



THE VOTER

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TALLAHASSEE

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Tallahassee

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OUR PURPOSE:

To promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government and to act on selected government issues

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Promoting Social and Economic Justice

This month's Hot Topic takes a look at the League's social policy positions, which are devoted to securing "equal opportunity for all" and "promoting social and economic justice," and asks: how are we doing locally? How do social and economic injustices manifest here? What more could we do "to prevent or reduce poverty and to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families"? (Impact on Issues 2012--2014, page 3).

Helping us answer these questions are Karen Woodall of the Florida Center for Fiscal and Economic Policy (FCFEP) and Deborah Holt and Jacob Reiter of the Tallahassee-Leon Shelter.

Founder and Executive Director of the FCFEP, Karen Woodall has over 30 years' experience advocating to improve the conditions of working families, children, seniors, people with disabilities, rural families, migrant and seasonal farm workers, immigrants and other vulnerable populations. Woodall and the FCFEP have been strong advocates for a broad and fair system of state taxes. Woodall will provide insights into how governmental policies relate to local economic disparities.

Involved with the Tallahassee-Leon Shelter since 2005, Deborah Holt, current Board Chair, and Jacob Reiter, appointed Executive Director of the Tallahassee-Leon Shelter in April 2013, will provide insights into the day-to-day lives of local citizens struggling to lead productive lives.

Please join us in a discussion of what we can do to better the lives of our most vulnerable neighbors.

Date & Time January 15, 2014 Wednesday
11:30 a.m.--1:00 p.m. Hot Topic Luncheon

Location Capital City Country Club
1601 Golf Terrace Drive

Buffet Menu Roasted pork loin or stuffed manicotti, salad bar, vegetables, rolls and butter, coffee, tea.

Cost Members - \$17 Nonmembers - \$20

The first three student members to RSVP eat FREE!!



07 Tuesday
7:00 -- 8:30 p.m.
Local Government
S & A meeting
3509 Trillium Court

08 Wednesday
4:00 p.m.
Tallahassee City
Commission, City Hall 2nd
Floor

09 Thursday 2:30 p.m.
House Select Committee on
Affordable Care Act
House Office Building
Room 214

09 Thursday
5:30--7:00 p.m.
Lobby Corps training
Eastside Public Library
1583 Pedrick Road

09 Thursday 6:30 p.m.
Town Hall meeting with
Local Legislative Delegation
(Sen. Montford; Reps.
Rehwinkel-Vasilinda,
Williams, Beshears)
City Commission Chambers,
City Hall

13 Monday 1:00 p.m.
CRTPA meeting
City Hall, 2nd floor

14 Tuesday 6:00 p.m.
LWVT Board meeting
LWVF Office
540 Beverly Court

14 Tuesday 6:00 p.m.
Leon County School Board,
Howell Center
3055 W. Pensacola St.

15 Wednesday
11:30 a.m.
Hot Topics Luncheon
Capital City Country Club,
1601 Golf Terrace Drive

20 Monday 2:00 p.m.
Health Care S & A Group
meeting
1006 Brookwood Drive

21 Tuesday 3:00 p.m.
Leon County Commission
County Courthouse
5th Floor

22 Program Planning
Committee meeting 4:30
p.m.
1628 Woodgate Way

29 Wednesday
7:00 p.m.

FOR RESERVATIONS

please call 309-3005 or e-mail
LWVTallahassee@gmail.com

Please RSVP by Saturday morning, January 11.

Because the League must pay for reservations cancelled after Saturday,
January 11, those who cancel late should reimburse the
League for the cost of their reservations.

President's Message

The words "Study and Action" capture the very essence of the League of Women Voters. Right now, LWVT has the opportunity to participate in two studies, one on charter schools in Florida, the other on agricultural policy of the U.S. government. After the study phase, the League organizes consensus meetings to arrive at a position upon which the whole League can take collective action.

So, two studies means two consensus meetings are coming soon; one on the 29th of this month, the other by mid-April. By the way, LWVT is looking for someone to coordinate the April consensus meeting: if you have a couple of hours to lend the League your modest talents of organization, please give me a call at [\(850\) 219-9966](tel:8502199966).

