



VOTER

December 2007
Volume 57, Issue 5

IN THIS ISSUE

SOUTH COUNTY MEETING	1
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE	2
AMMONIA LEAK	3
FERTILIZER FORUM	4
PRE-REGISTER TO VOTE AT 16	5
LOCAL LAWS	6
CALENDAR	7

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.

Holiday Party

- Dec. 4 Hanukkah
- Dec. 10 Human Rights Day
- Dec. 20 Eid al-adha
- Dec. 25 Christmas
- Dec. 26 Kwanzaa

December has a holiday for everybody. When the nights get long, it is wonderful to join with others and celebrate the season.

*Please come to the
League of Women Voters
Holiday Party*

When: Thursday, Dec. 13, 2007, 5 to 7:30 p.m.

Where: the home of Cathy Teti, 3315 Lawn Ave. Tampa, Fl. 33611

(for directions call (813) 835-4146)

RSDP: Heidi at 253-2640 or

heidi.grogan@lifelinkfound.org

Spouses and prospective members are encouraged to join us for this fun event.

If parking becomes a problem, the parking lot next to the YWCA at Himes and Lawn is a City of Tampa public lot.



President's Message

It seems like just a couple of weeks ago I was nervously giving my acceptance speech at our annual meeting! Now here we are; Thanksgiving is past and the rest of the holidays are right around the corner! We have much to be thankful for . . . the opportunity to speak out, educate, and influence the political direction of our community is not to be taken lightly. And I am very grateful for the guidance and direction provided by our dedicated Board of Directors as we work to recruit new members, strengthen relationships, and increase the visibility of the League's mission.

I just have a few comments to share with you this month . . .

The Lifetime Achievement Award Selection Committee has made its decision! What a tough job - - we had some wonderful candidates nominated by our members. I am happy to announce that in recognition of his many years of dedicated service at the state and national level, the 2008 Lifetime Achievement Award recipient is Governor Bob Martinez. We are now working on scheduling a date for our annual luncheon. Be on the lookout for all the details!

We learned a valuable lesson about communication, early this month. The importance of planning, planning, planning, was made clear to us by the light attendance at our November 6 Sun City Center Outreach Program. The few of us in attendance enjoyed the comments of Hillsborough County Supervisor of Elections, Buddy Johnson. Mr. Johnson was very gracious with his time and offered to help identify opportunities for the League and his office to work together.

We had much better luck with the November 8 Bay Area Leagues / Tampa Bay Estuary Program Advisory Committee / Weedon Island Preserve presentation "The Cost of Green." We had a super turnout, knowledgeable panelists, and thought-provoking questions! Thanks to Mike McKinney for representing our League and helping with the coordination of a great event.

Mark your calendars! On December 13 everyone is invited to the League's Holiday Reception. The Board is looking forward to welcoming you and your guests, introducing new members, and sharing the joy of the season. Please plan on joining us at Cathy Teti's home for this Board-sponsored social event.

And finally, on behalf of the Board of Directors, I wish each of you a Happy Thanksgiving and a peaceful Holiday Season!

Linda D'Aquila
President
Hillsborough County
League of Women Voters

Ammonia Pipeline Breach Impacts the Alafia River

by Tony D'Aquila

While the debate on the safety and security of the distribution system for hazardous materials such as anhydrous ammonia will continue for some time, the impacts to the environment from the events of November 12-14 were immediately apparent.

First-responders to the incident managed the situation with the utmost professionalism and textbook precision, minimizing risk to life and health of nearby citizens. The stated procedures to mitigate anhydrous ammonia leaks include attacking and dissipating the vapor cloud with water overspray. Unfortunately, the location of this particular pipeline breach, on the south bank of the Alafia River at the U.S. Highway 301 bridge crossing, resulted in significant pollution from this overspray entering the river.

Ammonia entering the waters of the river presented two unique threats; the immediate and acute threat from the toxicity of the ammonia, and the ongoing threat from the massive increase of nitrogen in the system.

