



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.

2008-2009
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A Message from your President

We initiated the election season with a very successful Summer Social at the home of **Nanci and George Babigian** with over 50 people in attendance. It was great to see everyone and with the campaign season in full swing, the conversation was very animated. Thanks, once again, to Nanci and George for their great hospitality.

We have several people to thank for the generous support we are getting for our events. We were honored to receive a grant from the **Sarasota Gulf Gate Rotary Club** to help us with our Candidates Fairs. This will make a considerable difference in the caliber and scope of these events. We want to give **George Babigian** a big thank you for helping us obtain this grant. The Sarasota Gulf Gate Kiwanis have been long time supporters of worthy community projects. It is groups such as this that make a difference in our community's quality of life. We also want to thank **Jean Slocum** for contributing to these events. Life-member and past President, Jean is known to many of you as a strong leader and generous supporter of our League. We are grateful to professional photographer, **Scott Phillips**, who donated his time and talents to photograph our events. You can see these in this newsletter and they will be included in our "Photo Album" on our website soon. And **Andrea Rogers** did a fantastic job creating new membership materials and other promotional items for us in time to be used for these events. It was no small feat to both design and produce these on short notice. **Thanks to all of you!**



Our first Candidates Fair for the primary election was very successful, and we hope helpful for citizens and candidates alike. We invited 31 candidates and 29 attended. Over 250 people attended the event at Gulf Gate Library, which was co-sponsored by the **Friends of Gulf Gate Library**. This was a unique "one-on-one" opportunity for people to get to know the candidates and for candidates to hear what is important to their constituents.

We are busy making arrangements for our 3 remaining candidate forums and 2 candidate fairs to help you and the community-at-large make ballot decisions. Please note the times and dates of these events listed in this newsletter.

ELECTIONS:

Judging by the 19% turnout for the Primary Election, we need to work harder to encourage our friends and neighbors to exercise their right to vote. It's up to all of us. In addition to the informative events the League provides to help people become better informed, we will be making the LWVF's Special Election Edition of the Florida Voter available as soon as we get it. It will be available in the public libraries. Both www.lwvfla.org and www.lwv-sarasota-fl.org have summaries and pro/con arguments for the 9 amendments. (Please note our local website is still under construction.) You can also find election information on www.vote411.org.

Yours In League,

Cindy Guest

Upcoming Events—Save the Date



September 22
Candidates for
State Senate District 23
and
State Rep Candidates for
District 69 & 70

Location: Community
Foundation of Sarasota,
Fruitville Road

11:30 a.m.
Boxed Lunches
\$10 per person

RSVP to
941-921-9778
lwwsc@comcast.net

Save the Date:
Dr. Susan MacManus
October 27

LWV WILL BE HAVING
TWO

CANDIDATE FAIRS

TUESDAY OCTOBER 7
5:30 TO 7:30 P.M.
JACARANDA LIBRARY

THURS. OCTOBER 16
6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.
THE SOUTHGATE
COMMUNITY CENTER



September 10
Sarasota County
Commission
Candidates, District 1

9 - 10:00 a.m.
Waterside Estates,
4540 Bee Ridge Road
*(just past the light at McIntosh
going West or just before the light
going East. South side of Bee
Ridge)*

Please RSVP to Pat Price,
Voter Services Chair,
at 349-0908 or
patt52@comcast.net

Save the Date:
October 1
Public Defender Candidates

Focus on LWV Board member: Michele Mician



Michele Mician, is currently the Vice President of the League of Women Voters of Sarasota County and serves on the Climate Change Committee. She holds a Masters in Science with a focus on Environmental Science, Management and Policy. She also holds a graduate certificate in Women's Studies and teaches as an Adjunct Professor at the University of South Florida. Michele has the position of Vice Chair on the Keep Sarasota County Beautiful Advisory Board and has served on the board for four years. She has participated in a variety of environmental campaigns including working with Florida Public Interest Research Group to protect old growth forest. Her research includes studying the forest activist culture and global climate change activism. She completed rainforest ecology studies with a focus on tropical plant and amphibian research at La Suerte Biological field school in Costa Rica.

