



TO PROMOTE POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY THROUGH INFORMED AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF CITIZENS IN GOVERNMENT AND TO ACT ON SELECTED GOVERNMENT ISSUES

THE VOTER
THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TALLAHASSEE
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Tallahassee

Volume 20 Number 4

April 2012

In This Issue

President's Message

Local Government Update

Health Care Update

Education Update

Privatization Article

Elections Law Update

Be A Pollworker!

WFSU Help Wanted!

Thanks Kim MacQueen!

HOT TOPICS

Florida Earns a C- Grade: The Story Behind the Score with Dan Krassner

Dan Krassner is the Executive Director of Integrity Florida, a nonpartisan research institute whose mission is to promote integrity in government and expose public corruption. He has served in several senior management positions in Tallahassee including Chief Strategy and Communications Officer for the Florida Chamber of Commerce and Vice-President of Communications at Florida TaxWatch.



The Center for Public Integrity has rated all states on their political processes. While Florida received an overall grade of C-, it received failing grades for Ethics Enforcement Agencies and Monitoring of Lobbying. Integrity Florida has recommended several ethics reforms, and Dan Krassner will bring those to the League on April 21.

Save the Date!

The LWVT Annual Membership Meeting will be **Saturday, April 21** from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. followed by a Hot Topics Luncheon from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

LWVT's fiscal year begins May 1, 2012. Please consider paying your dues when you attend the Annual Meeting to save time and postage.

Mark your calendars!

- DATE:** April 21, 2012
- TIME:** 10:30 a.m. Annual Membership Meeting
11:30 a.m. Hot Topics Luncheon
- PLACE:** Capital City Country Club
1601 Golf Terrace Drive, Tallahassee, 32301
- LUNCH:** Herb Roasted Chicken, Beef Bourguignon, Salad Bar, Vegetable, Starch, Dinner Rolls, Coffee, Cookie Tray
(vegetarian entrée available if requested at reservation)
- COST:** \$20 at the door

For reservations, please call 309-3005 or email LWVTallahassee@gmail.com. Please RSVP by April 14!

Because the League must pay for reservations cancelled after April 14, those who cancel late should reimburse the League for their reservation's cost.

Calendar

2 Monday 7 p.m.
Local Government Committee
Ruth O'Donnell
3509 Trillium Court

3 Tuesday 6 p.m.
Local Planning Agency
Public Hearing
Renaissance Center
435 N. Macomb Street

9 Monday 1:30 p.m.
Health Care Committee
Margie Thomas
808 Wilmon Court

10 Tuesday 1:30 p.m.
Leon County Commission
2012 Comprehensive Plan
Amendments
County Courthouse 5th floor

10 Tuesday 6 p.m.
Leon County School Board
Howell Center
3955 W. Pensacola Street

11 Wednesday 4 p.m.
Tallahassee City Commission
City Hall 2nd floor

17 Tuesday 6 p.m.
LWVT Board Meeting
LWVF Office
540 Beverly Court

21 Saturday 10:30 a.m.
Annual Meeting
Capital City Country Club

21 Saturday 11:30 a.m.
Hot Topics Luncheon
Capital City Country Club

24 Tuesday 3 p.m.
Leon County Commission
County Courthouse 5th floor

24 Tuesday 6 p.m. City/County
Hearing
Comprehensive Plan
Amendments
County Courthouse 5th floor

24 Tuesday 6 p.m.
Leon County School Board
Howell Center
3955 W. Pensacola Street

25 Wednesday 4 p.m.
City Commission Meeting
City Hall

President's Message

I am profiting from a moment of repose to write you from the country of Haiti. I have just completed two weeks of research in the north of Haiti and am waiting in a local airport for my flight to the capital city, Port-au-Prince, where I'll continue my research for another week. In the first phase of my research, I traveled to six different 'communal sections' where locally elected officials shared information with me about how their local government functions. It is at this smallest level of government, about the size of a small town or large neighborhood association, that decisions concerning economic development are supposed to be made. At least this is what should happen according to the 1987 Haitian Constitution, drafted after the end of the Duvalier dictatorship; this vision has yet to be fully realized in part due to interference of powerful foreign governments like our own, international financial institutions and so on.



The vision of the Haitian Constitution is to decentralize the government so that the people can choose for themselves, through their local government, the form of economic development they want. In the past, such choices have been dictated by the wealthiest Haitians who controlled the government and used the government to rather successfully siphon off the wealth of the masses (still known as Duvalierism). If this does not sound familiar to you, it does to me; it looks a lot like what just happened to the American poor and middle class in the last great recession.

