



# VOTER

Aug/Sept 2007  
Volume 57, Issue 2

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*The League of Women Voters of Hillsborough County is a nonpartisan political organization of men and women that encourages citizens to play an informed and active role in government. The League works to influence public policy through education and advocacy at the local, state, and national levels. The League does not endorse or support political candidates or parties. For more information about the League of Women Voters see [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org) or call (813) 831-9774.*

## League to Look at Local Budget Crunch

Pat Bean, Hillsborough County Administrator, will explain the impact of proposed budget cuts on County services at a League sponsored breakfast, August 23. This event is the first of a planned series of "Pancakes and Politics" breakfast meetings to address substantive issues in the community.

The breakfast will be held at Perkins Restaurant on Dale Mabry between I-275 and Kennedy Blvd. Registration will begin at 7:45 a.m. with the breakfast and program beginning at 8:00 a.m.

The meeting is open to the public. The cost for members is \$10 and for non-members, \$12. There is limited seating. For information on reservations, see the ad on page 9.

Hillsborough County, the Cities of Tampa, Temple Terrace and Plant City, along with every other county, city and tax supported special district in Florida must drastically reduce its operating budget to comply with property tax roll backs imposed by the Florida legislature. These limitations are in addition to those in the state constitution. Additionally, a referendum to change the constitution will take place in January 2008. For details of the Legislature's actions and the Florida League position on the proposed constitutional amendment see Page 5.

In Hillsborough County, the initially proposed budget is expected to be reduced by \$56 million and 498 positions. Various activities of local government will be cut, including functions of the Hillsborough County Environmental Protection Commission.



**August Breakfast Speaker Pat Bean** became the County Administrator in December 2003. Previously, she served as Deputy County Administrator for 12 years. Her 30 years of experience in Hillsborough County government includes 12 years heading up the county's human services, including health care, children's issues and programs for the elderly. She played an integral part in the development of the county's national award-winning Health Care Program. She also served as Assistant County Administrator over Public Works, Fire Rescue, Planning and Growth Management, Solid Waste and other municipal-type programs.

Ms. Bean holds a B.A. degree in sociology from Winthrop University and a Masters of Public Administration from the University of South Florida.

She recently served a two-year term as President of the National Association of County Administrators, served on a National Advisory Board for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and served as an evaluator for the Kennedy School at Harvard's "Innovations in American Government" Program.



## *President's Message . . .*

How fun this is! I want to take a few moments to share some of the League's recent activities with you. We are only two months into our new fiscal year and the Board has developed plans and set goals at our Annual Orientation/Retreat, our League has seen increased media coverage, we formally presented our position on wetlands protection and local control before the Board of County Commissioners, and this month we kick off our new FYI initiative, "Pancakes & Politics", with a presentation by County Administrator Pat Bean. Not a bad way to start out the year.

As we move forward with our plans for the year I am determined to: 1.) Keep you informed, and, 2.) Encourage you to participate at some level in as many of our activities as possible. Those of you who attended the Annual Meeting and provided direction to the Board will find we took your guidance seriously and incorporated it into our strategy. This year the League can look forward to:

- \* Membership meetings that will be held in different locations throughout the County.
- \* Hot Topic FYIs that address the issues that impact us right now.
- \* A membership goal of 200 by the time we hold our 2008 Annual Meeting.
- \* A "Member Appreciation" Holiday Event in early December - - so watch for the date.
- \* Increased fundraising initiatives.
- \* Increased visibility and action on local issues.

And there's more! In this issue of the VOTER you will find a Lifetime Achievement Award Candidate Nomination Form. Do you know someone who meets our criteria and should be honored? Complete the form and return it to me. Would you like to serve on the committee that reviews the nominations? Let me know - - I will appoint a committee as soon as possible.

One more thing . . . Membership renewal letters will soon be going out and we are compiling information and member photos for our new Membership Directory. The deadline date for providing new or updated information for the Directory is October 1. We already have some member photos and we will take more at all of our events. However, if you already have a photo (head and shoulders only) you would like us to use, please email it to me. If any of your contact information has changed please let me know that too.

Give me a call or send me an email if you have any questions or suggestions for the Board. And remember, we always need help. If you would like volunteer and help with any of our events, serve on a committee, write an article for the newsletter, or anything else you can think of - - just let me know.

*Linda D'Aquila  
President,  
Hillsborough County  
League of Women Voters*



# 2006-2007 LWVHC in review



At the June 17, 2006 annual meeting Mike McKinney was elected to a second term as president, a new slate of officers and directors were chosen, and a program adopted for the forthcoming year.

