



VOTER

October 2007
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League To Host Wetlands Luncheon

1 The League of Women Voters of Hillsborough County will host a luncheon to explore the state of the Wetlands. Guest speaker will be Dr. Rick Garrity, EPC Director and chief architect of the Wetlands Hybrid. The event will be held on Wednesday, October 17th at the Lions Eye Institute in Ybor City.

2 The luncheon is part of a series of community outreach "Hot Topic" programs being sponsored by the local League.

3 The event will provide an opportunity for the community to learn about the Hybrid and to express their support or concerns over the policy. The event is open to all League Members and their guests as well as to the general public. A buffet luncheon will be featured at the cost of \$20.00 for LWV Members and \$25.00 for non-members.

Reservations are required and must be placed by October 15th. Call 813-253-2640 ext. 1216 or email reservations to heidi.grogan@lifelinkfound.org. Participants will have an opportunity to ask questions following the presentation.



Dr. Rick Garrity, Executive Director of the Hillsborough County Environmental Protection Committee, will be featured at October Lunch.

The FYI Outreach Series will feature different community issues and hot topics throughout the year.

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 or call (813) 831-9774.

Oral Arguments in LWV v. Cobb set for October 3

In August 2006 the Federal District Court in Miami entered an injunction in LWV v Cobb preventing the state from enforcing legislation which subjected organizations that registered voters, other than political parties, to crippling fines and burdensome reporting requirements. The State of Florida have appealed the injunction and oral arguments of their appeal will be heard October 3, by the 11th Circuit Court in Atlanta.

Following the enactment of the law the State League had banned voter registration drives by local leagues. That ban has been lifted pending the outcome of the appeal.



President's Message . . .

The League of Women Voters of Hillsborough County is “movin' and shakin'!” Before I bring everyone up to speed on the League's activities I want to remind you that “Dues are due!” If you haven't already renewed your membership, please do so as soon as possible. Our League needs your support and we want to make sure that you continue to receive your copy of The VOTER, notification about upcoming events, State and National “Action Alerts”, and remain informed on issues critical to the voting population.

Lifetime Achievement Award Nominees: I am happy to report that I have received four nominations for this prestigious award. The Selection Committee will review the nominations to ensure compliance with our stated criteria and select this year's honoree. Each of the individuals nominated for the award are very deserving and the Committee has a difficult task to accomplish. It would be my hope to have the selection made and announced very soon.

Advocacy Committee: 1.) Sandy Frye, our Public Relations Chair and member of the Advocacy Committee, appeared before the Hillsborough County Board of County Commission on September 20 to voice the League's support of continued funding for the Education Channel and Tampa Bay Community Network. Despite supporters' best efforts the Commission voted to cut funding for the Education Channel to \$75K for one year and to eliminate all funding to TBCN. 2.) I will represent the LWVHC and the North Pinellas League at the October 3 Florida Taxation and Budget Reform Commission Public Hearing.

State Representation: The LWVHC has stepped up to increase our visibility within the State League. 1.) League member, Tony D'Aquila, has agreed to serve on the LWVF Climate Change Committee. 2.) Past President, Patricia Hall is one of 24 League members from across the State participating in the LWVF Study of Florida's Educational Assessment and Accountability System. 3.) LWVHV Membership Co-Chairs, Shirley Arcuri and Jan Platt, are participating in the LWVFL Membership Retention and Growth Plan. Thanks to each of you for your time and efforts on our behalf.

Save These Dates: 1.) On October 6 our neighbors in the LWV of North Pinellas have invited us to their FYI luncheon: “Judicial Independence” featuring Judge George Greer, presiding judge in the controversial Terri Schiavo case. The luncheon is \$25.00, will be held at the Belleair Country Club, and reservations are required. I hope to attend and would be happy to carpool. 2.) October 17 is the date of our FYI Luncheon on the “Wetlands Hybrid” featuring Dr. Rick Garrity, Director of the EPC. 3.) On November 8 the Bay Area Leagues will present “The Cost of Green.” This panel discussion will be held at the Weedon Island Preserve Environmental Education Center from 4:30 - 6:00. Space is limited so reservations are a must! Feel free to call me for details on these events.

Special Thanks: On behalf of all of us in the League, I want to thank Nancy Castellano for volunteering to help with the circulation responsibilities of The VOTER, and to Betsey McFarland for assuming the responsibility of monitoring the League's phone.

As you can see, we have a lot going on. Our League is growing stronger thanks to your support. Please let me know if there is anything the Board can do for you.

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

Advocacy Committee Meets, Sets Priorities

By Patricia Moran
Action Committee
Co-Chair

The Advocacy Committee met September 18 to set priorities and identify contacts for the coming year. The Hillsborough County League plans to be more vocal regarding local governments.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES: Our League had speakers Betsey McFarland and Rich Brown at the Environmental Protection Commission hearings to speak against removing protection of wetlands on the local level. Dr. Garrity, Executive Director of the County's Environmental Protection Commission will be the speaker at the October 17 FYI luncheon. Rich Brown will be monitoring environmental issues.

