



# VOTER

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# FYI HITS TARGET!

By Mike McKinney

Best FYI this year, damn good, fantastic program, let's invite Dr. Rose to our Annual Meeting, to bad more members didn't hear his message. These were just a few of the comments following the March 25th "Hot" Topic Luncheon on Civil Liberties.



League President, Linda D'Aquila, welcomes Dr. Charles H. Rose to the March "Hot" Topic Luncheon.

The speaker was Dr. Charles H. Rose, Director for the Center for Excellence and Professor of Law at Stetson University. Over 30 LW members and their guests attended the luncheon hosted at Valencia

Garden in Tampa. The Honorable Judge Castor summed up the comments by saying that this was the best speaker the League has ever had at any function.

Dr. Rose was extremely candid in his comments along with his criticism of some top government officials in Washington. The event was the final FYI luncheon of the year prior to the Annual Meeting.

*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.*



Members enjoyed Valencia Garden's Spanish food prior to Dr. Rose's presentation.



# President's Message

It's hard to believe that Easter has already come and gone and our 2007 - 2008 League Year is almost over. We still have so much left to do! Don't delay, get out your calendars and add the following events. You will find all of the details as you continue to peruse the newsletter.

- April 11 Third Annual Lifetime Achievement Awards Luncheon honoring Gov. Bob Martinez and Sydney and Thalia Potter
- April 15 Program Committee Meeting and Board of Directors' Meeting
- April 20 Earth Day Voters Registration Drive at Lowry Park
- May 31 LWVHC Annual Meeting

We are finalizing everything for the Lifetime Achievement Award Luncheon. This is our League's biggest fundraising activity and our ability to budget adequately for the coming year rests upon its success. I hope to see each of you at the luncheon to show your support of our League and our honorees.

For those of you who were unable to attend our recent FYI - - you really missed a good one! Dr. Rose is such an engaging speaker it was difficult to eat. All you wanted to do was listen! Member comments after the luncheon made it clear that we need to try and bring him back to speak to an even larger audience about the protection of our Civil Liberties.

As we prepare for the Annual Meeting there are a number of important items we must consider.

1. The Budget Committee, Tina Ray, Mary Mahoney, Lisa Barrentine, will soon meet to review our revenue and expenses and draft a budget proposal for publication in the next edition of The Voter.
2. Dena Leavengood will chair the Program Committee Meeting on April 15 (4:00 pm). All members are invited to join us and share their ideas for upcoming programs. In addition, you can email any recommendations you may have to me for consideration at that meeting.
3. If you have an interest in serving on the Nominations Committee please let me know as soon as possible. One person has stepped forward and agreed to serve but we need two more from the full membership. Again, let me know if you are interested in serving the League in this capacity.
4. If you are interested in serving on the Board - - I would love to hear from you! There is plenty of room for members with enthusiasm and good ideas!

So that is all of the good news. Now the other shoe has to drop . . . in this upcoming election year the initiatives established by our Voter Services Committee will be critical. But what initiatives will the membership support? Last month's request from our Voter Service's Committee for assistance with our televised Candidate Forums went unanswered . . . not one person responded. My first thought was, "Then let the Forums go! We don't have the support to produce them and there is no sense in once again asking a few stalwarts to take on this huge project. And I have absolutely no intention of asking our Board to be the only members who actively contribute their efforts to attend meetings, help plan events, schedule and produce voter services (such as the forums), with little or no further help from other members of the League."

This led to lengthy discussion at the last Board meeting about the LWVHC's focus and impact - - and that discussion must continue. We need to determine just what we want our League to be. Without membership support we are just going to become a sustaining organization that keeps the name of the League alive - - and not much else

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The current members of our Board do not want to see this happen. But we recognize that our League may have to evolve into something other than what it once was. It is my plan to call a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Board to review our options and present them for discussion to the full Board in the very near future. The Board will then make recommendations to the membership for review at the Annual Meeting. I hope that you will all weigh in on this. We need the benefit of your guidance and experience. I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

## LOCAL LEAGUE TO PARTICIPATE IN NATIONAL LWV CONVENTION

by Mike McKinney

The Hillsborough County League will sponsor a caucus workshop at this year's National LWV Convention in Portland, Oregon. Past president Mike McKinney will be leading the discussion focused on The Role of Men in Today's Modern League. This marks the 48th year the League of Women Voters of the United States has held a national convention. This year's theme is Reaching New Heights Together.