Michele has a certificate in permaculture design, has experience educating school children at several organic farms and has spent many years educating the public about pesticides, tree protection and protecting our old growth forests. Michele was recently asked to pioneer the City of Sarasota's Environmental Management Task Force. She also has worked full time for the City of Sarasota in the Neighborhood Partnership Office as a community liaison for the last five years. In May of 2008 she began working as the City's first Sustainability Coordinator in the newly created Environmental Services Division. She is also an active and healthy marathon running vegetarian!

A quick note about Membership...

By Andrea Rogers, Membership Chair



I've heard occasional comments from some of our local politicians what a civically-active community Sarasota is. It really is amazing how much is going on here. With so many organiza-

tions inviting participation from members of our community, and so many demands on individuals' time, energy and resources, we are especially appreciative of *all* in our community who support our local League. It's YOU who support us directly either by maintaining or newly joining in membership, or by otherwise contributing to our events, forums and projects. *Thank you!*

Looking ahead, to help build upon last year's increased membership momentum, Michele Mician and I sat down over lunch a couple of weeks ago and brainstormed ideas. Among other things, we discussed some possible new venues for our monthly *Food for Thought* and *Hot Topic* forums that might entice even greater participation from our community. Michele also shared some membership policies that were in place during her tenure as LWVSC Membership Chair, that were designed to encourage greater mutual support between our community and our local League. These policies are currently being revisited by the Board and we will be coming up with exciting programs and ideas as we forge ahead. Watch for details in the upcoming Voter newsletters and on our web site.

In the meantime, if you have any thoughts about either building our local membership, or about membership in the League in general, please feel free to e-mail me at agcullen@verizon.net, or call me at (941)359-3076.

Join the League today!

CFL's, EV's and, E fest OH MY! Climate Change Update

By Michele Mician, Vice President

The League of Women Voter's of Sarasota County has not just been talking about climate change and action. We are doing something about it! Recently the league has volunteered at the Farmer's Market to promote the Energy Star program through a partnership with the EPA, City of Sarasota, and Sarasota County. Over 400 bulbs were given away. This equals \$2776 in total annual savings for the people who signed the energy start pledge and an annual reduction in 35,072 pounds of carbon per year in our community. Thanks to Alex Barber, our STAR student and Cindy Guest, President we were able to do outreach for the League and inform citizens about energy conservation and climate change. We have more opportunities for League members to get involved in making a difference. If you have not already, please sign the Energy Star pledge. It is an easy way to make a difference and have immediate impact on climate change.



<http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=globalwarming.showPledgeHome>.

Get involved in an EV! (Electric vehicle) campaign.

Visit <http://www.pluginamerica.org/>

Encourage your elected officials to support the plug in hybrid and electric vehicle market. Sarasota County and the City of Sarasota have already signed a local resolution in support of this effort. However, you can do more. Gillespie Park UNPLUGGED! On October 12th we will have the opportunity to volunteer to do voter outreach and tell people about the electric cars on display. In addition, volunteers would hand out information about recycling, energy conservation, water conservation and the climate change connection.



If you would like to volunteer please contact me. The event is October 12th from Noon - 6pm in *Gillespie Park* at 710 N Osprey Ave. Sarasota. They will have bands and musicians, food and drink.

Efest is coming soon. Efest is a major green living music and arts festival that unites hundreds of organizations and individuals that care about our environment. Highlights include the Green-N-Healthy Expo with more than 175 exhibitors, panel discussions with top experts, the dynamic Children's Eco-Village, a special area promoting Florida-friendly landscaping, a tent displaying entries to the Efest Trash to Treasures Eco-Art Contest, live performances by top bands on the main stage, eclectic dance performances on the performing arts stage, an eco-fashion show, a food court with 25 vendors, and a beer and wine garden.