There are other parallels to us Tallahassee League members: several of these locally elected officials told me that they believed the most important thing needed to increase the capacity of the people to develop their own economy was civic education. Most Haitians have yet to understand that their Constitution already gives them this right. In my experience talking to foreigners who work in Haiti, even foreigners, with the best of intentions to help Haiti, lack a basic understanding of Haiti's Constitution and decentralization.

The purpose of my current research is to inform NGO workers and foreign government officials about how Haiti's local governments are functioning so that, instead of bypassing the local governments and diminishing their capacity to serve the electorate, they might engage, support and build the capacity of locally elected officials to meet basic service needs in their communities: clean water, electricity, sanitation, trash service, canals, paved roads, public education, street lights and health care. These are the ambitions of the locally elected officials I spoke to -- all things we take for granted.

Well, I see them loading my luggage, so I'll end here. I'm proud of the League, and I spoke of the League often to people here. Let us be thankful for the services we have, for our security and comfort. But let us continue to fight to protect our democracy and particularly our right to participate in our government so that we can choose what kind of economy we want rather than let others who are wealthier and more powerful take that hard-won right away from us.

Kenbe la! (Hold strong!)
Rebecca Sager

Local Government Update

Local Government Study & Action Group Transportation Study Gets Involved with the West Tennessee Street Pilot Controversy

The transportation project studied by the Local Government Study & Action group has become quite a cause célèbre. If you have been reading reports about City of Tallahassee and Tallahassee/Leon County Planning Department staff efforts to get approval for this road restriping pilot project, you know they are having a tough time of it. Originally on the March 14 City Commission agenda for vote, it and the transportation plan of which it is a part (Moving Tallahassee: Cars Optional) were pulled from the agenda and scheduled for a public hearing before the Commission on that same day. Meanwhile, the Secretary of the Department of Transportation, whose agency must approve the pilot after the City Commission, said he would not approve it and that the City should go back to the drawing board to solve the safety problems on the portion of West Tennessee Street near the Florida State University campus.

Ruth O'Donnell and Jan RuBino attended the March 14 public hearing. Ruth spoke in favor of the pilot study. Her comments were given as a private citizen rather than as a League member, based on the League's policy that the President and Vice-President are our official spokespeople. Although she spoke in favor, she was only one of two people to do so. By the end of the hearing, it was not looking good for implementation of the pilot. The Commission will discuss it at their March 28 meeting, but their minds seemed pretty made up to vote "no."

All of this, of course, does not impact our study although we are closely following developments. We are waiting to receive consensus questions from the statewide transportation study coordinator. After that, consensus meetings will be scheduled.

Proposed County Comprehensive Plan Changes

Rodaway, LLP, a development company, has proposed a change to the County Comprehensive Plan that will allow one house per three acres in a portion of the rural area of Leon County. The current plan allows one house per ten acres. This is a significant change made even more important by another part of the request which is to allow clustering of houses, thus leaving land available for future development should there ever be a desire to more densely populate the area. The Tallahassee/Leon County Planning Department recommended disapproval of the request, but it will go on to the Planning Commission on April 3 at 6 p.m. in the Renaissance Building. On April 24, there will be a transmittal hearing where the City and County Joint Commission meets to decide whether to transmit the request to a state agency for approval. Finally, an adoption hearing is scheduled for June 26. At present, the only people who appear to support this request are the developers, so it's progress remains to be seen.

Richard RuBino brought this information and another land use item to the March 8 Local Government Study & Action Group. The second item is also a request to change the County Comprehensive Plan to put a large area in the I-10/Mahan Drive area into the Urban Services Area so it can be developed without becoming a Development of Regional Impact (DRI). Devoe Moore is the requester. Richard is following up with the Planning Department and will have more details for us in future.

NEXT MEETINGS: April 2, 2012 at 7 p.m. and May 10, 2012 at 7 p.m., 3509 Trillium Ct. PLEASE JOIN US!

-Ruth O'Donnell

Health Care Update

On March 17, I attended the Year of the Healthy Infant II workshop hosted by Leon County Government at the FSU Turnbull Conference Center. There were many excellent speakers from various agencies associated with the effort to decrease infant mortality, especially in the black community in Leon and surrounding counties. My impression is that there is much being done, but the problem persists. The panel that spoke to what we can do

locally agreed that education is the key: the education of families, professionals and politicians. There is a need for health education in the schools, where presently they are limited to abstinence-only instruction and parents can opt their children out. There was agreement that more one-on-one home visits by counselors would benefit but requires more funding. Another suggestion was to engage peer groups for counseling and education through black churches.