## Candidate forums

Greg Vawter, new to the board, had the massive job, as Voter Services Chair, of organizing candidate forums for first the September primary, then the November general election and finally the City of Tampa election and runoff. The League also assisted with WEDU forums for state offices and moderated a Temple Terrace forum and the Tampa Environmental Forum.

## Florida Rights Restoration Coalition

Patricia Moran, Action Chair, represented the Hillsborough League at the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition meeting at Stetson Law School. Rights Restoration, a major League initiative in Florida, was partially addressed in May when Gov. Charlie Christ extended voting rights to certain citizens who had had felony convictions.

## Pretzels and Politics

On September 26, 2006, the League hosted an event at the Yuengling Brewery well attended by candidates which gave Leaguers and their guests an opportunity to meet and talk with candidates of the November general election while enjoying refreshments.



## Florida League Sues State

For the first time since 1937, the Florida League suspended voter registration efforts and directed local Leagues to do the same.

New legislation placed "strict Liability on organizations, other than political parties, registering voters. The League lead a coalition of organizations challenging the law.

## Dr. Paulson Speaks

On October 19, Dr. Darryl Paulson spoke at the first FYI luncheon of the year.

Dr. Paulson, a professor at the University of South Florida/St. Petersburg and an expert on political parties, educated and entertained members of the League and their guests.

**CONT. PAGE 7**



**League of Women Voters** of the US, president Mary Wilson visited Tampa on October 10 as part of a national promotion of the U.S. League's "5 Things you need to know on Election Day."

The Hillsborough League hosted a dinner and invited neighboring leagues.

# PROPERTY TAXES

by Terry Coble, 2nd VP Program Planning & Fiscal Policy Chair, LWVFL

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## *Summary of Tax Legislation Passed in the 2007 Special Legislative Session*

Three bills were enacted by the state legislature during the Special Session held June 12-14, 2007: HB 1, SJR 4, and HB 5. All three bills were signed by Governor Crist on June 21, 2007 and have become law. The following is a very brief summary of the three bills.

HB 1 - (1) This bill imposes a “rolled-back” real property tax rate on counties, cities and special property districts for the fiscal year 2007-08, and imposes maximum increases in tax rates and in total tax revenues that counties, cities and special property districts can collect in following years, on penalty of forfeiting the  $\frac{1}{2}\text{¢}$  sales tax revenues that are owed to them.

(2) HB 1 also enacts the statutory changes that are authorized if the constitutional amendments proposed by SJR 4 are adopted by the voters at a special election on January 29, 2008. See below for a description of the constitutional changes proposed by SJR 4.

SJR 4 and HB 5 - These bills place a referendum on the ballot at a special election to be held on January 29, 2008, concurrently with Florida's presidential primary. SJR 4 contains the proposed substantive changes in the constitution, while HB 5 authorizes the special election and the expenditure to hold it. If adopted, SJR 4 will apply retroactively to January 1, 2008 and will:

(1) Enact a new homestead exemption in the amount of 75 percent of the first \$200,000 of the homestead value, plus 15 percent of the next \$300,000; provide for annual increases in the upper limit based on growth in per capita Florida personal income; provide a minimum exemption of \$50,000, or \$100,000 for low-income seniors.

(2) Allow homesteaders now subject to the Save Our Homes (SOH) tax limitation as of January 1, 2008 to keep the existing exemption or irrevocably choose the new exemption. Homesteads established after enactment may not elect SOH.

(3) Authorize an exemption from taxation of \$25,000 of tangible personal property (this applies only to businesses, since the personal property of individuals is not taxed.)

(4) Authorize lower taxes for workforce housing, affordable housing, and working waterfronts.

(5) Require the state legislature to limit the authority of local governments other than school districts to increase property taxes.

## What the Legislature Enacted in Special Session

# LWVF's Position on the Proposed Constitutional Amendment

by Terry Coble, 2nd VP Program Planning & Fiscal Policy Chair, LWVFL

The League of Women Voters of Florida opposes SJR 4, the proposed state constitutional amendment that will be on the special election ballot on Jan. 29, 2008, because it would:

- (1) Require the state legislature to limit the ability of local governments to raise revenues to meet local needs;
- (2) Extend and increase tax limitations on homesteads without regard to the ability of homeowners to pay; and
- (3) Worsen Florida's current infrastructure deficit and the decline in the level of state services and in our quality of life.