Our local League has also made an award application in the Pioneer category to highlight our accomplishments in establishing the Lifetime Achievement Awards Program. The Hillsborough League was named Florida's most innovative League in 2007 at the Florida LWV Convention held last May in Tampa. That award was based on the Lifetime Achievement program.

## RECYCLING LEADERSHIP

By Mike McKinney

Calling all past presidents and former LWV board members. With several board positions being vacated as we go into the Annual Meeting, please volunteer to join Linda as she starts her second term. Reinvest in the League by recycling your leadership skills and join the new 2008-09 Board of Directors.

Past LWVHC Presidents have always played a vital role in the League's future. Just ask Patricia Moran, Cathy Teti and Mike McKinney who are all past presidents and currently serve on the Board. When the League was in trouble a few years ago, it was past presidents Mimi Osiason, Dena Leavengood and Liana Fox who rallied the troops.

Your League is a growing and innovative League, but your experience and leadership can only make it stronger. Plus, it's fun! Join Linda as she attempts to lead us to even greater heights. If you are interested in serving on next year's board, please contact Linda at 253-2640 ext. 1216.

VOTER

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

### OFFICERS

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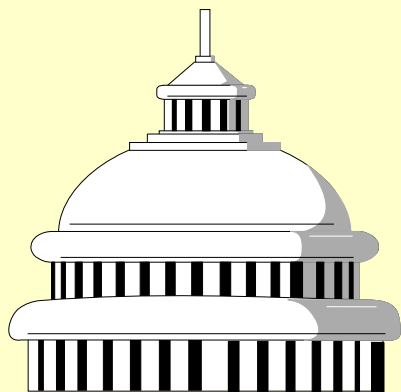
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## Capitol Reports

During the Legislative Session the Leagues of Women Voters of Florida publishes "Capitol Reports" written by the League's lobbyist, Jeanne Zokovitch .

Capitol Reports follow the ups and downs of the League's legislative priorities through committees, amendments and votes.

Formerly available only by subscription, Capitol Reports is now available to everyone at the State League Web site: [www.lwyfla.org](http://www.lwyfla.org).

# Health care costs remain top concern for Floridians

*Consumers need price information to shop for quality services at lower costs*

TALLAHASSEE - Floridians continue to see a major financial impact on their businesses and families from the steadily rising costs of health care, and are ready for state lawmakers to address this important political and pocketbook issue. A new statewide consumer survey conducted on behalf of the Florida HealthCHECK Coalition shows 86 percent of voting-age Floridians at all economic levels want the right to obtain up-front health care or medical cost information to better plan for their ongoing and preventive health care services. They are nearly unanimous (96 percent) in belief patients should receive an itemized statement of all hospital charges.

Today, State Sen. Charlie Dean (R) Inverness and House Representative Juan Zapata (R) Miami, joined representatives of Florida's business community and consumer advocates to roll out specific state legislation that will require Florida's health care providers to post retail prices for the most common health care services and medical procedures, and to provide advance cost estimates for non-emergency services at Florida hospitals and provider facilities.

"The Health Care Consumer's Right to Information Act will empower individuals and families to make more informed purchasing decisions about their health care needs," said Sen. Dean. "Greater access to health care pricing information and facilities' performance, along with advance cost estimates will spur providers to compete, and as a result, offer Floridians better quality health care - and at a lower cost."

Despite dramatically rising costs, consumers are still expected to purchase health care services without any knowledge of what it will cost. A 2006 Harris Poll showed consumers were able to guess the price of a specific new car within about \$300. When asked to estimate the price of a four-day hospital stay, they missed the mark by \$8,000.