I have thoroughly enjoyed the consensus meetings in which I've participated in the past: intelligent folks, well-informed, arriving with a diverse background of first-hand experiences with the subject, joined by others who have studied the topic intensely. And those of us less well-studied are still able to participate productively. We learn, we change our opinions, and we help mold a sense of consensus in the room.

Sometimes the meetings are intense as the public policy issues are important, and I get the sense that we are doing our best to solve the problems of the world. In some way, I suppose that we are, because out of the process a consensus of the group forms around the issue. And since the League's action and advocacy on public policy comes from this consensus, our positions have a unique strength and a greater power than those of other organizations or political parties.

The Florida League describes the state's Study-Consensus-Position process as follows:

"[M]embers first research the issue. Background material on all sides of the issue, a bibliography and consensus questions are furnished by a state study committee as approved by the State Board. These questions, when answered by the membership, may establish a statewide consensus.

"Consensus by a group discussion is the technique most often used in the League for reaching member agreement. It is a process whereby members participate in a group discussion of an issue. The consensus reached by members through group discussion is not a simple majority, nor is it unanimity; rather it is the overall sense of the group as expressed through the exchange of ideas and opinions. . . .

"The State Board evaluates the conclusions of the local Leagues. Wherever the State Board determines there is substantial agreement (or consensus), a formal LWVF position is adopted" (Study and Action 2011-2013, page 2).

You really will feel good at the end of the meeting, so I hope that you will carve out the time to participate. Mark your calendars now for January 29!

- Rebecca Sager

President, League of Women Voters of Tallahassee

[850 219-9966](tel:8502199966)

rsager@music.org



Seen at the Last Hot Topic



Rebecca Sager, Barbara
Rollins, Linda Stalvey



Susan Glickman



Debbie Rumberger

Ann Kimbrough
Kathy Francis-Belovary
Karen Morris



Board Bytes

(from the board meeting of December 10th)



- LWVT's treasury now has a total of cash and investments of \$17,298.77.
- The Board voted to print new information/sign-up cards for new and prospective members in color.
- After we had the "Know Your Public Officials" brochure printed, the Florida Legislature changed their phone system resulting in incorrect phone numbers in the brochure. The Board discussed reprinting the brochure.
- *Study and Action 2013--2015* (state program) is available and costs \$12.00 per copy and is also available on the LWVF web site at thefloridavoter.org/resources/program.

Calling All Members: LWVF Wants YOU... to Lobby!

The state League is pleased to announce that we have a new member on our team: Debbie Harrison Rumberger, who will be serving as LWVF's Legislative Advocate during the 2014 session. Debbie is a long-time activist who is excited to represent the League, and she is looking forward to working closely with LWVT members in order to maximize the League's presence at the state Capitol.

To that end, we are hoping that you will join Debbie and LWVF Executive Director Jessica Lowe-Minor on Thursday,

January 9 from 5:30--7:00 p.m. at the Eastside Library (1583 Pedrick Road, Tallahassee, FL) for a training session on grassroots advocacy. The session will include briefings on how to:

- Track and research bills online,
- Find background information on League issues, and
- Make a positive difference in the legislative process.

Do not be intimidated! Lobbying can be as easy as attending a committee hearing and wearing a button!

The training is free and open to all LWVT members. We look forward to seeing you there! If you have any questions, please contact Debbie directly at: LWVFadvocacy@gmail.com.

- Jessica Lowe-Minor

A New Committee is Formed

Nothing is more important to the League than our work on significant public policy issues.

As Chair of the Program Committee, I've agreed to work with two of my fellow board members, Liz Holifield and Kathy Winn, to present recommendations at our February board meeting for our 2014 program priorities. We will be working closely with the chairpersons of our four standing Study & Action Groups: Education, Local Government, Health Care, and Sustainability/Climate Change.

We also need your help. What issues get you excited? Are there any that we should consider adding? What issues would you like to see addressed in the 2014 political campaigns?

Your suggestions will be assessed against eleven criteria for possible inclusion in our 2014 program.

Please contact me by phone or e-mail at (850) 778-3795 (home), (850) 778-3795 (home), or peterbutzin@me.com.

- Peter Butzin

My League Story by Kristin Dozier

Leon County Commissioner, District 5 League Member Since 2012 (or 11?)

