca; an invaluable experience for me professionally and personally. When she decided to leave office in 1984, she convinced Gov. Bob Graham to take a chance on a 36 year old, young woman with no political experience. Many an elected official has had a hard time letting go of a former position; not Rebecca. She generously helped me with my campaign in many ways but she didn't set foot back in the office. She was gracious enough to give me the time to make my own decisions. After leaving office she continued to give of her time, talent and treasure especially to protect the environment. Winston Churchill said "we make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give." Rebecca Eger made a great life and this community, the League of Women Voters and this 33 year League member all benefited from her gifts.

Thanks, Rebecca!

Barbara Ford-Coates
Sarasota County Tax Collector

Legislative Interview Volunteers Needed

The LWV of Florida decides on issues for which to lobby in each session of the Legislature. These are distributed to each League, whose members then arrange for interviews with each House and Senate legislator in that District. We are to interview Keith Fitzgerald - House District 69, Doug Holder - House District 70, and Lisa Carlton - Senate District 23.

These interviews give local opportunities for face-to-face contact:

- To acquaint our legislators with our League and members in their district,
- To inform our legislators of and about the LEVF '08 legislative priorities, and
- To obtain information for the LWVF professional and volunteer lobbyists.

Appointments have been made to interview Doug Holder on January 15th at 11AM, and Keith Fitzgerald also on January 15th, at 3PM. No appointment has yet been made with Lisa Carlton.

We need volunteers to help conduct these interviews, and particularly welcome those who have not previously participated. Two League members conduct each interview. The interviewees will have the questions ahead of time. Conversation should hold strictly to discussion of those, be completely non-controversial and be completed in a timely manner.

Please contact Cindy Guest (cguest01@yahoo.com) or Ginny Tarika (ginitarika@gmail.com) for more information and/or to volunteer.

'Tis the Season... To Share the Gift of LWV Membership



Looking for a special and unique gift this holiday season? Want to give something that provides benefits all year long? Think about giving friends and family a gift membership in the League of Women Voters. League members keep our communities strong, fair and vibrant. Share the value of being part of one of our nation's most trusted organizations with the special people on your gift list. New members will receive copies of the League's national, state and local communications, including The National Voter and LeagueE-Voice, and more importantly, they will receive opportunities to impact local, state, and national issues. Give someone you care about the chance to make a difference in their community by becoming a member of LWV.

REDISTRICTING REFORM IS BACK!!!
Caroline Emmons-Schramm, Off Board, Redistricting Reform

The League has never flinched in the face of challenges, and we never give up on important issues. Redistricting reform is such an issue.

Background

The League has supported reform of the redistricting/reapportionment process for over thirty years. We believe, for a democracy to thrive, there must be debate, accountability, and for our citizens to feel that their votes matter. Although a majority of Floridians support an independent reapportionment group to draw districts, utilizing standards to ensure fair citizen representation, and would vote for it if it appeared on the ballot, the League has been unsuccessful in the past in both inducing Legislative leadership to place this vital reform before the citizens of Florida, or in placing these issues on the ballot by citizen referendum.

Currently, the Florida legislature is responsible for dividing the state into voting districts to reflect changes in population after each census. Historically, the redrawing of voting districts is a political process controlled by whichever party is in the majority, to be used to keep themselves in the majority and protect other incumbents.

In the 2006 election, as a result of the last redistricting, our legislators did such a good job of designing "safe" seats that challengers were discouraged and incumbent members of Congress and the legislature faced little or no competitive opposition.

How is that possible? The advent of advanced computer programming and extensive data bases has allowed our state's elected representatives, as they create their own districts, to literally pick their own voters.

The current redistricting process allows districts to span hundreds of miles and crisscross multiple counties across the state. The result is convoluted, strangely shaped districts which show no respect of communities and geography, and are designed to create an overwhelming majority for a single party within each district's bounds –for either Republicans or Democrats. This results in a more extreme partisanship, since candidates need only appeal to their party's base. It also spawns a lack of responsiveness to constituents once elected.

As the representative of The League of Women Voters of Florida, I served on the steering committee of the political action committee, Florida's Committee for Fair Elections during the 2005-2006 citizens' initiative campaign to establish an independent redistricting commission and establish standards for drawing the districts.

Many local Leagues and numerous League members actively supported and participated in collecting signed petitions to reform the redistricting process in 2005 and 2006. League members were instrumental in the successful collection of over 990,000 signed petitions. Of these, 689,000 signatures were verified. In addition, the campaign qualified in 15 congressional districts. These results garnered more than the numbers required to make the amendments eligible for the ballot.

