

# 2023-24 Membership Handbook

## PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

Welcome to the League!

Being a member of the League allows you to participate in one of the most respected grass roots organizations in the nation. Your League keeps you informed on important legislation, candidates, and ballot initiatives at the state and national level, as well as on topics of interest here in Hillsborough and Pasco Counties. Becoming involved in League activities by attending events, volunteering for activities, or joining a committee or action group is the best way to obtain the full benefit of your membership.

We hold regular events on topics of interest to our members and our community, as well as events designed primarily for members, such as orientations and social functions. The state and national Leagues also sponsor events, such as Lunch and Learn programs and webinars, that bring together experts on current topics and issues.

The following pages highlight important information about the programs we support, and our organizational structure, including membership, finances, communications and other resources. You will also find our non-partisan policy.

A wide range of information may also be found on our website, [www.hclwv.org](http://www.hclwv.org), including our calendar of events and contact information for members of our leadership team. Please reach out if you have questions about our League at any time!

*Teresa Potter, President*  
[president@hclwv.org](mailto:president@hclwv.org)

## WHAT IS THE LEAGUE?

The League of Women Voters of the United States was organized in 1920 by Carrie Chapman Catt shortly before the Women's Suffrage Amendment was ratified. Its principal aim was to help the newly enfranchised women become politically educated, responsible voting citizens. There are Leagues in every state, the District of Columbia, and the Virgin Islands with over 90,000 members.

The League of Women Voters of Florida was formed in 1939 by three local Leagues then in existence: St. Petersburg, Winter Haven and Winter Park-Orlando. There are now 29 local Leagues in Florida, plus one comprised of members-at-large, with over 4,600 members combined.

The League of Women Voters of Hillsborough County was organized in April 1949 with 60 members as an outgrowth of the Public Affairs Committee of the YWCA. In 1965, the name was changed to League of Women Voters of Hillsborough County to better reflect membership and concerns. In 2023, our name was changed to the League of Women Voters of Hillsborough and Pasco Counties, to more formally include our Pasco County members and activities.

## HOW IS THE LEAGUE ORGANIZED?

League structure parallels the representative system of government under which we live. The League is a grassroots organization. Members determine the policies and program at all League levels. While there may be paid staff, our League does not have an executive director who acts as a public spokesperson.

At each level of the League, boards are elected to manage activities. LWV of Hillsborough and Pasco Counties has five officers, six elected directors, and up to six appointed directors. An Annual Meeting is held between April and June to set the league's agenda for the next year. This includes board elections, dues and budget approval, bylaws updates and issues selected for study and action. Our League year begins July 1.

At the state and national levels, decisions on officers and programs are made at the state or national biennial convention, composed of delegates elected by leagues proportionate to their memberships. In alternate years, state and national councils are held.

As a grassroots organization, the League encourages members to express themselves to its leaders on any league concern. Members are always welcome at any local Board meeting and at state or national conventions or councils.

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## 2023-24 OFFICER AND BOARD MEMBERS

President  
President-Elect  
Vice President  
Secretary  
Treasurer

Teresa Potter  
OPEN  
Laurie Winkles  
Betsy Braden  
Timothy Burke

Directors:  
Caryle Cammisa  
Ida Williams Campbell  
Sheila McCants  
Dr. Idelia Phillips  
Louann Tolbert  
Cindy Wilson

Environment & Climate Chair

DEI & Social Action Chair

Communications Chair

Pat Hall  
Donna Earnest  
Deborah Kauffman

Membership Chair

### NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Idelia Phillips, Chair  
Christine Bright  
Mary Switzer  
Ida Williams Campbell  
Cindy Wilson

## ACTION GROUP & COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Education  
Gun Safety  
Healthcare  
Immigration  
Juvenile Justice  
Environment & Climate  
National Popular Vote  
Pasco County  
Study & Action  
Transportation  
Voter Services

Damaris Allen  
Betsy Braden  
Laurie Winkles  
Timothy Burke  
OPEN  
Caryle Cammisa  
Shirley Arcuri & Elaine Holmes  
Christine Bright  
OPEN  
Emily Hinsdale  
Chris Conn

Communications  
Development  
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion  
Membership  
Speakers Bureau  
The VOTER  
Hillsborough County Commission  
On the Status of Women  
Webmaster  
National Database Entry

Cindy Wilson  
Angela Birdsong  
Dr. Idelia Phillips  
Deborah Kauffman  
Jill McDannold  
Elizabeth Corwin  
Dr. Idelia Phillips  
Debra Bellanti  
Johanne Castagan

## OUR ACTION GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

**Voting Rights & Election Reform** - We empower voters and defend democracy through voter registration and education activities, our core missions. We promote open transparent government and measures to protect, extend and encourage voting through equal access to the ballot.