INDIGENT HEALTH CARE: Hillsborough County has a one-half cent sales tax dedicated to indigent health care and its uses are an issue of important public policy. Dena Leavengood is the League's liaison for indigent health care issues

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL ISSUES: The State League has established a priority of increased civic education in the public schools. Additionally the Hillsborough County League will be following local issues. Betsey McFarland is our point person on these issues.

TAXES AND BUDGET: Sandy Frye spoke at the Hillsborough County Board of County Commission budget hearing and she and Greg Vawter will be monitoring funding of educational and public access television. President Linda D'Aquila is scheduled to speak at the State Legislature's public hearing on Budget Reform in Tampa, October 3.

TRANSPORTATION: Transportation issues will effect the future of the entire Tampa Bay region. Decisions made by the Board of County Commissioners, HARTline, and the Metropolitan Planning Organization regarding public transportation, light rail, ferries, and roads will impact growth and livability for everyone. The League is seeking an interested individual to follow transportation issues on behalf of the League.

Please contact Patricia Moran 259-0258 if you are interested in working on any of these issues and/or are available to attend public meetings as a League observer or to put forth the League's positions.

Democracy is not something you believe in or a place to hang your hat, but it's something you do. You participate. If you stop doing it, democracy crumbles.

Abbie Hoffman

The Hillsborough County VOTER is a publication of the League of Women Voters of Hillsborough County, Florida

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Commission on the Status of Women	<i>Cindy Kane</i>

LWVF STATEMENT OF 2008 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Marilynn Wills, 1st V.P., ACTION LWVFL

The LWVF board has selected Legislative Priorities for the 2008 Regular Session of the Florida Legislature. The priorities were selected using input from Local Leagues, the LWVF Board and other sources.

Government in Florida: Promote an open government that is responsive to the people of the state.

Equitable Taxation: Support a state fiscal structure that is equitable in its distribution of the tax responsibility and responsive to public needs.

Redistricting: Support single-member election districts that are equal in population, provide access for minorities, and are not determined by the legislature.

Citizen Initiatives including the Statutory Initiative:
Support the citizens' right to have both constitutional and statutory initiatives.

Natural Resources and Sustainability: Promote an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest, and support governmental action that results in sustainability.

* Protection and restoration of the water supply: Support public policies that promote conservation of freshwater and its availability for environmental, public supply agricultural, industrial and mining uses on a priority basis.

* Coastal Management: Support intergovernmental stewardship of and fiscal responsibility for the Florida coast, under the management of the state, while recognizing the dominance of nature and the role of the sand transport system.

Energy: Support environmentally sound policies that reduce energy growth rates, emphasize energy conservation and encourage the use of renewable resources.

Civics Education: Promote the teaching of civics education in public and private schools.

For a full statement of LWVF positions, see *Study and Action 2005-2007*, a LWVF publication.

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Hillsborough League Seeks Legislative Interviewers

Each year the State League asks local leagues to visit with local state legislators and interview them using a list of questions prepared by the state League regarding their positions on League legislative priorities.

This is a wonderful opportunity to get to know your legislators and advance the causes of the League. An interview should take about two hours of your time.

Hillsborough County has four state senators and twelve representatives. Ideally two Leaguers should visit each legislator. Appointments for the interviews need to be made soon.

Please contact Patricia Moran 259-0258 if you are interested in participating in the interviews

League of Women Voters Of Hillsborough County

PRESENTS

The October FYI

“Hot Topic” Luncheon

The Wetlands Hybrid

FEATURING

Dr. Rick Garrity, EPC Director

Time: 11:30 a.m. (Registration)

Location: Lions Eye Institute, 1410 North 21st Street in Ybor City. (Building was formally the old EPC/Lozano Building) Ample parking

**Lunch: A Celebration of our Spanish Heritage in Ybor City
(Salad, Roast Chicken, Black Beans & Rice, Cuban Bread and Dessert)**

Cost: Members \$20.00 . . .Non Members \$25.00

**Required Reservations: Advanced RSVP Required
Call or email by Monday, Oct. 15th
Heidi at: 813-253-2640 ext. 1216
or Heidi.grogan@lifelinkfound.org**

*** All No-shows will be invoiced ****

**Support “YOUR” League of Women Voters
Join the League and receive the special discounted rate**

Annual Dues are: \$65.00

THE COST OF GREEN

A COMMUNITY FORUM ON RESIDENTIAL FERTILIZER USE

What: A **FREE** Public Forum on Residential Fertilizer Use

When: Thursday, November 8 from 4:30-6 p.m.

Where: Weedon Island Preserve Environmental Education Center at 1800 Weedon Drive N.E., St. Petersburg.

Why: The forum's purpose is to present varying perspectives on issues surrounding residential fertilizer use, explain pending state rulemaking, and explore the role of industry, government and individuals in managing use of fertilizer to minimize environmental impacts.

Moderated by Bobbie O'Brien of WUSF-FM National Public Radio

RSVP: Space is limited! To ensure your seat, call Nanette O'Hara at (727) 893-2765 or email nanette@tbep.org.