A more detailed explanation of this position is set forth below:

(1) LWVF positions provide that local governments in Florida should have available a variety of options for generating revenues to meet local needs. SJR 4 contravenes this principle by requiring that the State Legislature limit the authority of local governments to increase property taxes.

(2) LWVF positions state that property taxes collected in Florida should be equitable and levied based on ability to pay. We believe that tax relief should be provided only to those who need it, for example through a "circuit breaker" that, like the device that automatically interrupts the flow of an electric current when the current becomes excessive, provides property tax relief for households when taxes on housing exceed a certain percentage of income. SJR 4 is contrary to these positions because it allows current homesteaders to keep the Save Our Homes tax limitation, which has produced large inequities in the taxes paid by more recent home buyers, and which grants the same tax limitations to homeowners regardless of their ability to pay.

(3) LWVF positions provide that Florida presently has an infrastructure deficit, and state service levels and our quality of life are declining. We believe that sufficient state taxes should be levied to reverse the decline in levels of service and improve the quality of life for all Floridians. According to the Legislature's own calculations, passage of SJR 4 will result in revenue losses of \$3.6 billion in 2008-09 and as much as \$4.4 billion by 2010. These losses are on top of the already mandated revenue cap passed by the Legislature during the special legislative session. Over the next five years, the total loss of revenue due to SJR 4 is estimated to be \$32 billion, over 16% of Florida's budget. This will compound the revenue losses that the state is now projecting due to an economic downturn which is estimated to trigger an additional \$1 billion in cuts to services and infrastructure during this fiscal year alone.

League of  
Women  
Voters  
Opposes  
Proposed  
Property Tax  
Constitu-  
tional  
Amendment

[Review-continued from page 4.](#)

## Alternative Voting Consensus Meeting

The Hillsborough League joined St. Petersburg and Upper Pinellas County for a Joint Consensus Meeting on Alternative Voting Systems.

The material for the meeting was developed by the St. Petersburg League and held at Feather Sound County Club, a central location for the three Leagues.

Ultimately it was decided that the plurality method (Florida's current), with additional safeguards would best serve the voters needs.

## Congressman Sam Gibbons Honored

In March LWVHC had its Second Annual Lifetime Achievement Award Luncheon. This year's honoree was Congressman Sam Gibbons, long time representative of Hillsborough County.



Close to 200 well wishers crowded into the Centre Club banquet hall to honor former Congressman Sam Gibbons. Gibbons had represented Hillsborough County for over 40 years, first in the Florida Legislature and then in the United States House of Representatives, retiring in 1997.

In addition to Gibbons, the League honored community partners. LifeLink was named Corporate partner for all its assistance including allowing the use of its board room for LWV meetings.

The City of Tampa CTTV15, Hillsborough County HTV22, the Tampa Tribune, Tampa Bay Community Network, and the Tampa Educational Cable Consortium shared the Partners in Communication Award for their participation in the November and March candidate forums.

## Hillsborough Hosts State League Convention

The three day convention in May included an "Evening Out in Tampa," organized by Shirley Arcuri, Vice President of the Hillsborough League and included an after hours tour of the Plant Museum with wine and dinner overlooking the Bay with Flamenco music.



## Did Your Vote Count?

Dr. Robert Kerstein, Professor of Government & World Affairs at the University of Tampa provided Leaguers with an analysis of Election Day results at the November FYI Lunch.

## Affordable Housing Summit

The Hillsborough, Manatee, St. Petersburg, and Upper Pinellas Leagues held a joint meeting on the crisis in the cost of housing for low income persons.

## Alex Sink Speaks at April FYI

Florida's CFO spoke at a lunch co-sponsored with the USF Extension Service.



## May Luncheon Panel

Administrators for drug programs on both the enforcement and treatment sides shared funding concerns at the May FYI Lunch, part of our on-going study on the subject which is being chaired by Lora Bernard.

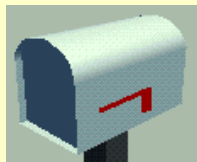
# August 26 is Women's Equality Day

On August 26, 1920, after a 72-year struggle, the 19th Amendment to the United States was formally ratified, giving women the right to vote nationwide.

The anniversary of that date is celebrated annually as Women's Equality Day.

The League of Women Voters is an outgrowth of the suffrage movement dedicated to encouraging full participation in the election process and an informed electorate.