On March 23rd, 2006, the Florida Supreme Court struck the proposed amendment from the ballot, ruling that the wording of the proposals did not comply with technical legal requirements for ballot initiatives.

However, the Supreme Court decision clearly established a roadmap for compliance, and individuals and organizations active in redistricting reform have interpreted that as a positive sign

Current Fair Districts Campaign:

On October 30, 2006, the campaign for redistricting reform was reborn in Florida. The political action committee, re-named **Fair Districts Florida**, established a legal team to draft four amendments to the Florida Constitution to be placed on the ballot in November, 2010. The legal team included experts grounded in Florida Constitutional law and familiar with the amendment process and policies in the state and a through knowledge of Florida's political climate. Yes, the words in the Ballot Summaries have been counted.

The extended target date allows us the necessary time to forge a broad based coalition supporting reform by allowing extensive input at the front of the process, especially from the minority communities. This process has taken an extensive amount of time and effort.

For our amendments to follow the road map presented in the Supreme Court ruling, would require four (4) separate amendments. Two amendments would establish appointed Reapportionment Commissions: one to draw congressional districts, one to draw legislative districts.

Separate amendments would establish fairness standards for use in establishing legislative and congressional boundaries respectively. The standards would prohibit drawing district lines to favor or disfavor any incumbent or

Redistricting continued...

political party or which would deny or abridge the equal opportunity of racial or language minorities the ability to elect representatives of their choice. Districts would have to be compact, equal in population and utilize existing political and geographical boundaries

Polling was conducted to gauge voter response to, among other issues, the proposed wording of the petitions, attitudes toward redistricting in Florida, and four different redistricting initiatives. This polling was very important, since the initiatives must pass by a 60% margin to be successful, and we know that powerful and well financed groups are arrayed against these reforms.

Overall, the results of the polling were positive. All four initiatives had the potential to pass, but the work and expense were monumental. Of the group, the Commission petitions are the most problematic. They contain a complicated subject and many specific details which can allow opponents to seize on one minor point and use that to derail the whole concept. The Standards petitions are much easier to grasp and support.

After a thorough review and much discussion, the redistricting reform campaign committee (which includes the League of Women Voters and Common Cause) has decided that our best course of action is to file the two petitions which would create new requirements for drawing legislative and congressional districts.

Why did we do this? Primarily, establishing the proposed fairness standards that must be followed by any entity charged with drawing voting districts will meet almost all of our goals; districts that allow voters to choose their legislators, not legislators choosing their voters; districts that do not unfairly protect incumbents; compact and contiguous districts, equal in population, that do not divide communities and neighborhood; and districts which allow racial and language minorities to fully participate in the election process and elect representatives of their choice.

Another major concern was the cost of the petition process and then the cost of the campaign. The estimated cost to get the four petitions on the ballot and then run a campaign for passage is estimated to be more than several million dollars, and the effect of recent legislation that will allow voters to remove their name from a previously signed petition is unknown. In addition, our request to attach the petitions together as we did last campaign has been denied.

Also, we know that the legislators and other influential groups are poised to oppose an appointed commission because it threatens their power. The fight would be expensive and it would be ugly. Removing the commission removes many of the negative arguments against reform.

A number of political figures have endorsed the reform effort and agreed to serve as honorary co-chairs for FairDistrictsFlorida.org. They include Republicans, former Comptroller Bob Milligan and former Judge Thom Rumberger; and Democrats, former U.S. Senator and Governor Bob Graham and former U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno.

FairDistrictsFlorida.org plans to collect the 61,000 signatures per petition necessary for Supreme Court review, and then suspend operations until after the court has ruled. If successful, we will then collect the rest of the signatures.

So we are again in the thick of a reapportionment reform campaign! As the LWVF representative on the FairDistrictsFlorida.org Steering Committee, I urge you and your League to join in this campaign.

How can your League join this action campaign? Form a League Fair Districts committee and send the name and contact information of the committee chair to me at: carolinees@cfl.rr.com. Show your family and friends those convoluted districts, distribute and collect signed petitions from them. Volunteer to attend an event and collect signatures. Join or form a Speaker's Bureau in your community, either as a speaker, or to assist in distribution and collection of the signed petitions at the event. Arrange for a speaker to address an organization of which you are a member. Visit the FairDistrictsFlorida website on the Internet at: www.FairDistrictsFlorida.org (coming soon) for more information.