**Education** - We support the requirement of free appropriate public education for all and advocate for adequate funding and a safe learning environment.

**Environment & Climate** - We support proper implementation of the Water & Land Legacy Amendment, legislation for energy conservation, greater use of renewable energy, and a ban on offshore drilling & fracking in Florida.

**Gun Violence Prevention** - We advocate for meaningful, common-sense gun law reform for a safer Florida, and participate in the Florida Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence.

**Health Care** - We support the implementation of health equity including access to affordable health care, expansion of Medicaid and reproductive rights.

**Immigration** - We oppose deportation of non-criminal migrants, and against legislation that forces local law enforcement to cooperate with federal officials in the deportation process.

**Juvenile Justice** - We promote more just practices and laws regarding juvenile crime, such as issuance of civil citations instead of misdemeanor arrests, reducing trial as adults, and increased funding for indigent defense.

**National Popular Vote** - We support the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, which is an agreement between states that pledge their electoral votes to the candidate who wins the national popular vote.

**Transportation** - We advocate for sustainable public transport options, recognizing that transportation needs significantly intersect with affordable housing, economic development, growth management, and voter rights.

## THE PASCO ACTION GROUP

The Pasco Action Group brings the League's mission and voice to Pasco County communities in a manner that specifically suits Pasco County. While some activities relate primarily to Pasco County topics, such as candidate forums, others are an outreach of overall League programs.

Pasco Unit membership meetings are held periodically and are open to the general League membership, regardless of their geographic location.

We also coordinate with the League's committees and action groups to participate in and create League events, as well as train to become speakers about the League and its issues. We identify local organizations as potential event partners and as places where we may make presentations about the League and its goals.

## MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCES

Membership in the League of Women Voters is open to all persons who are at least 16 years old. Anyone joining the local league automatically becomes a member of the state and national League levels as well.

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The Hillsborough County League is supported almost entirely by member dues, which are assessed annually. Paying for a single year provides membership for 365 days, and you will be notified when your renewal date approaches. Membership dues are NOT tax deductible.

Although dues are the primary source of income for the League, we try to keep them as low as possible, while still allowing us to continue in our important work. A large portion of our annual dues is sent on to the League of Women Voters of Florida and the League of Women Voters of the United States. These "per-member payments" (PMP) are set at the state and national level. The small amount kept in Hillsborough makes it necessary to hold fund raisers and to solicit additional donations to support our programs.

Our current membership categories include:

Individual - \$60

Household (up to two people) - \$85

Individual Sponsor (Susan B. Anthony) - \$100

Household Sponsor (Carrie Chapman Catt) - \$200

Student membership, for those enrolled in a full-time program, is free.

## COMMUNICATIONS AND RESOURCES

We communicate with members primarily through email, so please be sure to look for our messages in your inbox and keep your contact information current. This includes our monthly newsletter, The VOTER, although you can also find information on our website.

If you have questions about the League, please check the website first. You may find the information you are seeking, or you may find the email address of the appropriate person who can answer your question. You may also email [info@hclwv.org](mailto:info@hclwv.org) if you are unsure who to contact.

Here's a list of our communication outlets:

Website: <https://hclwv.org>

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/HCLWV>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/hclwv/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/HCLWV>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@HCLWV>

## 2023-24 PROGRAMS

### 1. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The League of Women Voters of Hillsborough and Pasco Counties' mission is to encourage the active participation of citizens in government, increase the public's understanding of important policy issues, and influence policy through education and advocacy. Central to this mission is the inclusion of and engagement with the diverse communities of Hillsborough and Pasco Counties to ensure the voices of all residents are prominent and that they can exercise their power to make positive change for all by influencing municipal, county, and state policymakers.

### 2. Social Policy

**Healthcare:** The Healthcare Action Group strives to inform, educate and support health issues that directly affect our community, while uniting with organizations that work on health-related issues supported by the HCLWV, LWVFL and LWVUS. We support the implementation of health equity including access to affordable quality healthcare, expansion of Medicaid, mental health and substance abuse services, protect the Affordable Healthcare Act (ACA), oral health, and the education to better understand. We stand behind reproductive services and the constitutional right for women to make reproductive choices and have available services, including abortion. We support efforts to build a healthcare system that provides access to comprehensive quality care to all residents at an affordable price.

**Transportation:** Our focus is to educate and advocate on transportation-related issues and how those issues impact other LWV focuses. Transportation viability significantly intersects with equity, climate change, affordable housing, economic development, growth management, education, and voter rights. Locally, safety concerns over the Tampa Bay region's ranking as among the highest nationally in vehicular fatalities and serious injuries must be considered, but the importance of transportation access as it connects to other League programming will be a Transportation Action Group priority.

