



# VOTER

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## Gov. Bob Martinez to Receive Lifetime Achievement Award

Robert "Bob" Martinez has been selected to receive the 2008 League of Women Voters Lifetime Achievement Award. A former governor of Florida, Martinez has a long record of public service at every level of government.

He was born in Tampa, attended the University of Tampa, graduating in 1957 with a bachelor's degree in education, and the University of Illinois receiving a master's degree in 1964. As head of the Tampa teachers' union in the late 1960s, he led a strike against the city. In 1979 he was elected mayor of Tampa, a post he occupied until his run for governor in 1986.

Martinez was the first Hispanic to serve as governor of Florida and was known as a protector of the environment. During his term he promoted surface water improvement, protected Florida's coastline from new natural gas and oil leasing activities; and proposed and signed legislation establishing Preservation 2000 (P2000.)

Following his service as governor, the first president Bush appointed him to the cabinet level position of Director (or "Drug Czar") of the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

The Bob Martinez Sport Center at UT and Department of Environmental Protection offices in Tallahassee are named for the Governor.

Details regarding the Lifetime Achievement Award will appear in the March Voter.



Governor Robert Martinez

*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.*

## HOT TOPICS LUNCH

# E<sub>q</sub>ual R<sub>i</sub>ghts A<sub>m</sub>endment in Florida

January 24  
Valencia Restaurant

Details Page 5



# President's Message

Happy New Year! The holidays are behind us and it's time to prepare for LOTS of activity in 2008! Just think about what lies ahead us: the Presidential Preference Primary (PPP) on January 29 continuing with the Presidential Election in November 2008. Add to those major initiatives our Third Annual Lifetime Achievement Awards Luncheon in the Spring and our Annual Meeting in June. And don't forget we will have a few FYI - Hot Topic events sprinkled in here and there too.

LWVF has joined a ballot initiative committee created in mid-December to oppose Amendment 1, the property tax amendment, on the PPP ballot. It is called "Florida is Our Home, Inc.". Other organizations who have adopted resolutions or statements opposing Amendment 1 to date include: The Florida PTA, The Florida Alliance of Retired Americans, Florida AFL-CIO, the League of Cities, The Human Service Coalition of Miami-Dade, the Florida Education Association, AFSCME, SEIU, and the Professional Firefighters. The coalition is still building a list of organizations that oppose the passage of Amendment.

The Florida is Our Home, Inc. website is up and running and you can view it at [www.floridaisourhome.org](http://www.floridaisourhome.org) Check it regularly, download information and materials and get out the vote "NO" messages to your friends and neighbors by email or at property tax forums. There is also a useful "palm card" suitable for local reproduction and distribution. And remember - - even registered "independents" can go to the polls on January 29 to vote on the amendment only. Learn more about the LWVF position on this issue in the article on page 6. The LWVF position statement and ballot analysis is on page 7.

We are also beginning to plan for our Third Annual Lifetime Achievement Awards Luncheon. Former Governor Bob Martinez was thrilled to learn that the LWVHC Selection Committee had chosen him as the recipient of our 2008 award. This year we will also honor two of Hillsborough County's civic leaders with a special award - - to be named in their honor! More on this surprise later in the year.

The LWVHC has also been asked to participate in the TM! Growth Management Dialogue Planning Group discussions. LWVHC Past President, Dena Leavengood, has been instrumental in the coordination of this effort to restore civil dialogue among the many stakeholders in the direction of growth management. If you have an interest in this particular area please let me know!

As you can see, our plates are full. This is going to be a busy year and there is plenty of important work to be done. If you have an interest, like to plan events, or just want to lend moral support . . . I would love to hear from you!

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

# 2007 Holiday Party



*Best Wishes  
for a  
Happy and  
Healthy  
New Year*



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

## OFFICERS

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# EDITORIAL

## Where's The Outrage?

### An Editorial from a loving father

Being a father of a young talented daughter, I am outraged that she is considered an equal among her male peers, but not in the eyes of our United States Constitution. The ERA should be a slam dunk issue, one that everyone should endorse, but where's the outrage? Why is it meeting so much opposition here in Florida? Why are we letting misinformation formulate our public policy? Why aren't we marching on Tallahassee and holding our legislators to a higher standard? Had black America been as unresponsive to the civil rights movement back in the 60's as we are today with the ERA, we would still have "for colored only" drinking fountains in downtown Tampa. Where's the outrage?