-Peggy Ramsey

The Capital Coalition for Health MAPP Steering Committee members met on March 20 to continue their work "to identify areas of need and opportunity toward the shared goal of improved community health in Leon County." Kathy Winn and I attended this meeting to learn more about the MAPP (Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnership) process and the progress being made in reaching the goal. Three reports were shared and briefly discussed: Forces of Change Assessment (forces are trends, factors and events); Community Themes and Strengths Assessment; and the NPHPSP Local Public Health System Performance Assessment. The next meeting on April 10 will review the assessment findings, identify strategic issues and form workgroups. Meetings will continue in the spring on May 8 and June 12 followed in the summer with a report out to the community stakeholders. For more information on the Leon County vision, values, meeting information and participants in this process, visit www.leoncountyfl.gov/lchd/mapp/mapp.asp.

I write this report on the night before the Supreme Court convenes to hear arguments in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act cases on March 26, 27, and 28, with a decision expected in June. The LWVT health care group has a history of health care reform study and action of a single-payer plan (Medicare for All) to educating ourselves and the public about the present law passed in 2010. AARP brochures and materials were very helpful in our educational effort to learn about the new law. As an AARP member and volunteer, I want to take this opportunity to let you know of a new AARP effort called You've Earned A Say because it provides another opportunity to make our voices heard about the future of Medicare and Social Security. If you haven't already taken the time to fill out the brief questionnaire provided by AARP, please go to www.earnedasay.org and learn more about it. If you are unable to access the website, I would be happy to give you a questionnaire, along with printed information on Medicare and Social Security provided by AARP. You may also contact flaarp@aarp.org or call (866) 595-7678 and ask for the Speakers' Bureau line to request a facilitator to speak to your group about You've Earned A Say.

The health of U.S. citizens is intricately entwined in the socio-economic health of the country. The League of Women Voters of Florida has developed a great Speakers Bureau presentation on the health reform law and welcomes the opportunity to speak with interested groups. Please contact LWVFOffice@gmail.com or (850) 224-2545.

At this time, we have not scheduled a health care meeting for April. However, members will be working on our areas of interest and attending local meetings with our partner groups. You may contact Theresa Chase at chasetheresav@yahoo.com or (850) 383-1348 for questions about the health care study and action group.

-Theresa Chase

Education Update

At the February meeting of the Education Committee, it was decided that we would take a preliminary look at the extent of privatization in Leon County schools. After looking at the public documents available, the committee decided that services to Leon County schools were pretty much a function of Leon County, with the possible exception of the schools themselves. Currently, there are five charter schools operating in the Leon County School District. Beginning in fall 2013, there will be two more, a Mavericks High School (www.mavericksineducation.com) and a Renaissance School (www.renlearn.com).

In view of the poor press that Mavericks High Schools have received, I called to ask about the decision to bring it to Leon County. What I learned is that approving a charter is a complicated process, starting with the application made to LCSB by a nonprofit board. Should the application be denied, there are several review

boards at the state level that can overrule a rejection by the local school board. According to Bev Owens, Divisional Director of Special Schools and Programs (487-7525) at Leon County Schools (www.K12.fl.us), there was nothing in Mavericks' application to support denying its application to the LCSB. Once the initial application is made and unless there is something in the application to justify stopping it, the application is home free. The application from Mavericks High Schools was approved at the LCSB meeting of Sept. 27, 2011, article 18.05: for Renaissance, Jan. 2012, article 11.06. The applications are public documents; if you would like to read them, let me know and I will try to get the references for them. Or you may call Bev Owens who has all the information.

Work was also done on planning a beginning of our study of three elementary schools: Astoria Park (school grade A), Sabal Palm (school grade B) and Hartsfield (school grade C). The schools are similar in population, free/reduced lunch and percentages of minority students. Our work will look at the following categories: library, online learning, teacher profiles (training and professional development), volunteer hours, student teachers, administrative staff, arts and athletics, and budget. We will begin with the information that is available online. When we have what data we can collect using the Internet and libraries, we will analyze the data and prepare a report. If this report points to some future study, we will prepare a proposal for further study.