**Gun Safety:** We educate and advocate for LWVFL positions on meaningful state gun law reform while promoting responsible gun ownership. We promote safe storage, including gun locks, for consumer protection. We support the ban of semi-automatic assault style weapons and large capacity feeding devices. We support implementation of comprehensive universal background checks, and ensuring the state provides all relevant records to the FBI National Instant Criminal Background Check System. Our group will continue efforts to defeat unsafe gun legislation and promote awareness and education to reduce the incidence of domestic violence, suicide, and accidental child gun deaths.

### 3. Government

Our group educates and advocates to protect, extend and encourage voting by all sectors of the public with an emphasis on underserved communities. We advocate for voters rights by monitoring local, state and national legislation. We promote implementation of the Florida constitutional amendment authorizing voting rights restoration for former felony offenders. We support adoption of the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact (NPVIC) and open primaries in Florida.

### 3. Education

Our group advocates for LWVFL positions on adequate funding of public education in Florida, including facilities and operations. We promote an assessment and accountability system that provides the same data at appropriate intervals to measure student progress for all schools that receive public funds, directly or indirectly. Encourage comprehensive information on all schools receiving public funds so choice between all options is clear and available to the public. Support the authority of local school boards to determine the need for and location of additional schools within their districts. Support a curricular framework that includes broad common standards developed by educational experts that serves as a guide to local districts.

### 4. Environment & Climate

We support national, state and local League positions on climate change, sustainability, environment and natural resources, especially those involving energy conservation, greater reliance on renewable resources and a carbon-free Florida; the protection and wise management of the State's natural resources, including the conservation of safe fresh water and funding for public transportation. We recognize the interrelationships of air quality, energy, land use and waste management and their impacts on the health of people and the environment. We support policies that provide for cooperative, coordinated decision-making on land use and promote resource conservation, stewardship and long-range planning with the responsibility for managing

natural resources shared at all levels of government. We oppose state preemption of local environmental controls. We consider the impact of state and local environmental policies and ordinances in terms of their impact on vulnerable communities and advocate on environmental justice issues. We support scientifically based projects to reuse treated wastewater and improve water conservation and scientifically based fertilizer standards to protect surface water and maintain a healthy Tampa Bay. We support sustainable policies and local government efforts to improve community awareness and promote transparency and accountability.

## **NON-PARTISAN POLICY**

Reviewed and adopted June 26, 2023

This policy is to be reviewed and endorsed or revised by the League of Women Voters of Hillsborough and Pasco Counties ("HCLWV") Board of Directors ("Board") at the beginning of each League year and subsequently published in the VOTER.

The purpose of the HCLWV is to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government. The League of Women Voters is nonpartisan in that it does not support or oppose any political party or candidate; it is political in that it takes positions on selected governmental issues after member study and agreement.

While the League urges its members to be politically active, certain constraints are necessary to maintain the nonpartisanship of the organization. The Board has, therefore, established the following guidelines to protect the League's nonpartisan identity and reputation.

### **Board of Directors**

The Board has the responsibility to maintain the nonpartisanship of the organization.

Other than the **President, President-Elect, and Voter Services Chair**, all Board members may take active, visible roles in political campaigns and non-League issues, including:

- Host or attend political and political fundraising functions,
- Make contributions to political campaigns, and
- Publicly associate with a candidate's campaign.

Any Board member may run for or hold political office, provided, however, they resign from the Board prior to the announcement of their candidacy. Public notices released by the League announcing the resignation of the Board member must be carefully worded to avoid the appearance of the League's endorsement of the resigning Board member's candidacy.

The political activities of a spouse or relative of, or other person in a close personal relationship with, a Board member should be considered as separate and distinct from the activities of the Board member.

When there is doubt as to whether a conflict of interest exists with a Board member's political activity, the matter shall be resolved by a vote of the Board, excluding the person(s) who may have the possible conflict.

### **Members**

Members are encouraged to participate fully in the political process, serve on public boards and commissions, and participate in political activities as individuals without implying or receiving League endorsement. When acting in public as League representatives, members must not allow partisanship to be discernible. Therefore, to help ensure the League's nonpartisanship, the following guidelines apply:

- No candidate materials shall be distributed during League functions, except at specified events, such as candidate forums.
- Only the HCLWV President and/or their designee may present League statements to governmental boards, commissioners, or the media.
- Since a general policy cannot cover every situation, the Board is empowered to deal with specific cases as they arise.

### **League Positions**

Once the League (local, state, or national) takes a position on an issue, members may not identify themselves as League members when publicly expressing an opinion that is in opposition to a League position.

### **League Membership List**

The League's Directory and/or any other list of members and their contact information is for League use ONLY and shall not be used for any non-League purpose.