Anyone familiar with maintaining an aquarium at home recognizes the health risks to fish from ammonia. Fish and other marine organisms are much more susceptible to ammonia than humans. Extremely low levels of ammonia, as low as 0.2 milligrams per liter (mg/l) can be toxic for certain fish, and above a threshold of about 2.0 mg/l, mass die off can be expected. Monitoring of ammonia levels in the Alafia River showed readings ranging from 1.4 mg/l to a peak of 3.2 mg/l. These readings represent levels of ammonia 20 to 30 times historic levels, and would clearly lead to lethal conditions for marine life in the river.

Under these conditions, why didn't a massive fish kill occur? Fortunately, ammonia reacts quickly in water to form non-toxic ammonium. By the end of the day on November 13, ammonia readings in the river had returned to normal background levels less than 0.1 mg/l. Additionally, the stratification in the river, created by the tidal push of denser higher salinity waters from the bay in the bottom layers of the river, confined the elevated levels of ammonia to the surface layers of the river, and may have provided refuge zones for fish in the deeper portions of the river.

While the river seemed to escape massive acute die-off, localized fish kills did occur, chiefly impacting smaller fish and juveniles, such as bay anchovies, killifish, and silverside minnows. These fish most likely populated the shallower, near-shore segment of the river, in an effort to escape predation, and did not have the opportunity to seek refuge in deeper zones when the ammonia impact occurred.

CONTINUED Page 7

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

OFFICERS

President	<i>Linda D'Aquila</i>
Pres. Elect	<i>Rich Brown</i>
Vice Pres.	<i>Greg Vawter</i>
Secretary	<i>Mary Mahoney</i>
Treasurer	<i>Tina Ray</i>

DIRECTORS

Action	<i>Patricia Moran</i>
Fundraising	<i>Betsey McFarland</i>
FYI	<i>Mike McKinney</i>
Membership	<i>Jan Platt</i> <i>Shirley Arcuri</i>
Public Relations	<i>Sandy Frye</i>
VOTER	<i>Cathy Teti</i>
Voter Service	<i>Rich Brown</i> <i>Greg Vawter</i>
Commission on the Status of Women	<i>Cindy Kane</i>

December 15th is
Bill of Rights Day

Fertilizer Forum Spreads Awareness

by
Mike
McKinney

The Bill of Rights are a guarantee of the “rights of free men against tyrants.” The first ten amendments to our Constitution are concerned with the following topics:

1. Freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly, petition.
2. Right to keep and bear arms
3. Rights regarding the quartering of soldiers
4. Regulation of search and seizure
5. Protection of persons and their property
6. Rights of persons accused of crime
7. Right of trial by jury
8. Protection against excessive fines, bail, punishment
9. Guarantee of unspecified rights
10. Powers reserved to states and the people

A standing room crowd of over 100 citizens jammed into the Weedon Island Preserve auditorium on November 8th to hear a distinguished panel discuss the environmental impacts of residential fertilizer use. Most of the experts agreed that what was at issue was not the use of fertilizer, but rather the misuse and the over application. It was the consensus of the panel and the audience that residential fertilizer is a major contributor to polluting Tampa Bay and area wetlands.

The event was moderated by Bobbie O'Brien of WUSF-FM National Public Radio and sponsored by the Tampa Bay Estuary Program's Community Advisory Committee and the Bay Area Chapters of the League of Women Voters. Hillsborough and St. Petersburg Leagues were represented and assisted.

The solution to this pressing problem must be a collaborative effort between government, industry and the homeowner. It was felt that education is going to be more effective than government regulation. Homeowners were encouraged to only purchase slow release nitrogen fertilizer products and to limit the number of commercial applications if they employed a lawn care company. The University of Florida Extension Service was identified as being an excellent resource to assist homeowners on lawn issues. The Hillsborough County Extension Service was represented at the Forum and had materials available. Suggested publications are: Urban Turf Fertilizer Rule and ENH962..Figuring Out Fertilizer for the Home Lawn. These and other publications can be obtained by calling 813-744-5519.





South County Outreach Meeting at the Ruskin Regional Library attendees included Hillsborough County League of Women Voters president Linda D'Aquila, Supervisor of Elections Buddy Johnson, LWWHC vice-president Greg Vawter, former LWWHC president Mike McKinney, and prospective member Norma Muhibaier. (Photo curtsy of Supervisor of Elections.)