Our next scheduled meeting will be Monday, April 9 at 1:30 p.m. If the issues surrounding our schools and the children they educate interest you, please join us.

There is much to do. We meet at the home of committee co-chair Margie Thomas, 808 Wilmot Dr. Our meetings are open to LWVT members. If you plan to come, please notify Margie Thomas at 270-9750.

-M. L. Baker

NOTE: The LWVUS Board approved a new Education position at the March 2012 Board meeting. The position is based on responses received from the 377 Leagues across the country who participated in the Education Study, including LWV Tallahassee. Read the full version of the new position at: www.lwv.org/content/federal-role-public-education-position

LWVUS Privatization Study

The Legal Framework of Transparency and Accountability within the Context of Privatization Executive Summary

The legal frameworks within which public and private sector entities operate differ. One difference is that, unlike private entities, government entities are statutorily required to conduct their business through open, transparent processes to ensure that they are accountable to the citizenry. This modern practice of open government is viewed as both a key feature and a necessary condition of a contemporary democratic state. It is based upon the conviction that the people can only effectively exercise their constitutional role as overseers of government action where their unfettered rights of access to information about government operations are secure.

Public transparency laws thus have been enacted throughout the United States at both the federal and state level for the purpose of maintaining free and open access to the government's proceedings, deliberations, decision-making and records. Such laws include sunshine or open meeting laws, which seek to ensure that the public may observe the meetings and deliberations of government bodies, and freedom of information or public record acts, which seek to ensure public access to the documents and records of government.

Privatization raises particular issues with respect to transparency, however, because as a general matter, such transparency laws apply exclusively to public bodies, and not to private entities. Where the provision of government services are transferred into private hands, what then becomes of the public's right of access to information regarding the provision of those services?

Judicial and legislative efforts to address concerns regarding public transparency within the context of privatization have emerged over several years. Some state courts, for instance, have adopted a

judicial doctrine that subjects a private contractor to the applicable transparency law when the contractor is performing a government function in such a manner that it may be deemed the "functional equivalent of the public body." In addition, state legislatures have been modifying their public accountability statutes over the years in order to make such laws applicable to certain private entities carrying out government functions. Public accountability advocates nonetheless are concerned that public access to information in the hands of private contractors often is frustrated when statutory language does not adequately cover the private entity or a court ruling is not obtained. Moreover, even when private contractors are subject to such laws, they often dispute it or are not aware of such requirements, and, thus, refuse to provide the information.

A recent example involves one of the nation's largest not-for-profit providers of community-based supervision and treatment services to individuals within the criminal justice systems. The company is 97 percent publicly funded from sources such as state departments of corrections and the federal prison bureau. Following revelations of certain unusual and high profile expenditures by the private contractor in Kentucky (including hundreds of thousands of dollars in stadium suites, sponsorship of a university basketball team and extravagant social events), the Kentucky state auditor sought to examine how its tax dollars were being spent. The private contractor, however, refused to provide the state auditor with the requested financial information, and neither the state public records law nor any decision by a state court required the contractor to provide the information. This case illustrates the importance of yet another approach to ensuring public accessibility of information and records in the hands of a private contractor: that is, using the bidding or contract negotiation process of the privatization deal itself to require agreement on the part of the private contractor to make all pertinent information available to the government agency with which it is contracting before any privatization of services is put in place.

-Diane Dilanni

Read the complete paper on the LWVUS website. What kind of accountability measures should be applied to private companies in order to ensure the proper constitutional role of the people as overseers of government action?

Elections Law Summary from Carol Weissert

During the 2011 legislative session, HB 1355 was passed. This bill became known as the voter suppression law, and LWVF, along with other organizations is suing to have the law overturned. If the law is upheld, most college students will have to vote a provisional ballot, early voting days will be cut from 14 to 8 days and the Sunday before Election Day will be eliminated as an early voting day. Early voting sites are limited to city hall, libraries, or the Supervisor of Elections' office. While legislators claimed the bill is needed to prevent fraud, statistics show that there were 31 alleged voter fraud cases in Florida from 2008 to 2011 with two arrests. Supervisors of Elections fought the bill. The common wisdom is that the early voting and change of address provisions will affect Democrats and students in the voting process.

Professor Carol Weissert, director of the Collins Institute at Florida State University, spoke to us on the ramifications of this law in Leon County. The following is a summary of the discussion:

The 2008 elections illustrated that race and age are very important in determining the outcomes in an election. Voters in the 18-29 age group made up 45% of the Democratic vote. During the campaign, Get Out the Vote Florida noted that 1 in 3 of the 18-29 age group were contacted by the Obama campaign, while 1 in 7 were contacted by the McCain Campaign.