Volunteers from the League will be needed to educate attendees about climate change education and resources in Sarasota at this great event. November 15th and 16th volunteers will be needed from 7 am to 6 pm to help staff a booth. Please help with this fantastic endeavor. Call Michele at 941-448-3901.

More Great News

Help Needed To Register Voters

Pat Price, Voter Services Chair

As we approach the November 4 election, we are receiving requests for volunteers to register voters. It is, of course, an ongoing commitment of LWV but September until October 6 will probably have the highest demand in the four year period as we approach the presidential election. We have been requested by Sarasota Memorial Hospital to register voters on September 23, 24, and 25th between 7:30 AM and 6:00 PM. If you can give a couple of hours for this worthy cause please email me and tell me when you will be available. Also, I would like to have a list of willing volunteers to call on when we receive other requests.



Election Events

Now that the primary is over it's time to prepare for the general election.

We again have opportunities for you to learn about the candidates and issues. Of course, our Voter Guides will be available at all public libraries as well as the Special Election Guide from LWVFlorida. The state guides will present the "pros and cons" of the state amendments on the November ballot as well as nonpartisan information about the state-wide candidates.

Our Candidate Fairs have been so popular that we are holding 2 in October, one on 7th and the other on the 16th. Our "Food for Thought" events will have candidate forums on 9/10 and 10/1. The candidates for state senate and state house will debate at our Hot Topics lunch on 9/22.

Look in this issue for further information on these events and be sure to attend some or all. I know you won't want to miss Hot Topics on October 27 when Dr. Susan MacManus will share her insights with us one week before the election.

Special Thanks to Marilyn and Keith Boyle and Kerly Sekera for doing voter registration at the Granary!

LEAGUE OPPOSES COAL-FIRED POWER PLANTS

Waiting for Congressional Action on Climate Change Would be Too Late, League Says

Washington, DC – The League of Women Voters today called for a moratorium on new construction of coal-fired electric power plants.

"Global warming is happening now," said national League President Mary G. Wilson. "If we wait for federal action from our congressional leaders, it will be too late. We must take immediate and aggressive action to halt climate change," she said.

"Burning more coal is too big a risk for too many people," Wilson said. "Coal is the single largest source of global warming pollution in the U.S., with power plants responsible for 33 percent of CO₂ emissions. Because of this pollution, we already face increasingly severe heat waves and droughts, intensifying hurricanes and floods, disappearing glaciers and more wildfires. If left unchecked, the effects will be catastrophic to us and our planet," she said.



"We will be active in opposing the building of these plants," said Wilson. "Coal-fired electric power plants have a very long lifespan and contribute huge amounts of pollution to the atmosphere. Building these new plants would foreclose the possibility of preventing dangerous global warming."

"Today, there is no environmentally sound use of coal," Wilson said. "Many hope that CO₂ can be captured and stored underground," she observed, "but this technology has never been demonstrated on a commercial scale."

"Instead of coal, we must look to clean energy alternatives," according to Wilson. "California, which has been a leader in energy conservation and efficiency, has been able to keep per capita energy consumption essentially constant for three decades while enjoying a growing economy," she noted. "Wind and solar are also ready to make large contributions to economic growth," she said.

The League carefully examined many facets of energy policy before taking its stand. "We support strong action in Congress to stop global climate change, but the planet can't wait," Wilson concluded.

LWVUS National Popular Vote Compact Study

Delegates at Convention 2008 adopted a study of the feasibility of using the National Popular Vote (NPV) Compact among the states as a method for electing the president. A study committee has been formed and will produce background materials. As the NPV Study Committee proceeds with its work, the LWVUS will provide consensus material to the Leagues. The study will be proceeding on a compressed schedule.

