



Mayor Explains Budget and Sets Community Goals

By Tony D'Aquila

At the recent Kiwanis Club-League of Women Voters luncheon, Mayor Pam Iorio presented a summary of the City of Tampa FY 09 Budget, discussed her strategic goals for the community, including a commitment for decisive action on light rail transportation, and stood by to field questions from her audience.

In her message on the City's budget, she emphasized it reflects the impacts from Amendment 1 and the reduction in millage rate to be expected, and trims 382 positions from the City work force over the past two years. Yet as a result of growth in enterprise and bond funds, the overall budget increased 9.8% from the FY 08 level. The City budget for FY 09 totals \$836 million.

The mayor summarized her six strategic focus areas for the City and her administration:

- Investing in Tampa's Neighborhoods
- Economic Development in East Tampa
- Creating a Downtown Residential Community
- Efficient Government Focused on Customer Service
- Tampa as a City of Arts
- Making Regional Mass Transit a Reality

While the adopted city budget provides resources to fuel action in all six strategic focus areas, two were particularly of note. Concerning Investing in Tampa's Neighborhoods, the mayor ensures continued improvement across the board in municipal infrastructure, including street resurfacing, sidewalks, signage and traffic calming projects. Moreover, significant resources will be provided for improvements to stormwater drainage and treatment, replacement of aging and deteriorating wastewater mains, major expansion and improvement to potable water supply production and distribution systems, expansion of the reclaimed water program, and commitment to the environmental minimum flow on the lower Hillsborough River.

Mayor Iorio was passionate in her support of her sixth strategic goal, Making Regional Mass Transit a Reality, describing a light rail system to link North Tampa and the USF area to the central business district downtown, out to Tampa International Airport, the Interbay peninsula, and poised for regional connections with neighboring communities. Her vision is for ballot action on a funding base from sales tax not later than 2010, with substantial completion of the inaugural system by 2020.



From left: Kiwanis President Al Diaz with Tampa Mayor Pam Iorio and LWVHC president Linda D'Aquila. **PHOTO:** City of Tampa



President's Message

On August 26 we celebrated the 88th Anniversary of Women's Equality Day. We are all focused on this year's elections but think about it for a moment . . . only 88 years ago American women were finally granted the right to vote! The hard won right - - and responsibility - - to vote remains the foundation of the League of Women Voters' mission. Now, in 2008, we continue to fight for and protect this right for all citizens. The League remains fully committed to fight for Felony Rights Restoration (See Greg Vawter's article on the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition meeting) and to ensure that every eligible citizen has the opportunity to register to vote (See 'League of Women Voters and AFL-CIO Announce Intention to Continue Voter Registration Drives after Court Ruling at www.lwvfla.org).

I am so pleased that we are accomplishing in Hillsborough County what is reflective throughout the country. We are determined to register new voters, and through collaborative relationships with the Tiger Bay Club of Tampa, Kiwanis Club of Tampa, our area Chambers of Commerce, as well as various independent civic organizations, to provide the tools necessary for every voter to go to the polls ready to make an informed decision. Our determination supports LWVUS President Mary Wills' observation in the August 21, 2008 edition of LEADERS' UPDATE:

"There's a tremendous sense of excitement and energy driving this election, and we've seen an unprecedented rise in the number of new registered voters, especially women, young people and minorities. The League is working with several organizations specifically dedicated to reaching out to these rising populations of new voters to ensure that everyone is prepared for November 4th. Imagine how proud our League founders would be to see an active, energized, educated voting public fulfilling the destiny of the 19th Amendment.

But, our task is far from over. In communities across the country, citizens still lack real representation by their elected officials and the policies they pass. Much work remains to be accomplished. Let's celebrate August 26 by working to make voters this year the most well-informed electorate yet and by planning for the work to be done during the coming year to assure our democracy is a representative democracy."

And we are really on a roll. Our co-sponsored events have been well attended (although League attendance could be better . . .), and we have additional events lined up. I am excited to share with you that in addition to our co-sponsored events we have been asked to appear on an upcoming TBCN program, Speak Up Presents, to discuss local and state ballot initiatives. The show will air after the primaries - - we'll keep you posted.

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Watch for the League's three new public service announcements encouraging viewers to Register, Vote and Be Heard - then forward this message to a friend and ask them if they've registered to vote yet. Featuring Oscar® nominated actress Virginia Madsen, the videos highlight the importance of voting in this historic election year. Produced as part of the Freedom of Expression through Film campaign, they showcase www.VOTE411.org - the League's one-stop-shop for election information - and encourage all voters to express themselves in life and politics, specifically by voting for what they believe in.

