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The VOTER

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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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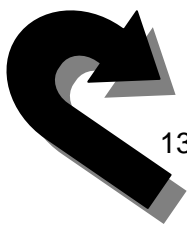
The VOTER
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Upcoming Events

Hot Topics!

At the January 28 Hot Topics luncheon, we'll welcome City Manager **ROBERT BARTOLOTTA** An Overview of Sarasota



SELBY LIBRARY (Auditorium)

1331 First Street (downtown)

\$10 members / \$12 non-members
Boxed lunches 11:15 a.m.
**PLEASE ARRIVE PROMPTLY
AT 11:15**

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

Please Note:

Pancakes and Politics!

(Pat Price)

Unfortunately The Fountains at Lake Pointe Woods is no longer able to host our monthly "Pancakes and Politics".

We certainly appreciate the almost seven years they have provided this service. We have been able to attract new members, raise money and most importantly present excellent programs to our members and the public.

We are looking for a new sponsor. Stay tuned!!

A Message from your President

Cindy Guest



The League operates on funds raised by annual dues, donations, and special fundraising efforts. We also pursue and are fortunate to find support in the community such as the Supervisor of Elections sponsoring "Facts for Citizens" and the "Voters Guide," The Fountains at Lake Pointe Woods providing

meeting space and breakfast for Pancakes and Politics for several years, and the Community Foundation providing meeting space for Hot Topics luncheons.

In order to achieve the important objectives of increasing voter education and participation, the League needs funds to enable it to communicate with members and the public at large. Specifically, funds are used to:

- Publish and disseminate newsletters
- Announce events, promote position and pursue initiatives
- Maintain a web page
- Produce and distribute member directories
- Participate at state and national conventions

In addition, the League works on numerous projects including issue studies, informative events, election participation, advocacy, etc. Candidate debates and ballot question forums will be held this election year.

Without the ability to effectively communicate League events and positions, we are hard pressed to make any impact in the community. So please, particularly as we go into the intense activities of a presidential election year, think of how you can increase our financial support.

In League, Cindy

Florida 3RD Party Voter Registration Laws and You
(From The Florida Voter, Winter 2007, Dianne Wheatley-Giliotti)

The argument date for the state of Florida appeal before the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals concerning the Miami federal district court's August 28, 2006 decision to grant a preliminary injunction blocking enforcement of a third party voter registration law was canceled before a scheduled October 3, 2007 hearing. The Florida League of Women Voters had filed a complaint, *League of Women Voters v. Browning (formerly Cobb)*, in federal court in Miami on May 18, 2006 to block Fla. Laws 2005-277, Secs. 2 and 7 which went into effect on January 1, 2006. This law trampled constitutional rights by imposing crippling fines and burdensome reporting requirements on voter registration groups. The Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law, the Advancement Project in Washington DC and Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel LLP in New York City represented the LWVF in this successful suit.

The 2007 Legislature passed HB 537 that includes provisions amending the enjoined 2006 3RD party voter registration law. The LWVF has entered into a stipulation with the Florida Secretary of State under which the state has agreed not to enforce the new voter registration law, which would otherwise go into effect on January 1, 2008. Although either the LWVF or the state may terminate this agreement, they must give 30 days notice for this to occur.

Local League voter registration drives for the Presidential Preference Primary are not impacted by either 3RD Party Voter Registration Law inasmuch as the book closing date for the primary is December 31, 2007. Local Leagues planning voter registration drives after January 1, 2008, should consult with the LWVF President.

SUMMARY
NONPARTISAN POLICY STATEMENT
League of Women Voters Sarasota County

The League may take action on governmental measures and policies in the public interest. However, it shall not support or oppose any political party or any candidate. Recognizing that the League experience uniquely equips members for public life and wishing to encourage members to utilize their knowledge and abilities, non-board members are urged to participate fully in partisan activities (on an individual basis). Board members' activities must be limited to preserve the League's non-partisan position.

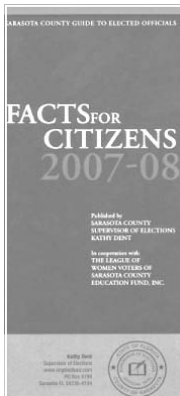
- No officer or Board member shall run for or hold elective office.
- Board members shall not undertake any action that will cause them to be identified publicly as supporting any candidate for office or any political party. .
- A Board member may not actively campaign, petition for or support a campaign or political issue that is in direct opposition to the LWVSC's position. A Board member may however support a political issue that the LWVSC has no position on. This includes petitioning, placing signage on property, or publicly speaking on the issue as long as it is clear she/he is not acting on behalf of the League.