Sponsored by the Tampa Bay Estuary Program's Community Advisory Committee, the Bay Area Chapters of the League of Women Voters and Weedon Island Preserve



Testimony Before The Florida Taxation & Budget Reform Commission

September 2007

OCTOBER Observances

- 1: World Habitat Day
- 2: National Diversity Day
- 8: Columbus Day
- 8: Native American Day
- 15-21: Freedom of Speech Week
(www.freespeechweek.org)
- 17: International Day for Eradication of Poverty
- 24: United Nations Day
- 31: National UNECEF Day



October is also National
Cookie Month

The League of Women Voters was formed in 1920 as a non-partisan organization that takes positions on a variety of issues affecting the general public. The League of Women Voters takes positions only after careful study and after obtaining informed consensus from our varied membership. The LWV of Florida has studied Florida's tax system for over fifty years.

LWVF Position : The bedrock principle adopted by the LWVF as a result of this study is that our state fiscal structure should be both equitable in its distribution of the tax responsibility and responsive to public needs. Specifically, we believe that Florida's tax system should be: 1. Equitable and based on ability to pay; 2. Provide adequate revenue to meet our needs; 3. Adaptable to fluctuating economic conditions; 4. Efficiently administered to ensure compliance; and 5. Consistent with economic, environmental, social and other public policy goals.

Problems with Florida's present tax structure In general, the LWVF believes that Florida's present tax structure should be reformed so that a greater proportion of taxes are levied based on the ability to pay. We also believe that Florida's tax revenues are not keeping pace with our needs, resulting in an infrastructure deficit, and a decline in state service levels and the quality of life. More particularly, the LWVF has identified the following specific problems with Florida's tax structure that we urge this Commission .

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County Administrator Pat Bean took questions from attendees regarding the County budget and proposed constitutional amendments regarding property tax at the August 23 *Pancakes and Politics* breakfast at Perkins Restaurant.

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to address:

1. Florida's sales tax is riddled with exemptions, so that the total amount of taxes that are exempted are now higher than the amount collected.
2. Florida's current state tax structure is far too reliant on sales as a revenue source, rendering our fiscal resources extremely vulnerable to downturns in our economy.
3. Florida's corporate income tax law needs to be tightened to prevent large corporations doing substantial business in Florida from escaping income tax liability through loopholes such as shifting profits to lower tax states or countries.

Proposed remedies To remedy these problems, we urge this Commission to recommend the following changes in our tax structure: 1. Review all current exemptions in the state sales tax to determine their economic and policy justification, and retain only those that follow sound principles of equity and taxation. 2. Enact a state personal income tax to help insulate Florida's revenue sources from downturns in the state's economy. 3. Close the loopholes in the corporate income tax that allows corporations that do substantial business in Florida to escape taxation.

Property taxes Finally, we would be remiss if we did not address the issue of property taxes, which are the primary source of revenue for our local governments, and have been the subject of much recent political attention. The Legislature has enacted property tax legislation and placed measures on the January 29, 2008 ballot for voter approval. A lawsuit has since been filed attacking both the legislation and the ballot measures. At this time, we do not know the outcome of either the lawsuit or the vote. However, this Commission has the power to place measures before voters directly. The LWVF would therefore like to take this opportunity to make recommendations to the Commission regarding property taxes.

Property taxes should be based on the ability to pay The LWVF believes that, as with other taxes, the amount of a citizen's property taxes should be based on ability to pay. The League therefore opposes across-the-board homestead exemptions that are not based on income. We recommend tax relief in the form a circuit breaker, which, like the device that automatically interrupts the flow of an electric current when the current becomes excessive, provides tax relief for households when taxes on housing exceed a certain percentage of income.

Local governments should have the ability to tax to meet local needs The LWVF believes that local governments should have available a variety of options for generating revenues to meet local needs. While assertions have been made regarding over-spending by county and municipal governments, sufficient data have not been gathered to accurately estimate the impact on localities of the state's burgeoning population and the cost of new mandates imposed by state legislation. We believe that local governments are in the best position to evaluate the amount of funding they need to provide the many important services on which we all rely.

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League Calendar

OCTOBER

- 3: 4-7 p.m. Public Hearing
Legislative Budget Reform
Commission
26th Fl. County Center
601 E. Kennedy Blvd.**
- 16: 4:00 p. m. Board Meeting
LifeLink Building**
- 17: 11:45 FYI Lunch
(See notice page 5)**

NOVEMBER

- 6: 4:30 p.m. Forum on
Residential Fertilizer
Weedon Island Preserve
(See details page. 6)**
- 16: 9:00 a. m. Legislative Dele-
gation Roundtable
Courthouse, 6th Floor
800 E. Twiggs Street**
- 20: 4:00 p. m. Board Meeting
LifeLink Building**

DECEMBER

- 7: 9:00 a.m. Legislative Dele-
gation, Public Hearings
County Center, 26th Fl.
601 E. Kennedy Blvd.**
- 13: 5:30 - 7:00 Holiday Party**
- 18: 4:00 p.m. Board Meeting
LifeLink Building**

The League of Women Voters
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Dues are due!

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