In a representative form of government, we elect people who will, hopefully, stay engaged and informed about the issues we care about (and those we don't, but remain important all the same) and who will pursue policies that align with our values and political perspective. And while this is ideal for those who are busy with family and work (and who isn't?) and may not have the time to track every bill and agenda, we know that it's not the end of the story. That's why I am thankful for and proud to be a member of the League of Women Voters. The League keeps us informed and engaged on crucial issues facing our state and local governments, so that we can respond at those times when we will have the greatest impact.

- story gathered by Martha Stewart

Study and Action Group and Committee Contacts

Study and Action Groups

Ruth O'Donnell, Chair, Local Government
(850) 668-6911, ruth.odonnell@comcast.net

Kathy Winn, Chair, Health Care
(850) 877-0960, kathywinnclan@embarqmail.com

Margie Thomas, Chair, Education
(850) 270-9750, margie.thomas2010@comcast.net

Dot Skofronick, Chair, Climate Change/Sustainability
(850) 222-8544, dsjs@embarqmail.com

Membership Committee

Marty Monroe, Co-Chair
(850) 942-2340, martymonroe@me.com

Sharon Russell, Co-Chair
(850)878-1407, (850)212-7633, sharonkrussell@aol.com

Voter Service

Janet Findling, Co-Chair
(850) 942-2291, janetfindling@comcast.net

Rebecca Sager, Co-Chair
(850)219-9966, rsager@music.org

Program Committee

Peter Butzin, Chair
(850) 778-3795 (home)
(850) 778-3795 (home)
peterbutzin@me.com.

Public Education Study and Action Group



The Public Education Study and Action Group of the Tallahassee League of Women Voters is participating in a League of Women Voters of Florida study on charter schools in our state. The Consensus Meeting will be held on January 29, 2014, at 7:00PM in Room A of the Leon County Public Library (headquarters library at 200 West Park Avenue in Tallahassee).

Our local committee has been working for several months to collect data on our local charter schools, and that report can be found on LWVT's web site at http://www.lwvtallahassee.org/images/Charter_Schools_Data.pdf.

We will follow the procedures outlined in the Consensus Packet also on the web site at http://www.League_of_Women_Voters_State_Wide_Concensus_Packet_1.pdf.

Collaborating Leagues throughout Florida have contributed to the development of both the background information (pages 2--6 of the packet), and the discussion statements themselves on pages 7 and 8. The background information includes information on educational reform, an introduction to the consensus questions, and excerpts from the 2011 Florida Statutes 1002.33, which is the Florida Legislative Intent for Charter Schools, as well as "The Essential Guide to Charter Schools Lawmaking: Model Legislation for States" by Alison Consoletti, Vice President for Research, Center for Educational Reform, 2012.

League members and members of the public who will be participating in the Consensus Meeting should become familiar with this information which represents a diversity of viewpoints and information on charter schools.

- Margie Thomas

(Editorial Comment: I have read the above-cited documents and I believe it's vitally important for everyone else to read them, too, and plan to attend the Dec. 29 meeting. If you have trouble getting to the documents, e-mail me at lgdavis75@gmail.com and I'll mail you hard copies. - Linda)

Health Care Study and Action Group

Members of the Health Care Study and Action Group were joined by Deborah Rumberger, State League Lobbyist, in a meeting with Commissioner Jane Sauls to discuss the possibility that the State would expand Medicaid to provide health care coverage to uninsured residents with incomes below the Federal Poverty Level. Commissioner Sauls had not heard from any constituents who were concerned about the issue but provided suggestions concerning how to reach community members in her district with information about the Affordable Care Act and the Medicaid expansion.



The Florida House of Representatives' Select Committee on the Implementation of the Affordable Care Act will be meeting on January 9 at 2:30 p.m. in Room 214 of the House Office Building where they will get status reports on insurance issues and changes in Medicaid eligibility determination. Members of the Action Group, and League members in general, are encouraged to attend to stay informed.

The Action Group will begin having regular meetings in January with the first scheduled for January 20 at 2:00 p.m. at Kathy Winn's home (1006 Brookwood Drive). All are welcome to join the Group. For further information, contact Kathy by phone at 766-2612 or via email at kathywinnclan@embarqmail.com.