What Role Will You Assume?
(Marilyn Gerkin)

As we begin a new year, now is the time to think about the busy 2008 election year. The League has a big job of informing the public on candidates, issues and other areas of concern at the local, state and national level. For any organization to be successful, it must have people who are willing to accept a leadership role. On behalf of the nominating committee, I ask you to let me know what position or role you would be willing to accept. All of us should be recruiting new members and we especially need someone to head the membership committee.

Please email (gerk91@comcast.net) or call (922-8730) and tell me how you are going to support the League in 2008.

Voter Service *(Pat Price)*



As you most certainly are aware we are entering an election year. There will be races that we will be covering at the county, state and federal level. In 2006 there were over thirty candidates that we presented to the public. The ways that you can become involved are many. You can register voters, become a poll worker, develop questions for candidates, help put together the "Voter's Guide", get involved with the forums. These are just a few and jobs come in small, medium and large. Anyone that is willing to help please contact me.

Welcome New Members:

Pat Dalaku
State Rep Doug Holder
Elinor White

THANK YOU!

Consensus Meeting Immigration Study Committee

(Ann Hardy & Ginny Tarika, Co-chairs)

This meeting, to come to consensus will take place at the Fruitville Library on Thursday, January 24, 2008, from 2-4:30. Please note the 2 ½ hour time. An outline of the questions to be addressed is included in this Voter. Also, we would like to encourage all of you to go to: <http://www.lwv.org> and, on the Immigration Study site, read over, and possibly print up the 4 Brief papers and those of the 8 Background papers that are of interest to you.

We members of the committee have been reading and clipping articles concerning our nation's immigration policies and practices, and are looking forward to a lively discussion at the consensus meeting. Do join us!!

LWVUS IMMIGRATION STUDY2008 Consensus Discussion and Questions

The Consensus Questions will each be discussed at the January Meeting. Take a few moments to think about these. For questions 1-6 you will be asked to designate these items High PRIORITY (H), LOWER PRIORITY (L), or if you DISAGREE (D).

Allotted time for Questions 1 and 2: 40 minutes

Question 1: Who may enter our country as an immigrant is subject to much discussion. Here are three criteria that Federal immigration laws could take into consideration:

- Environmental Impact/sustainability
- Ethnic and cultural diversity
- Immigrant characteristics:
 - Health
 - Age
 - History of criminal activity
 - Educational and training

Question 2: Historically the U.S. has issued visas for family members of those already here, for workers, for refugees and asylees, and temporarily for students. LWVUS is asking us to assign priorities on 1) the value that should be placed on each of these criteria as immigration policies are being considered, and 2) the provision of efficient, expeditious systems in each area (with minimal or no backlogs) for legal entry into the U.S.

- Family reunification of authorized immigrants and citizens with spouse and minor children
- Rights of families to remain together
- Economic, business and service employment needs
- Humanitarian crises/political persecution in home countries
- Temporary students

Allotted time for Question 3: 20 minutes

Question 3: How should unauthorized immigrants currently in the U.S. be treated?

- Deport unauthorized immigrants
- Deport some/allow some to earn legal adjustment of status based on length of residence in U.S.
- Deport some/allow some to earn legal adjustment of status based on needs of U.S. employers
- Allow all to earn legal adjustment of status by doing things such as paying taxes, studying civics, learning English, etc.
- If deported, assess fines before possible re-entry
- Assess fines before allowed to earn legal adjustment of status

Allotted time for Question 4: 10 minutes

Question 4: In order to deal more effectively with unauthorized immigrants, Federal immigration law should include:

A social security card or other national identification card with secure identifiers for all persons residing in the U.S. Verification documents, such as green cards and work permits with secure identifiers

Allotted time for Question 5: 15 minutes

Question 5: Which methods should be used to enforce Federal immigration law?

- Physical barriers (such as fences) and surveillance at borders
- Increased personnel at land, air and sea entry points
- More effective tracking of persons with non-immigrant visas until they leave the county
- Improved technology to facilitate employer verification of employee visa status
- Significant fines proportionate to revenue for employers who fail to take adequate steps to verify work authorization of employees
- Improved technology for sharing information among Federal agencies

Allotted time for Questions 6: 10 minutes

Question 6. At the same time that various forms of enforcement may be advisable, we need to take into consideration the rights of all individuals to fair treatment.