## New Address



League of Women Voters of  
Hillsborough County  
P. O. Box 1801  
Tampa, FL 33605-1801

## LWV SIGNS ON TO COMMUNITY FORUM

The League of Women Voters of Hillsborough County will be a co-sponsor for the upcoming community forum on fertilizer along with the Tampa Bay Estuary Program's Citizen Advisory Committee. This informative forum on residential fertilizer use is scheduled for Thursday, November 8th from 4:40 to 6:00 p.m. at Weedon Island Preserve's Cultural and Natural History Auditorium in St. Petersburg.

Called "The Cost of Green, A Public Forum on Residential Fertilizer Use," the event will present varying perspectives on issues surrounding residential fertilizer use, explain pending state rule making, and explore the role of industry, government and individuals in managing the use of fertilizer to minimize environmental impacts. A moderator will begin the discussion and audience members will be able to ask questions of panelists representing various viewpoints. Representatives of the lawn care industry, environmental community, homeowners associations, local government and scientific research fields will be among those invited to participate.

The audience also will be asked to complete a survey at the end of the forum to assess what they know about fertilizer and to share their views on the best strategies for ensuring appropriate fertilizer use. Past President Mike McKinney is representing LWV on the TBEP Citizens Advisory Committee. Mark Nov. 8th on your calendar so you'll be sure to attend this important public forum. More details to follow.

## Our League in Action

### LOCAL

\* On July 9, 2007, St. Petersburg Times published a letter from the Hillsborough County League of Women Voters; "**Local control is better**" regarding the decision by the Hillsborough County Commission - sitting as the Environmental Protection Commission and without prior public hearing - to strip protection of wetlands from local government.

\* July 27, at a meeting of the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners, sitting as the Environmental Protection Commission, Betsey MacFarland read into the record a letter from the Hillsborough County League of Women Voters in opposition to removing wetlands regulation from local control.

### NATIONAL

\* May 24, National League president Mary G. Wilson strongly denounced an amendment proposed by Senator Mitch McConnell (R Ky) that would require all voters to show photo ID at the polls beginning January 1, 2008.

\* July 24, LWVUS sponsored a "National Call to Senators" encouraging mass phone calls to all senators in support of voting rights for citizens of the District of Columbia.



Introducing:  
**PANCAKES**  
&  
**POLITICS**



The new LWV Breakfast FYI Series

Thursday Morning, August 23<sup>rd</sup>  
*Perkins Restaurant*

(On S. Dale Mabry Ave. between I-275 and Kennedy Blvd.)

Featuring

**County Administrator Pat Bean**

Discussing the proposed 2008 County Budget and its  
impact on our community

Registration  
7:45 a.m.

Breakfast & Program at 8:00 a.m.

\$10.00 for LWV Members

\$12.00 for guests and non-members

Reservation Deadline (Limited Seating) August 21.

Call or Email Heidi at:

813-253-2640 ext. 1216 \* [heidi.grogan@lifelinkfound.org](mailto:heidi.grogan@lifelinkfound.org)

\* Pictures will be taken for our 2008 Membership Directory

# League Calendar

## AUGUST

- 21: 4:00 p. m. Board Meeting  
LifeLink Building
- 26: 7:45 a.m. Breakfast FYI  
Perkins Resturant  
(See details this page.)

## SEPTEMBER

- 18: 4:00 p. m. Board Meeting  
LifeLink Building

## OCTOBER

- 16: 4:00 p. m. Board Meeting  
LifeLink Building

## NOVEMBER

- 6: 4:40 p.m. Forum on  
Residential Fertilizer  
Weedon Island Preserve  
(See details page 6.)
- 20: 4:00 p. m. Board Meeting  
LifeLink Building

# Dues are due!

The League fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30

2007-2008 dues are due on July 1, 2007

Membership Form is on Back Page of the VOTER

Scholarships are available.

The League of Women Voters  
Of Hillsborough County  
P. O. Box 1801  
Tampa, FL 33601-1801



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF HILLSBOROUGH CO.  
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2007-2008

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose: \_\_\_\$60 Individual \_\_\_ \$85 Household \_\_\_\$40 student

Please consider an additional amount  
for the League Revitalization Effort \_\_\_\$60, \_\_\_ Other amount \$\_\_\_\_\_

Your contact information may appear in our directory.  
\_\_\_Check here to prevent publication.

Make checks payable to the LWVHC and mail to:  
League of Women Voters  
P.O. Box 1801  
Tampa, FL 33601-1801