LWVF STATEMENT OF 2008 POSITIONS REGARDING PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION

AMENDMENT #1: RELATING TO PROPERTY RIGHTS/INELIGIBLE ALIENS

This amendment is proposed by the legislature. It would remove a provision in the Florida Constitution that allows laws prohibiting "aliens ineligible for citizenship" from owning, inheriting, disposing of and possessing real property.

The League of Women Voters of Florida **supports** this amendment. Florida and New Mexico are the only two states that still maintain these racially biased provisions in their constitutions. Both have amendments on the November ballot to remove these provisions.

AMENDMENT #2: FLORIDA MARRIAGE PROTECTION AMENDMENT

This amendment makes invalid any legal union that is treated as equivalent to marriage other than heterosexual marriage.

The League of Women Voters of Florida **opposes** this amendment. The LWVF board took a position in opposition to this amendment at its March 2008 meeting. The League believes that no person or group should suffer legal, economic or administrative discrimination and that there should be secure equal rights and equal opportunity for all.

AMENDMENT #3: CHANGES AND IMPROVEMENTS AFFECTING THE ASSESSED VALUE OF RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY

This amendment would allow the state legislature to grant an exemption to residential real property taxes in the amount of the cost of increasing the property's wind resistance and of installing renewable energy devices.

The League of Women Voters of Florida **supports** this amendment. The League supports action by appropriate levels of government to encourage the use of renewable resources and energy conservation through financial incentives.

AMENDMENT #4: PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION OF PERPETUALLY PRESERVED LAND: CLASSIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF LAND USED FOR CONSERVATION

This amendment would require the state legislature to exempt real property dedicated in perpetuity for conservation purposes from *ad valorem* taxation, and would require such property to be assessed on the basis of its "character and use" instead of its "highest and best use."

The League of Women Voters of Florida **opposes** this amendment. The League supports management of land as a finite resource and land-use planning that reflects conservation and wise management of resources. This amendment does not link land-use planning to conservation and would further limit the ability of local governments to obtain revenue from real estate (their primary source of revenue).

AMENDMENT #5: ELIMINATING STATE REQUIRED SCHOOL PROPERTY TAX AND REPLACING WITH EQUIVALENT STATE REVENUES TO FUND EDUCATION

Amendment 5 is the so-called "Tax Swap" provision. It would eliminate the requirement that public school districts contribute local property taxes in order to qualify for state K-12 educational funding and would require the state legislature to replace the lost revenue by either repealing sales tax exemptions, increasing

the sales tax, reducing other parts of the state budget, or raising additional revenues through other means. Amendment 5 would also reduce the maximum allowable millage rate for public school districts from 10 mills to 5 mills, and would reduce the maximum annual change in assessments for non-homestead properties from 10 percent to 5 percent.

The League of Women Voters of Florida **opposes** this amendment. While the League has long supported the review of state sales tax exemptions, this amendment does not require the legislature to do so. The League supports the use of *ad valorem* taxes as the main source of local revenue for education and believes that each local school district should have the authority to tax itself to supplement the state program. The amount of millage levied should be set by the district taxpayers through their vote.

AMENDMENT #6: ASSESSMENT OF WORKING WATERFRONT PROPERTY BASED UPON CURRENT USE

Amendment 6 is known as the “Working Waterfronts” amendment. It would require that real property tax assessments of certain waterfront properties be based on current use rather than “highest and best use.”

The League of Women Voters of Florida **supports** this amendment. The League believes that government should promote the conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest. This amendment promotes the continued public access to Florida waterfronts, and helps to stem the loss of waterfront-dependent businesses and jobs.

AMENDMENT #7: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Amendment 7 is one of two “school voucher” amendments proposed by the TBRC. It would remove the existing provision in the Florida constitution prohibiting the appropriation of state moneys to aid religious organizations, and would add a provision stating that religion cannot be used as a reason to deny participation in a public program.

The League of Women Voters of Florida **opposes** this amendment. Passage of Amendment 7 would result in allowing state funds to be used to support religious institutions and weaken the public school system.