The League and the citizens of Florida are counting on you! The current redistricting process places the concept of "one person, one vote in jeopardy! This is the quintessential League good government issue! **SUPPORT FAIR VOTING DISTRICTS IN FLORIDA!!!**

Immigration Study Consensus Discussion for Members

Come to Fruitville Library on January 24 from 2:00 to 4:30 p.m. for a discussion of U.S. immigration policy. You can find additional information on this subject on the LWVUS website (www.lwv.org) under "Projects" and "Immigration Study." Your input for this national consensus study is important.

What is it? Reaching Member Agreement by Consensus

Before the League can take action on program that has been adopted, members must agree in broad terms on what they think about various aspects of the policy issue. The technique most often used in the League for reaching member agreement is consensus by group discussion.

It is not a simple majority, nor is it unanimity; rather it is the overall sense of the group as expressed through the exchange of ideas and opinions, whether in a meeting of the full membership or a series of smaller discussion meetings.

It is essential that members have an opportunity to become informed before being asked to make decisions on the issue under consideration. It is through this process that League members become educated on a given issue, and this is what makes subsequent League action on that issue uniquely credible and respected. During the study phase, members have an opportunity to examine the facts and key pro/con points. They are encouraged to discuss the political realities of action and to contribute ideas for the board to consider when it formulates an action strategy after a position is reached.

If the League has a position on a given issue, action can be taken as appropriate. The issue does not need to be studied each time action is thought to be necessary.

— From *League Basics*, LWVUS

SOLAR POWER UPDATE by Ray Ritenour

A recent edition of the MIT Technical Magazine reported on Spain's efforts to produce much of their electricity needs by using solar power. Their method chooses approaches that can blend into existing power plants. A simple description of an electrical utility (power plant) is that it converts a source of energy into electricity. Sources of energy can be oil, natural gas, coal, nuclear, and solar. The first step in a conventional plant is to use the base energy source to make hot water. The hot water is used in a turbine to make suitable electricity. Now let's look at characteristics of each source of energy.

Coal is in abundant supply and likely to have modest price growth but it is a heavy air polluter.

Coal is cheap and efficient and it is easier to maximize profit. General Electric is developing a conversion of coal to gas to reduce pollution.

Oil is still abundant but suffers from rapidly increasing demand. It pollutes.

Natural Gas is a light polluter but supply is a problem.

Nuclear has no air pollution but will be slow coming on line and many people fear nuclear power. It also is somewhat less efficient and thus costs more. Solar has no pollution and should not grow rapidly in price. It does have a problem at night. Spain seeks to solve this by storing hot water. There may be other ingenious ways.

There is another research approach that seeks sequestration of the carbon and then pumps the extracted carbon into underground vaults. It is an attractive idea because it solves the problem for all types of power generation. But it is complicated with many problems still to be resolved.

Any of these problems, with some regulation, can be resolved by Congress and the industry. Global Warming need not be a factor in the decision. What we do need to know is how strongly the citizens want cleaner air to breathe. On Sunday, Sept 30 the Herald-Tribune reported that Florida, like Spain, will also use the Thermal-Solar method to start using solar power. Where does that leave our citizens? On the sidelines.

When America has a crisis many citizens want to help, so, is there a way for individuals to contribute to cleaner air? Yes there is a way. The method suitable for us uses cells to produce electricity on the roof tops of private homes. The output of the cells is shaped like that coming from the utility. Equipment exists to do this. One need not worry about nighttime because power is sent to the utility during the day and the utility power is used during the night. The state of Florida will have to be involved to assure that all pricing is fair. The utility will make as much money as before and the air will be less polluted. There are some things to do before embarking on massive power generation in our homes.

This is a field under development in numerous places. Changes need to be known early: changes in efficiency, which relate to roof top array and size and cell life, which relates to maintenance. A third concern is with taxation. This can be a great benefit for the state of Florida, so a modest taxation seems called for. Perhaps there should be no tax since this is contribution to our society.

Summation: This seems like a possible opportunity for Florida citizens to improve our air quality without having to WAIT for the federal or state governments. It requires a group of retired engineers and retired tax people to keep our citizens fully informed. The Clinton Global Initiative may provide a single data source. Any widespread roof top cells would be safe from terrorists, and we need not sit idly by to make a contribution to cleaner air.

**WELCOME !
TO OUR NEW MEMBERS**

*Helen Burkett
Frank Gurney
Patricia Higgins
Russ Jordan
Charlotte Nunnemaker
Chris Pfahler*



**AND FOR YOUR
GENEROUS CONTRIBUTION...**

Georgia Joan Keep

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