- Kathy Winn

Local Government Study and Action Group



Local Government Group Members Eat and Drink Their Way Through Discussions of Sales Tax

Members of the Local Government Study & Action Group celebrated the start of the holiday season at the group's December 12 meeting with a great discussion, wine and pastries. You can't beat that for a fulfilling evening! Jan RuBino and Ruth O'Donnell had just attended a long meeting of the Sales Tax Committee, the group developing a slate of projects to be proposed when voters decide whether or not to extend the optional half-cent sales tax, and were able to report on ten of the Imagine Tallahassee economic development projects. We have been following the Imagine Tallahassee project and have reported progress several times in *The Voter*. The presentations at the December 12 meeting were a follow-up to questions asked when all projects were presented earlier. Details on the earlier presentations are available at http://imagineallahassee.com/assets/salestaxdeck_dec5_final.pdf.

Jan and Ruth noticed that several of the projects overlap in services and purpose, a concern also voiced by Sales Tax Committee members. The Sales Tax Committee meets again on January 16 at 9:00 a.m. and will be making decisions about which economic development proposals will go forward.

Proposed Tallahassee Noise Ordinance

Court rulings in December 2012 denied the City of Tallahassee the ability to use state statutes to address noise concerns. This resulted in the current effort to develop a City-specific ordinance. If you want to give the City Commission and staff your opinion about the draft ordinance and you live in the City limits or have a business in or outside the City limits, fill out the brief questionnaire at <http://www.talgov.com/growth/growth-noise-ordinance-survey.aspx>. That web page also links to the full text of the proposed ordinance as well as a summary.

The proposed ordinance identifies sound levels based on the time of day and location. It allows law enforcement to issue warnings and citations, and to regulate special events for noise that exceeds specified decibel levels. During our December meeting, members of the Local Government Group discussed whether the proposed decibel levels are appropriate. For further information about noise levels and the ordinance, view the slideshow presented to the City Commission in June 2013: http://www.talgov.com/Uploads/Public/Documents/growth/pdf/proposed_noise_ord_pres.pdf.

Next Meeting: January 7, 2014, 7:00 -- 8:30 p.m., 3509 Trillium Court

- Ruth O'Donnell

Climate Change and Sustainability Study and Action Group

What should you do with the Christmas tree after the holidays?

You can either put the tree on the curb to be collected and made into mulch, or you can drop the tree off at one of three drop-off locations in town. The trees will be turned into mulch and used on the walking paths at Tallahassee parks. As an alternative for leaving the tree at the curb (or for customers living in an apartment complex), customers can take the tree to the locations listed below. Trees taken to the listed parks will be ground into mulch and used on the walking paths at City parks. You can drop off your tree until January 6th. The three locations are in Tallahassee:

San Luis Park: 1313 San Luis Road, south of West Tharpe Street

Tom Brown Park: 501 Easterwood Drive, across Easterwood Drive from the tennis courts

Myers Park: 907 Myers Park Drive.

Or you can do what we do out here in the country. We add it to one of two trash piles of fallen limbs and trimmed shrubbery and it becomes part of a little habitat for small animals and birds (and probably the occasional snake, though I've never seen one).

- Linda Davis

Look on the [LWVT web site](#) for the sea level change flyer created by the Climate Change and Sustainability S & A Group. The group has been handing out the flyer at the Saturday Downtown Market to aid in educating the public on the dangers of climate change.

Membership Committee



The membership committee is looking for new blood and new ideas. Please join Sharon Russell and Marty Monroe, once a month for no more than 30 minutes. We meet virtually (online). Next year will be another difficult round of election issues and it would be a great opportunity to expand the LWVT base. If you are interested in joining the fun, please contact Marty Monroe at 228-8882.

- Marty Monroe, Co-Chair

OPT OUT - go Green!

If you would like to opt out of the traditional paper Voter (the one that arrives by regular mail), then please send an email to lwvtallahassee@gmail.com with "Opt Out" in the subject line.

VOTER DEADLINE

The next Voter will be the February Voter. The deadline for submission of material is Saturday, February 1. Please e-mail your articles to lgdavis75@gmail.com.