16 Year Olds May Pre-register to Vote

Effective January 1, 2008, sixteen year olds in Florida will be able to pre-register to vote. Currently 17 year olds may register if they will be 18 by the next election. This addressed the problem of individuals turning 18 between the closing of the voter rolls and an election.

Now sixteen year olds will be able to pre-register to vote when they apply for their drivers license. The "Motor Voter" program while registering a large number of voters when they renewed their driver's license did not capture 16 year olds. According to Hillsborough County Supervisor of Elections, Buddy Johnson, who strongly supported the new program: "Most teens consider a driver's license their first-and most exciting-step to freedom. I want to make it easier for them to take another exciting step toward freedom by pre-registering to vote as they get their drivers license."

Johnson already pushes voter registration among teens with his High School Registration & Education Program. Through a partnership with the Hillsborough County School Board, his office has registered or pre-registered some 6,000 county high school students to vote. Now that program will include 16 year olds.

"Thanks to this program, more high school students than ever before are taking responsibility to participate in our democratic process by registering to vote and then making their voices heard at the ballot box," noted Johnson.

VOTER

Congratulations!

League member Felicia Harvey was named by the Tampa Bay Business Journal as among the top 100 business people under 30.

Felicia is a public relations specialist with the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer & Research Institute of Tampa

Seven Local Bills to be Considered by Legislative Delegation

Local Bills are proposals that effect specific jurisdictions but must be enacted by the entire legislature. They are proposed by individuals or local governments and must be sponsored by a member of the affected jurisdictions legislative delegation. Seven bills have made the cut and will be considered by the Hillsborough County Legislative delegation. They are briefly described below.

The Legislative Delegation has scheduled a Public Hearing on December 7, at 9:00, at the County Center, 26th Floor, 601 E. Kennedy Blvd.

For more information about these proposed local laws, go to:

www.hillsboroughcounty.org/legislativedelegation

1. Governance of EPC, Planning Commission and Sports Authority

*Proposed by Kevin Ambler
Sponsored by Rep. Kevin Ambler*

This bill proposes changes in the governing bodies of three local governmental agencies created by the legislature. The identified purpose is to more closely reflect the unincorporated and municipal populations and the jurisdiction's funding obligation.

The governing body of the Environmental Protection Commission is currently the seven member Board of County Commissioners. This bill would change the make up to have 4 EPC members representing the unincorporated county, 2 from Tampa and one each from Temple Terrace and Plant City.

Currently the ten member Planning Commission has 4 members appointed by the County, 4 by The City of Tampa and one each from Temple Terrace and Plant City. The bill proposes adding an 11th member to be appointed by the County.

The Sports Authority currently has 11 members. One member is appointed by the Governor, 5 by the County including one member of the Board of County Commissioners; and five members are appointed by the City of Tampa including one member of City Council. The proposed change would increase the membership to 12 with an additional member of the Board of County Commissioners.

2. Bond Waiver for Construction Projects

*Proposed by: Hillsborough County
Sponsored by: Sen. Arthenia Joyner*

Currently, state statutes authorize the Hillsborough Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to waive payment and performance bonds by bidders on construction projects valued up to \$200,000. In 2004 the legislature authorized, in Hillsborough County only the BOCC to waive the bonds on projects with estimated costs of up to \$500,000. The waiver is in conjunction with the County's Small Business Encouragement Program and an individual small business may have a maximum of three projects with the waiver. The current program sunsets in 2009. The proposed change would increase the maximum number of projects to five and extend the sunset date to 2011.

3. EPC Governance

*Proposed by: City Councilwoman Mary Mulhern
Sponsored by: Rep.: Rich Glorioso*

The governing body of the Environmental Protection Commission is currently the 7 member Board of County Commissioners. This bill, to provide representation to the municipalities, would change the make up to have 9 members: 4 representing the County, 3 the City of Tampa and one each Temple Terrace and Plant City.