"Every day, Floridians are forced to make decisions that may greatly impact their business or personal budget, and, as informed consumers, they deserve to know the retail cost of medical services and procedures up front - not when the bill arrives in the mail," said Rep. Zapata the Florida House sponsor of the bill.

The Health Care Consumer's Right to Information Act provides consumers with the information they need to select the best services at the best price.

The Act increases price transparency by:

- Requiring disclosure of prices for the 100 most common procedures,

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medications and medical equipment available to consumers on the Internet

- Requiring advance, written good-faith estimates for non-emergency hospital care.

“Health care is an industry where far too often consumers buy services without knowing what they will be charged,” said Jack McRay, Advocacy Manager for AARP. “By requiring health care providers to post retail prices for the most common services and provide advance estimates for non-emergency services, The Health Care Consumer's Right to Information Act helps consumers shop for the best care at the best price.”

The legislation is backed by Florida HealthCHECK, a broad-based coalition of business and consumer advocates working together to empower health care consumers to make informed decisions and inject competition into the marketplace. Formed in 2005, the statewide coalition helped push through landmark health care transparency legislation that made health care quality and cost information available on the Internet at [www.floridahealthfinder.gov](http://www.floridahealthfinder.gov). The group sees this legislation as another important step forward in empowering and engaging Florida consumers on health care.

“Price transparency is not a silver bullet but it is one of several steps that can be taken right now to lower health care costs,” said Brad Ashwell, Consumer Advocate for the Florida Public Interest Research Group. “This is also an issue of fairness. The strong tradition of secrecy in pricing allows health care providers to charge some customers two or three times more for the same services, and the biggest burden often falls on those least able to afford it. Greater equity in pricing would result in greater access to care for all Floridians.”

“All consumers of health care across our state will benefit from making health care costs and quality information accessible, transparent and public,” added Rick McAllister, President and CEO of the Florida Retail Federation. “We must ensure that Floridians are able to seek health care when they need to, and know what it's going to cost them when they do.”

## FLORIDA VOTER REGISTRATION LAW

On February 19, the 11th Circuit Federal Court dismissed the State's appeal of the of the preliminary injunction the League had obtained in LWVF v Browning, to block enforcement of a burdensome third party registration law the Legislature enacted in 2006. Because the Legislature had amended the law in 2007 the court found the appeal “moot” but left the injunction in place.

The LWVF has entered into an agreement with the state that it will not enforce the new law without giving 30 days notice.

Accordingly, to date, local LWV voter registration drives are not impacted by the new law.

VOTER



Girl Friday . . . Heidi Grogan, Linda's assistant at Lifelink, has truly been a lifeline for the League and LWVHC Board. Heidi is the one who coordinates all the event reservations and plays host at all Board Meetings. She gathers materials for registration drives even including chilled bottled water for the volunteers. The League wishes to THANK Heidi for all the work she does us. THANK YOU HEIDI!

# An Independent Judiciary

By Elizabeth Mannion, LWVF Off-Board Director, Judicial Independence

May of 2008 will be the 50th Anniversary of Law Day, an event established by President Eisenhower and “dedicated to the principles of government under law.” Our freedoms are based on this rule of law, which allows all citizens to challenge authority. The framers of our Constitution, who had experienced in their own lives persecution by the British Parliament and King George III, believed that human nature might lead our own executive and legislative branches to expand their power at the people's expense. Their brilliant solution to that problem was to create a co-equal branch of government as a check against such a possibility. The legislature's power to enact laws is balanced by the executive's power to veto legislation and by the judiciary's power to declare legislation unconstitutional. The judiciary as the third branch of government forms a tripod with the executive and legislative branches. While a tripod is a very stable form, if one leg of the tripod were to be weakened, then the whole structure would begin to wobble.

Today, judges are under partisan attacks from those who disagree with their decisions. Interest groups who used to devote their efforts and money exclusively to legislatures and executive offices are now fine tuning their strategies and going after judges who have not ruled according to their dictates. Campaigns for judicial office look increasingly like campaigns for other offices--from fund raising large amounts of money to misleading television ads. (Not only is their independence under attack, the integrity of our judges is also at risk.) Some state legislatures are threatening to reduce funding for the judicial branch while others pass guidelines eliminating judicial discretion.