*Linda D'Aquila, President
Hillsborough County LWV*

League to Concentrate on “Live” Events

For the Primary Election LWVHC taped candidate forums of all the contested non-judicial races which were broadcast 30 times in the days running up to the election. However, the production of such forums is labor intensive. A half dozen or more people are required for each forum which must be held during regular business hours, making the burden fall on the same few. Additionally, as cable companies have shifted public and government access to high and remote channels where your average channel surfer is unlikely to run across them, it is estimated that viewership has fallen by 20 to 50%.

The League is grateful to TBCN and TTV for partnering with us on the primary taped forums but for the general election the League will use our expertise to partner with other organizations to provide live forums for their membership and the public, primarily at noon or in the evening. The calendar (page 9) lists a number of joint events and others are in the works. As always volunteers are needed. Let us know if you are available at www.hclwv.org.

How to Contact the League

OFFICERS	President	<i>Linda D'Aquila</i> president@hclwv.org	DIRECTORS	Action	<i>Patricia Moran</i> action@hclwv.org
	Pres. Elect	<i>Rich Brown</i> president_elect@hclwv.org		FYI	<i>Liana Fox</i> fyi@hclwv.org
	Vice Pres.	<i>Greg Vawter</i> vicepresident@hclwv.org		Membership	<i>Shirley Arcuri, Mike McKinney</i> membership@hclwv.org
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				Voter Services	<i>Mark Hart</i> voterservices@hclwv.org

Tiger Bay & LWVHC Joint Meeting

By Greg Vawter, Vice Pres.



BOB SANDERS and Mark Hart at the August 15 joint Tiger Bay/ League of Women Voters Meeting

What happens when the two most active nonpartisan political organizations in Hillsborough County invite candidates in an upcoming primary to lunch? On August 15th we got: a nice meal at Maestros, pleasant politicking and socializing among our county's most active citizens and interesting questions and answers, which largely verified and sometimes altered audience members' views.



TIGER BAY president April Schiff and LWV president Linda D'Aquila,

Candidates in contested primary races for County Commissioner, School Board and Property Appraiser were all invited. The incumbent Commissioners for districts 2 and 6 were noticeably absent, but those candidates brave enough to risk interrogation by Tiger Bay and LWVHC members are listed here by primary race:

Commissioner Dist. 2 (R) Tom Aderhold

Commission Dist. 6 (R) Don Kruse

Commission Dist. 6 (D) Kevin Beckner, Dee Layne, and Joe Redner

School Board Stephen Gorham (called away for active military duty), Carol Kurdell (incumbent), Jason Mims, David Schmidt, and Susan Valdez (incumbent)

Property Appraiser (R) Rob Townsend and Rob Turner (incumbent)

Tiger Bay's president, April Schiff, and our own Linda D'Aquila took turns moderating the session. League past president Chris Smith served as official timer, allowing each candidate three minutes to introduce her/himself and then both questioners and answers 30 seconds apiece. The "Garfield Panel" included our immediate past president Mike McKinney with Tiger Bay's Irene Guy and Michael Steinberg and the Garfield (prize-winning question) was asked by another league past president, Mimi Osiason.

I heard many positive comments from candidates, as well as audience members. Congratulations to all involved in this joint event!



LEAGUERS Shirley Arcuri and Mike McKinney took applications for new members

PHOTOS by Greg Vawter

Where Are The Incumbents?

Dear Editor

Once elected, politicians spend their entire term telling us, the public, what a great job they are doing in office. When they run for reelection however, they can hardly be found. Incumbents are doing a major disservice to the public and to the citizens who elected them by refusing to participate in debates and forums with their challengers.

Many of these incumbents refused to participate in the recently televised debates sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Hillsborough County in this year's primary season, and it appears they are also snubbing Tiger Bay by refusing to appear at Friday's (August 15th) luncheon as well. It's time for voters to take notice and punish these candidates for their arrogant behavior. It's equally disheartening that those institutions like the Tampa Tribune would reward this behavior with their endorsements. Shame on both the incumbents and the Trib.

Michael McKinney

Wesley Chapel, FL

EDITORS NOTE: The above letter to the Editor from LWVHC Past President Mike McKinney was published in the August 17 Tampa Tribune.

Constitution Day - September 17th

Every September 17th (unless it falls on a weekend or other holiday) Constitution Day, also called Citizenship Day, is celebrated to mark the anniversary of the ratification of the U.S. Constitution. This is one of the newest federal holidays to be established by Congress, as it was passed in just 2004. Citizenship Day was the name given to the holiday prior to its official designation.