4. Regulation of agriculture and Agricultural lands

*Proposed by: Tampa Bay Wholesale Growers Association
Sponsored by: Rich Glorioso*

CONT. page 7

AMMONIA ...CONT. from page 3

It is estimated between 10,000 to 20,000 pounds of nitrogen accumulated in the river in the course of the incident. Ammonia is composed principally from nitrogen, and readily reacts in the environment to make this nitrogen available for biological assimilation by organisms such as algae. This quantity of nitrogen, which impacted directly on a limited segment of the river, represents more than a doubling of the daily allocation of nitrogen within the entire Hillsborough Bay watershed. Such an increase of this potent nutrient could easily result in a bloom of algae in the river, and ensuing water quality impacts, principally dramatic decreases in dissolved oxygen, and the subsequent threat to marine organisms.

Monitoring data indicated elevated levels of algae activity in the river, but fortunately the time of year (decreased sunlight hours, decreased water temperature) may have favorably tempered algae activity, and the river did not experience an aggressive algae bloom.

Overall, although significant environmental degradation did occur, the impacts could have been much worse. The time of year and the short duration of the pipeline breach both successfully minimized what could have been a major environmental disaster for Hillsborough County.

LOCAL BILLS ... CONT from page 6

This proposed legislation exempts agricultural land from local wetlands regulation (by the Environmental Protection Commission.) Wetlands on agricultural land would still be required to comply with state statutes.

5. City of Tampa: General Employees' pension/investment policy revision

Proposed by: City of Tampa

Sponsored by: Sen. Arthenia Joyner and Rep Kevin Ambler

Local Law would amend the City's pension plan to be consistent with state statutes regarding investment policies.

6. Public Transportation Commission (PTC): federal background checks; temporary drivers license

Proposed by: Public Transportation Commission

Sponsored by: Rep. Rich Glorioso

The PTC regulates Taxis and other vehicles for hire and their drivers. The FBI does not consider the PTC's current legislation as authorizing it to obtain FBI screenings on applicants. The proposed legislation would provide that authorization. Additionally, the legislation would authorize the issuance of temporary PTC licenses to drivers without Florida drivers licenses when transportation is imported for special events such as Super Bowl.

7. Public Transportation Commission (PTC): extended supervision of wreckers

Proposed by: Public Transportation Commission

Sponsored by: Rich Glorioso

Currently the PTC regulations cover only wreckers that provide "government tows", wreckers used by, through or for governmental agencies and even these are not subject to PTC safety and equipment regulations. The proposed legislation would subject all wreckers to PTC regulation including safety and equipment standards.

VOTER

League Calendar

DECEMBER

- 7: 9:00 a.m. Legislative Delegation, Public Hearings**
County Center, 26th Fl.
601 E. Kennedy Blvd.
- 13: 5:30 - 7:00 Holiday Party**
3315 Lawn Ave., Tampa
(See details p 6.)
- 15: Bill of Rights Day**
- 18: 4:00 p.m. Board Meeting**
LifeLink Building, Tampa



JANUARY

- 15: 4:00 p.m. Board Meeting**
LifeLink Building

FEBRUARY

- 14: LWVUS Birthday**

MARCH

- 4: Florida Legislative Session opens**
Tallahassee
- 16-18 Legislative Seminar**
Tallahassee

P. O. Box 1801
Tampa, FL 33601-1801

The League of Women Voters
Of Hillsborough County



**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM
2007 - 2008**



Add my voice to yours. ***Please check appropriate box***

- I'm joining the League of Women Voters of Hillsborough County.
- I'm renewing my membership League of Women Voters of Hillsborough County

I enclose: (please check one)

_____ \$60.00 Individual

_____ \$85.00 Household

_____ \$39.50 Student membership

Please consider sending an additional donation.

_____ Amount

Name(s) _____

Address _____ City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ (H) _____ (W) _____ (FAX)

email Address _____

Your contact information will appear in our directory. _____ Check here to prevent publication.

Your areas of interest: _____

Please make your check payable to the LWVHC and mail to: LWVHC Membership
PO Box 1801, Tampa, FL 33601-1801. For more information, please call 813-831-9774.