The first thing we all need to do is to learn more about the ERA, both pros and cons and then once and for all eliminate all the misinformation that's being propagandized in our society. I am sure we have all heard the scare tactics that if the ERA is ratified, we will have unisex restrooms and women will be called to the front lines during wars. GET REAL!

Hopefully the January 24th LWV "HOT TOPIC" Luncheon will help us reevaluate the Equal Rights Amendment and will renew our spirit in the fight to get the legislation passed. The luncheon will feature the delicious food at the Valencia Garden Restaurant in Tampa. Those attending will have a choice between Seabass A La Rusa or Chicken A La Rusa both priced at \$20.00 per person. Reservations are due on Monday January 21st. See the insert for additional details for making your reservations. Seating will be accepted on a first call basis, so don't delay as we only have seating for the first 40 to call or email. If not for us.....let's do this for our daughters!

Mike McKinney  
Past President

## Proposed Amendment to the United States Constitution

### THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

Section 1. Equality of rights under law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.

Section 2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

Section 3. This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.

## Recent ERA Activity in Florida Legislature

In 2007 bills were filed in both houses of the Florida legislature to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution.

Senate Bill 272 died in the Committee on Judiciary.

House Bill 8003 died when reference was deferred.



# *Equality & Justice for ALL?*

## The ERA

**January's "HOT TOPIC" Luncheon**

**11:45 a.m. /Thursday, Jan. 24<sup>th</sup>**

*Valencia Garden Restaurant*

**811 W. Kennedy Blvd. Tampa, Florida**

*Seabass A La Rusa or Chicken A La Rusa*

**\$20.00 payable at door**

**Reservations Required by Monday, Jan. 21<sup>st</sup> (all no shows will be invoiced)**

### PROGRAM

Our speaker, Ms Sandy Oestreich, member of the St. Petersburg Area LWV and leading ERA advocate, will discuss how the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) is still "viable and contemporaneous", and how League members and women can play a crucial role in its passage. Sandy will tell us how 2008 ERA bills (SCR 362 and HCR 8001) will fare, and what we can do easily to propel them.

Go to the ERA website, [www.RatifyERAflorida.net](http://www.RatifyERAflorida.net) to learn about the issue prior to the luncheon. The Hot Topic Luncheon is open to all League members and their guests. Bring a friend, neighbor or family member who believes in Justice and Equality for ALL.

### **Required Reservations:**

**Call or email by Monday, January 21<sup>st</sup>.**

**Heidi at 813-253-2640 ext. 1216**

[Heidi.grogan@lifelinkfound.org](mailto:Heidi.grogan@lifelinkfound.org)

***Support "YOUR" League of Women Voters***

# Vote NO on January 29 Constitutional Amendment!

The League of Women Voters of Florida opposes SJR 2-D, the proposed state constitutional amendment that will be placed on the special election ballot on January 29, 2008, because it would:

- (1) Add limitations and exemptions regarding revenue sources in the Florida Constitution
- (2) Extend and increase homestead tax limitations without regard to the ability of homeowners to pay;
- (3) Extend the inequities created through Save Our Homes by allowing homeowners to transfer its benefits; and
- (4) Worsen Florida's current infrastructure deficit and the decline in the level of state services and in our quality of life.

President Dianne Wheatley-Giliotti states that “The League of Women Voters of Florida has long held the position that tax sources and revenues should not be specified, limited, exempted or prohibited in the state constitution and that local governments in Florida should have available a variety of options for generating revenues to meet local needs. SJR 2-D contravenes this principle because it increases and extends present homestead-based exemptions, creates a new exemption for tangible personal property and caps assessment increases on non-homestead real property.”

In addition, the League of Women Voters of Florida believes that property taxes in Florida should be levied based on ability to pay, and that tax relief or circuit breakers should be provided for all low-income persons who own or rent property regardless of age. By allowing current homesteaders to keep the Save Our Homes tax limitation, SJR 2-D runs contrary to this principle - Save Our Homes is not based on ability to pay and has introduced a bias against more recent home buyers and non-homestead property owners resulting in large inequities in the taxes they pay.

Finally, the League of Women Voters of Florida believes that our state has a present infrastructure deficit, and state service levels and our quality of life are declining. The League's position is 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 2-D will result in revenue losses of \$12.4 billion in the next 5 years. These losses are in addition to the already mandated revenue cap passed by the Legislature during its earlier special legislative session.