However the roots of Citizenship Day stretch much farther back beginning in 1940 when I am an American Day was initiated by Congress for the third Sunday in May. The day of September 17th was reached by citizens themselves. In 1952 Olga T. Weber of Ohio successfully convinced her municipality to name the date Constitution Day. The next year she went a step further and petitioned the Ohio government to celebrate the holiday statewide as Constitution Week from September 17-23 and the movement was soon passed.

Today we consider Constitution Day as a birthday for our country and it serves as a means for American citizens to express their pride in their citizenship. Constitution Day also designates a time to honor the Constitution of America and learn more about the famous piece of legislation. The Act that passed the holiday also states that federally funded schools are required to provide lessons on the U.S. Constitution during the holiday.

VA SECRETARY PEAKE URGED TO STOP BLOCKING VOTER REGISTRATION

Voting Rights Groups Encourage Voter Registration at VA Facilities

Washington, DC- Leading voting rights groups called on James B. Peake, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), to reverse a recent decision that prohibits VA offices and facilities from offering voter registration and potentially registering tens of thousands of veterans.

American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), Common Cause, Demos and the League of Women Voters urged Secretary Peake to approve future state requests to allow voter registration at VA agencies and offices. This would be a reversal of his ruling on a May 1, 2008, request by California Secretary of State Debra Bowen that he agree to the designation of VA sites in her state as voter registration agencies, as permitted under the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA). Connecticut Secretary of State Susan Bysiewicz made a similar request on July 2, 2008.

“As a former secretary of state, I know how important it is for our veterans to be able to participate in our democracy,” said Miles Rapoport, president of Demos and former Secretary of State of Connecticut. “I urge James Peake to stop blocking voter registration by our vets.”

The national voting rights groups-in conjunction with their grassroots state-based chapters around the country-also sent letters today to chief election officials in each state, calling on them to request that the VA agree to the designation of its offices and facilities in their states as voter registration agencies.

“Designation of VA facilities as voter registration agencies is the single most important action that can be taken to help veterans participate in our nation's elections,” said Bob Edgar, president of Common Cause. “We will be working with state election officials to make this a reality.”

In addition to the refusal to accept designation as a voter registration agency, the Department of Veterans Affairs has recently taken other steps that restrict voter registration opportunities for America's veterans. On May 5, 2008, the Veterans Health Administration issued Directive 2008-025, prohibiting all voter registration drives at its medical facilities and raising legal barriers to activities by nonpartisan voter registration groups like the League of Women Voters.

“Secretary Peake's actions are baffling,” according to Mary G. Wilson, president of the League of Women Voters of the United States. “Why is he standing in the way of non-partisan voter registration?” she asked. “Obviously, Secretary Peake is getting bad advice on how to help veterans.”

U.S. Senators Feinstein, Kerry and Akaka, and 10 Secretaries of State have separately called on VA Secretary Peake to rescind the new Directive and help veterans register to vote.

“For veterans with disabilities, voter registration opportunities through the VA are essential,” said Jim Dickson, vice-president of American Association of Persons with Disabilities. “Veterans with disabilities have a harder time registering to vote through state agencies, so we call on Secretary Peake to help.”

Florida Rights Restoration Coalition 2008 Convening

by Greg Vawter, LWVF Delegate

When Nancy Mitchell, our state league representative on the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition could not attend the annual convening at Stetson's Law Center in Tampa, I was the lucky local called to stand in for her. In my enthusiasm as a new participant, I ended up sending Nancy six pages of notes about the event. But, here are some highlights.

You can find the purpose of the coalition on its home page, www.restorerights.org. LWVF is listed on the "About" page; we're one of the largest of the 55 member groups. The League has been involved since the coalition was organized in early 2003. Leaguers from all around the state have been active and I now understand why.

Florida's laws and regulations regarding rights restoration are needlessly harsh, worse than most other states. Restoring rights shows enlightened self-interest rather than forgiveness, as felons brushed aside at their release are often drawn back into criminal behavior. Instead of continuing to punish released convicts with restricted rights, we need to encourage them to become active citizens with a vested interest in society. That starts with rights restoration.

Even if unintended, the racial aspect of restricting Florida felons' civil rights of is hugely troubling. African-Americans make up a big portion of the ex-offenders who cannot vote, run for office, or sit on juries; so blacks are significantly under-represented in the self-governance of our state.