- Rights of all individuals in U.S. to fair treatment under the law (fair hearing, right to counsel, right of appeal and human treatment)
- Rights of workers to safe working conditions and livable wages

For questions 7 and 8 - Do you agree or disagree?

Allotted time for Questions 7: 10 minutes

Question 7: Federal immigration law should address and balance the long-term Federal financial benefit from immigrants with the financial costs borne by states and local governments with large immigrant populations.

Allotted time for Question 8: 15 minutes

Questions 8: Federal immigration law should be coordinated with U.S. foreign policy to proactively help improve economies, education and job opportunities, and living conditions of nations with large emigrating populations

The Property Tax Proposal

The League of Women Voters is **opposed** to the **property tax proposal** that will be included on the January 29 ballot. Please see the following article from LWVF for further background information on this issue.

January 29, 2008 Ballot Question Ballot Summary and Pro/Con Statements

AMENDMENT # 1 – PROPERTY TAXES

Reference: Article VII, Sections 3, 4, and 6, and Article XII, Section 27

Ballot Summary: This revision proposes changes to the State Constitution relating to property taxation. With respect to homestead property, this revision: (1) increases the homestead exemption except for school district taxes and (2) allows homestead property owners to transfer up to \$500,000 of their Save-Our-Homes benefits to their next homestead. With respect to non-homestead property, this revision (3) provides a \$25,000 exemption for tangible personal property and (4) limits assessment increases for specified non-homestead real property except for school district taxes.

Sponsor: The Florida Legislature

Background: This amendment was placed on the ballot by the Florida Legislature at a special session in October 2007, after a Florida court struck down the Legislature's earlier proposal for property tax cutbacks. This Joint Resolution proposes changes to the following sections of **Article VII** (Finance and Taxation) of the Florida Constitution: **Section 3** (Taxes; exemptions); **Section 4** (Taxation; assessments); and **Section 6** (Homestead Exemptions). It also adds a new **Section 27** (Property tax exemptions and limitations on property tax assessments) to **Article XII** (Schedule).

PRO:

- Adds a new \$25,000 homestead exemption applicable only to county property taxes (not school taxes).
- Allows homestead property owners to apply up to \$500,000 in existing Save Our Homes tax savings to a new home stead.
- Provides businesses with a new \$25,000 tax exemption on tangible personal property.
- Limits county property tax assessment increases on non-homestead real property to 10% per year (this is not applicable to school taxes).
- May help stimulate sales of real property by allowing homestead property owners to transfer Save Our Homes tax savings to a new homestead.

CON:

- Cities and counties will lose \$9.6 billion in tax money over the next 5 years.
- Public schools will lose \$2.8 billion in tax money over the next 5 years.
- Making Save Our Homes portable extends the present inequality in property tax assessments between homestead owners and owners of non-homestead property.
- The tax breaks will apply to all homeowners, even those who can afford to pay.
- Counties may raise developer impact fees or other taxes or fees to pay for cuts in property taxes.
- May be unconstitutional because it treats long-time homestead owners differently from new arrives to Florida
- Changes state property taxes while the constitutionally man dated Florida Taxation and Budget Reform Commission are still working on its once in twenty years study of the taxation system.

Where DO Your Dues Go? (Marilyn Boyle)

If you have wondered where your dues go, you might be interested to know that not all of the \$50.00 you pay annually to your local chapter here in Sarasota stays in Sarasota. For each local member, we send \$26.80 to the League of Women Voters of the United States and \$13.00 to the League of Women Voters of Florida. These Per Member Payments (PMPs) provide a significant resource to fund the efforts of the League at the state and national levels and they are payable quarterly with the first payment due April 1st of each year.



As you may recall, at our annual meeting last April, our bylaws were changed to better reflect the cycle of our fiscal year that runs from April 1st to March 31st. Members' annual dues will now be payable at the beginning of the fiscal year on April 1st. This change will provide your League with the resources to fund our operations up front and throughout the year and to meet our state and national obligations in a timely way.

**FIVE EASY WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR OUR PLANET,
OUR PEOPLE**

- *Use an eco-friendly reusable bag for shopping*
- *Do not print Gas or ATM receipts to save paper*
- *Recycle as many items at home versus throwing away*
- *Decorate an artificial Christmas tree*
- *Use CFL Light bulbs all throughout my home*



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