Said Fiscal Policy Chair Terry Coble, “The losses in revenue occasioned by SJR 2-D would result in unconscionable cuts to our state's infrastructure and service needs at a time when revenue shortfalls are already causing the Legislature to reduce our existing state budget.”

**“The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.”**

**- Albert Einstein (1879-1955)**

# January 29, 2008 Ballot Question

## Ballot Summary and Pro/Con Statements

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF FLORIDA EDUCATION FUND  
540 Beverly Court, Tallahassee, FL 32301-2506  
Voice: 850/224-2545 Fax: 850/222-4485 Email: lwvfl@comcast.net  
Web: www.lwvfla.org

### 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 homestead.
- \* 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.

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VOTER

“Tax reform means,  
'Don't tax you, don't  
tax me. Tax that fel-  
low behind the tree.’”

Russell Long

# Welcome New Members

Mr. Kevin A. Beckner  
12911 Vicksburg Drive  
Tampa, Florida 33625

Phone: 813-960-0646

Email: kevinabeckner@yahoo.com

Interests: Finance & Politics

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Ms. Mirella Szakacs  
3041 Samara Drive  
Tampa, Florida 33618

Phone: 813-935-9336

Email: jenoemirella@verizon.net

Interests: Education & Science

[CONT. from page 5](#)

## CON:

- \* Cities and counties will lose \$9.6 billion in tax money over the next 5 years.<sup>1</sup>
- \* Public schools will lose \$2.8 billion in tax money over the next 5 years. <sup>2</sup>
- \* 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 arrivals to Florida.
- \* Changes state property taxes while the constitutionally mandated Florida Taxation and Budget Reform Commission are still working on its once in twenty years study of the taxation system.

*1 Florida Senate, Updated Senate Fiscal Analysis for Proposed Tax Reform Package, October 28, 2007.*

*2 Ib.*

## Proposed Governance Special Law

Hillsborough County Legislative Delegation

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: TIME AND PROGRESSION CHANGES

Rep. Rich Glorioso, chair of the Hillsborough County Legislative Delegation, has announced that Rep. Kevin Ambler will hold a town-hall meeting relating to the governance of the Tampa Sports Authority (“TSA”), the Hillsborough County Environmental Protection Commission (“EPC”), and the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission (the Planning Commission) on Monday, January 14.

The meeting has, however, been re-set to begin at 5 p.m. in Conference Rooms A and B of the Fred B. Karl County Center, 601 E. Kennedy Blvd., Tampa, FL., with adjournment expected by 8 p.m. The tentative format of the meeting will have each of the agencies making a brief presentation about that agency followed by public comment specific to that agency with the Planning Commission leading off at 5 p.m. followed by TSA and concluding with the EPC. To insure that all members of the public are given an opportunity to speak, public comment is expected to be limited to three minutes per person.

The town hall meeting is open to the public, and anyone with an interest in the future governance of the TSA, the EPC or the Planning Commission should plan to attend and speak or, in the alternative, submit a written statement including name and home address, electronically to [hundleyc@hillsboroughcounty.org](mailto:hundleyc@hillsboroughcounty.org) or through the postal system at Hillsborough County Legislative Delegation, P.O. Box 1110, Tampa, FL 33601.

# Florida League Announces Legislative Priorities

**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.

## Contribute to State League Lobbying Fund

For the 4th year Jeanne Zokowitch will serve as the Florida League's professional lobbyist in Tallahassee. Her fee is paid by donations to the State League's Lobbying fund. Your contribution at any level supports efforts to advance the League's priorities. Send contributions to:

LWVFL Lobbying Fund  
540 Beverly Court  
Tallahassee, FL 32301-2506

# League Calendar

## JANUARY

- 15: 4:00 p.m. Board Meeting**  
LifeLink Building
- 21: Martin Luther King Day**
- 24 11:30 Hot Topic**  
**Lunch**  
**ERA**  
**Valencia Gardens**  
**See page 5**
- 29: Presidential Primary and**  
**Election on Constitution**  
**al Amendment**

## FEBRUARY

- 14: LWVUS Birthday**
- 19: Board Meeting**  
LifeLink Building

## MARCH

- 4: Florida Legislative Ses-**  
**sion opens**  
Tallahassee
- 16-18 Legislative Seminar**  
Tallahassee

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