Professor Weissert worked with the Leon County Supervisor of Elections office in compiling the data presented at Hot Topics:

- There were 13 precincts with 50% or more of voters 18-25 years old.
- Student-dominated precincts were 55% Democrat and 33% African-American.
- In other precincts, the average was 58% Democrat and 25% African-American.
- 21% were listed as NPA (no party affiliation) in student-dominated precincts.

- In student precincts 31% early voted, while 28% did so in the other precincts.
- In student precincts, 13% voted absentee ballots, while 22% did in other precincts.
- In student precincts, 7% of voters had a change of address, while 2% did in the other precincts.

Who does early voting in Leon County? 68% are Democrats, and 36% are African-Americans.

In the 23 African-American districts, 17% voted absentee ballots, 31% voted early, and 3% had a change of address.

In March, the LWVF lawsuit was heard in the North Florida Federal District Court; we are awaiting a decision by the court.

Adopt-A-Precinct: Be a Pollworker!

Are you looking for a way to stay in shape? To entertain your friends and family? Get some exercise? Look no further: the League has a program for pole dancing! Err...Pollworking! Work those polls!

As you all know, this is a big election year. This year, as with years past, League members volunteer at polls all around Leon County. The Supervisor of Elections office provides all the training and information for all poll workers. They have named this program "Adopt-A-Precinct," and we've been an integral part of the election process each primary/election. Typically, the Supervisor of Elections office assigns us the polling place at the Timberlane Community of Christ Church (located at the corner of Meridian Road and Timberlane Road). Or you may work at any precinct of your choosing. Each precinct team has a Clerk, Deputy Clerk and several Inspectors, depending on the size of the population voting there.

In addition to providing a valuable service to the voting process, the League uses this opportunity as a fundraiser. The League poll workers are paid for the day of the election (about 14 hours), as well as for training (usually 3 hours for each election), and we ask that you donate that back to the League. These donations are used for various items, including yard signs, print flyers, billboards and other means of educating the voters.

If you are interested in helping with the August Primary and/or the General Election in November, please visit the SOE's website [for more information](#) and to apply to be a poll worker. Also let me know so that I can notify the Supervisor of Elections that you are part of the LWVT team. Contact me if you have any questions. Thanks so much for your help.

Peggy Ramsey
386-7589
ramsey020@comcast.net

WFSU: Help Wanted

WFSU is holding its Spring Fund Drive. We will be working on Tuesday, April 24, 2012. We need volunteers for the following shifts: 7-8:30 a.m., 8:30-10 a.m., 12-2:00 p.m., 2 p.m.-4 p.m., and 4-6 p.m.

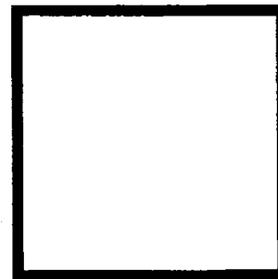
Please email Marilyn Wills at marilynwills@msn.com and let her know which time of day is best for you.

Thank You to outgoing Voter Editor, Kim MacQueen

We would like to thank LWV Tallahassee member Kim MacQueen for her amazingly dedicated service to the League as our Voter Editor! We will miss you!



League of Women Voters of Tallahassee
 P.O. Box 10216
 Tallahassee, FL 32302-2216



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
 (Please Print Legibly)

Name _____ Phone (home) _____
 Address _____ Phone (mobile) _____
 _____ E-mail _____

Please Circle Annual Membership Level
 (May 1, 2011 - April 30, 2012)

- \$100.00 Susan B. Anthony membership _____
- \$ 90.00 Household membership _____
- \$ 60.00 Individual membership _____
- \$ 30.00 Student membership _____

I am enclosing \$5.00 for LWVF Lobby Fund _____

Additional gift to LWVUS Education Fund _____

Please circle any topics
 that interest you:

- Voter Services
- Local Government
- Fundraising
- Health Care
- Lobby Corps
- Sustainability/Natural Resources
- Publicity
- Membership
- Hot Topics
- Education
- Hospitality/Events

Please make all checks payable to LWV of Tallahassee. Mail to LWVT, P. O. Box10216, Tallahassee, FL 32302-2216. You may also renew/join at www.lwvtallahassee.org. There is a \$2.00 charge for using PayPal.