AMENDMENT #8: LOCAL OPTION COMMUNITY COLLEGE FUNDING

Amendment 8 would authorize counties with community colleges to levy a local option sales tax to supplement the college’s funding if authorized by county voters.

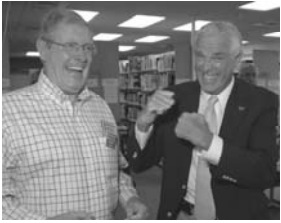
The League of Women Voters has not taken a position on this amendment.

AMENDMENT #9: REQUIRING 65% OF SCHOOL FUNDING FOR CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION; STATE’S DUTY FOR CHILDREN’S EDUCATION

The other school voucher proposal, Amendment 9, would specifically override the decision by the Florida Supreme Court in *Bush v. Holmes*, 919 So. 2d 392 (Fla. 2006). In that recent case, the court held that the Opportunity Scholarship [school voucher] program violated the requirement of the state constitution’s education clause that free education must be provided through a uniform system of free public schools. Amendment 9 would change the constitutional language to allow funding of schools other than those in the public school system. Amendment 9 would also require that school districts expend 65% of their funding on classroom instruction.

The League of Women Voters of Florida **opposes** this amendment. The League has long supported a state-financed, free public school system with high standards for student achievement and equality of educational opportunity for all and joined the *Bush v. Holmes et al.* lawsuit in 2006.

Seen and Heard at the Candidates Fair



Hospital Board Candidates Tom Towler and Will Jensen



Cynthia Crowe, State Committeewomen Candidate



Sheriff Candidates Larry Dunklee and Dave Gustafson



State Rep Dist. 70 Candidate Sam Rosenfeld



State Senate Dist. 23 Candidates Nancy Detert, Michael Grant and Morgan Bentley

BBC Dist. 1 Candidate Carolyn Mason and Commissioner Shannon Staub



Congressional Dist. 13 Candidate Chris Jennings



Circuit Judge candidates Gilbert Smith Jr. and Connie Mederos Jacobs



Sheriff Candidates Major Tom Knight and Curt Lavarello



BCC Candidates Dist. 1 Richard Redding, John Mullarkey, Carolyn Mason and Jono Miller



Public Defender candidates Ron Filipkowski, Adam Tebrugge and Larry Eger



Donna Clarke, candidate for SRQ Tax Collector



Summer Social at Nanci's Place

Nanci Babigian



Sarasota County Tax Collector, Barbara Ford-Coates

LWV Board Member Millie Headdy, Marilyn Gerkin and LWV Board Member Ann Hardy



School Board Member Caroline Zucker and Casey Pilon



LWV Vice President Michele Mician and George Spector

Public Defender Candidate Adam Tebrugge, LWV President Cindy Guest and Charter Review Board Member and candidate for re-election, Frank Moore



Supervisor of Elections Kathy Dent and LWV Voter Services Chair Pat Price



Special Contributors

Operating Fund

Kerly Sekera
Jean Slocum

welcome new members

Donna Clarke
Tracy Seider

Have you sent in your dues?

BOARD BYTES August 19.2008

- Thanks to Andrea Rogers for all the great work on new membership forms and a letter and a new large poster to be used for events.
- We will review at the end of this fiscal year a request from LWVF for a per member contribution to them to determine what we might be able to do in this regard.
- We will pursue the inquiry of Doug Heinlen, Director AARP, regarding the League studying and proposing primary election caucus policy reform.
- PayPal will be added to our website.
- Work on the website continues.
- We will think about how we can best proceed with a petition signing campaign on the redistricting issue working with the Florida Voter Coalition.
- We are being sent brochures on judges standing for merit retention from LWVF to distribute to the public.
- Upcoming events include the candidate forums and fairs, Dr. Susan MacManus, Medicare Reimbursement panel discussion, The Pines Story and Tour, Health Care Update, Sustainability and Public Transportation Update.

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