When we speak of judicial independence, it is not independence in the sense that judges can make decisions as they wish. They take an oath to uphold the Constitution and follow the law, which includes statutes and higher court decisions. They must follow the law whether they agree with it or not. And, of course, their actions and decisions are reviewable by higher courts. As former Supreme Court Justice O'Connor has stated, judicial independence means that when a case comes to court, the judge deciding the matter will do so fairly and not for personal notions of what is right and wrong--he or she will impartially resolve the case based on the law and the Constitution of the United States.

An independent judiciary cannot stand alone; it must have the support of all citizens, regardless of their politics or stations in life. An educated public is essential to an independent judiciary and the League of Women Voters is uniquely qualified to provide this service to our country. We can educate ourselves and our fellow citizens so that we will make informed decisions about our courts and who presides over them.

## Lifetime

## Achievement Award

## Lunch

The League's Lifetime Achievement Award honoring Gov. Bob Martinez will be held:

April 11 at 12 noon at the University Club in downtown Tampa.

Cost: \$35.

Make your reservation by calling: Heidi at 813-253-2640 or e-mail: [heidi.grogan@LifeLink.org](mailto:heidi.grogan@LifeLink.org).

# LVVHC Drives for Voter Registrations

By Greg Vawter

March 11th was certainly a busy day for the Hillsborough County League. Our volunteers held Voter Registration Drives simultaneously (from 4 to 7 P.M.) in Ybor City and in the USF Sun Dome.

Hillsborough Community College hosted us for its second of two registration events on their Ybor campus this Spring. In celebration of Women's History Month (March), Shirley Arcuri, Liana Fox, and Brenda Menendez turned out for the League. Student response was good once again, with thirteen people returning completed registrations.

At the same time League volunteers were offering Voter Registration to the Temple Terrace community. Its Chamber of Commerce provided our League with a free booth for the purpose at their combined Business Expo and Taste of Temple Terrace event in the Sun Dome. Two League couples, Cathy & John Teti and Anne & Greg Vawter, greeted everyone among the 1500 attending who stopped by. Only four individuals registered on site, but several took forms to mail in and there was enough interest in LWWHC that ever membership brochure and "Voter" on hand was gone by the end of the event.

We have one or two Voter Registration Drives in April, but at least they are not on the same day...

The Ruskin Chamber of Commerce is considering providing us booth space at their first Business Expo on Friday, April 4, from noon to 8 P.M. We would need two teams of volunteers (noon to 4 & 4 to 8) to cover all eight hours.

We certainly need volunteers to staff a League booth at "Earth Day Tampa Bay" in Lowry Park from 11 A.M. to 4 P.M. on Sunday, April 20. The Tampa Bay Sierra Club organizes this annual community festival. It features green exhibits, eco-friendly products, arts and crafts, a hybrid vehicle display, live music and a children's activity area.

If you can help at either April event, (or both!) please contact Linda D'Aquila at [linda.daquila@lifelink-foundation.org](mailto:linda.daquila@lifelink-foundation.org) or 813.253.2640.

*Thanks for the donation of League  
letterhead and envelopes:*



## League Calendar

### APRIL

- 4:** Noon-8 pm **Voter Registration Drive**, Ruskin
- 11:** 11:45 **Life Time Achievement Award Luncheon**  
University Club
- 15:** 4:00 p.m. **Program Planning Meeting and Board Meeting**  
LifeLink Building
- 20:** 11 a.m.-4 p.m. **Voter Registration "Earthday Tampa Bay"**  
Lowry Park

### MAY

- 17-18** **LWVF 2008 Council of Leaders**  
Datona Beach
- 20:** 4:00 p. m. **Board Meeting**  
LifeLink Building
- 31:** **Annual Meeting**

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  
2008 - 2009**



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

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Please consider sending an additional donation.

\_\_\_\_\_ Amount

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

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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.