Sadly, even when Florida has done the right thing - restoring civil rights to 115,000 eligible felons by Gov. Christ's 2006 executive order - many of those impacted have not been informed about their new status. The state has not widely distributed the lists of those with restored rights. The FRRC is trying to partially fill that gap on www.restorerights.org.

If, at our local voter registration events, people respond that they cannot register because they have felony records, we can help them get their rights restored. This is more complex (and tricky) than you might expect. (Registering to vote before ones rights are restored is, itself, a felony.) The ACLU of Florida is currently printing tens of thousands of palm cards to help impacted individuals and making them available to local Leagues.

With one in 100 Americans now incarcerated, including 98,000 in Florida's prisons (with 40,000 released and 13,000 returning each year), criminal justice is failing at rehabilitation and becoming even more financially untenable. We Leaguers need to learn about these issues and become more involved in advocacy to improve Florida's laws and clemency procedures.

To advocate for rights restoration and help individuals in your area get their rights restored, contact LWVF board member Nancy Mitchell Leaguer@aol.com.

Hillsborough County League Now Available on the Internet



Check out our new webpage at: <http://www.hclwv.org>.

Individual officers and directors may be e-mailed by entering their title followed by "@hclwv.org" with no spaces. The president may also be e-mailed from the web site.



Elaine Mary College

1947 - 2008

Former Hillsborough County
League of Women Voters' President

PHOTO BY:

darjon || P H O T O G R A P H Y ||
@darjonphotography.com

On July 28, the Tampa Bay area lost one of its brightest stars - - Elaine College . Elaine's life was woven into the fabric of our community. She served on the USF College of Fine Arts Development Committee, Network of Executive Women, Coalition of Family Justice, Athena Society, National Theater Association, Florida State Dance Association, Tampa Chamber of Commerce, Florida Bar Grievance Committee, USF Alumni Society, IAAPA Entertainment Committee Chair 2006-2007 and on the Advisory Board of the UCF Theater Department and Search Committee Member of the Patel Conservatory, Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center. Elaine was named Woman of Distinction in the area of Business, by Soroptomist International, Woman of Distinction in the Arts, by the Suncoast Girl Scout Council, Woman of the Year finalist in the Network of Executive Women. Most importantly to us, Elaine served as President of the League of Women Voters of Hillsborough County from 1989 to 1990.

A tribute to Elaine's life can be found at <http://elainecollege.legacy.com/lmw/Homepage.aspx>. Please take a moment to visit the site in honor of Elaine and her many contributions to the Tampa Bay community.

A Memorial Celebration of her life was held at the Gwazi Pavillion at Busch Gardens where Elaine had recently retired as vice-president of entertainment and a Memorial Mass will be held at St. Paul's Catholic Church on September 15 at 8:20 am.

CALENDAR

- September 9 Board Meeting, 12 noon, LifeLink
- September 10 Joint luncheon with Kiwanis: County Mayor pro & con with: Mary Ann Stiles and Gladstone “Tony” Cooper. ICONS Restaurant, St Pete Times Forum. Registration at 11:45; for reservations call(813) 287-2669.
- September 25 Candidate Forum sponsored by Temple Terrace Chamber of Commerce, Reception at 5 p.m.; Forum at 6:15.
- September 30 Candidate Forum sponsored by the Upper Tampa Bay Regional Chamber of Commerce; LWVHC to serve as Timekeepers. 7:00 - 8:30 at Aston Gardens 12951 Linebaugh Avenue , Tampa 33626 (Westchase area).
- October 2 Candidate Forum sponsored by the Upper Tampa Bay Regional Chamber of Commerce. LWVHC to serve as Timekeepers. 7:00 - 8:30 at Aston Gardens 1295 Linebaugh Avenue , Tampa 33626 (Westchase area).
- October 10 Board Meeting, 12 noon, LifeLink
- October 14, Candidate Hob Nob with South Tampa Chamber of Commerce. Channel-side. Time TBA.
- Oct, 20-Nov 1 Early voting for General Election (See August VOTER at hclvw.org for locations)
- November 4 General Election (Registration closes for General Election October 6)
- November 11 Noon Board Meeting, LifeLink
- November 14 Noon, deadline for filing Special Law proposals (See page 3)
- December 17 Legislative Delegation Public Hearing on proposed Special Laws

League Welcomes New Members:

Ms. Carol W. Kurdell
Ms. Pamela Jo Hatley

Mary Ann Stiles
Charlotte Anderson



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.

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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- _____ \$39.50 Student membership

Please consider sending an additional donation.

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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.