



# THE VOTER

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TALLAHASSEE

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Tallahassee

Volume 21 Number 8

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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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## Hot Topics Luncheon

### Implementing the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act in Florida: Medicaid Expansion, Exchanges and Strengthening Medicare

What will health care reform look like in Florida as the PPACA is implemented and policy evolves in the Legislature this spring? What will it mean for uninsured citizens, Medicaid and Medicare recipients, you and your family?

We are very pleased to have two guest speakers who will present and address questions on Medicaid Expansion, exchanges and the law's impact on Medicare.

Anne Swerlick is Deputy Director of Advocacy at Florida Legal Services, Inc. For over thirty years she has been advocating on behalf of Medicaid applicants and beneficiaries, including legal representation of individuals on eligibility and coverage issues, as well as legislative and policy advocacy to protect and improve the quality and scope of the program.



Leslie Spencer is an Associate State Director for Advocacy at AARP of Florida, and lead for the Tallahassee Targeted Community. Her primary role is as Field Coordinator for the Tallahassee area. Prior to working for AARP, Leslie worked with the Alzheimer Resource Center in Tallahassee, an agency devoted to caregivers and individuals with Alzheimer's disease. Her experience includes aging research, public policy and coordinator for volunteer activities in the state capitol.

In addition to our speakers, The League of Women Voters of Florida PowerPoint presentation on *Health Care Reform After the Supreme Court Decision: What Does It Mean for You and Your Family?* will begin at 11:00 a.m. to give you an updated overview of the PPACA. And, to thank you for your time and support of this Hot Topics luncheon, we will raffle off several copies of Health Care Reform: What It Is, Why It's Necessary, How It Works by Jonathan Gruber and Nathan Schreiber.

## CALENDAR

5 Tuesday 11:30 a.m.  
City Ethics Advisory Panel, City Hall, Tallahassee Room

11 Monday 2:00 p.m.  
Health Care Group  
Theresa Chase  
2299 Trescott Drive

11 Monday 4:00 p.m.  
Climate Committee  
ReThink Energy Office  
565 E. Tennessee St.

Please join us and bring a friend!

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

Date & Time      March 20, 2013 Wednesday  
11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Location            Capital City Country Club  
1601 Golf Terrace Dr., Tallahassee 32301

12 Tuesday 7:00 p.m.  
Local Gov't Committee  
Ruth O'Donnell  
3509 Trillium Court

Lunch \$20           Grilled seasonal fish or vegetable lasagna, coffee and iced tea

FOR RESERVATIONS      please call 309-3005 or  
email [LWVTallahassee@gmail.com](mailto:LWVTallahassee@gmail.com)

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

Please RSVP by Saturday morning, March 16

Because the League must pay for reservations cancelled after Sunday, March 17, those who cancel late should reimburse the League for their reservation's cost.

14 Thursday  
11:30 a.m.  
City Ethics Advisory  
Panel, City Hall,  
Tallahassee Room

### President's Message

When I moved to Tallahassee from Istanbul, Turkey, in 2001, I sought out the League of Women Voters because--after the 2000 election debacle--I knew I could no longer be exceptional in just my profession and hope that politicians would do the same. It became imperative that I also engage directly in safe guarding democracy. Democracy is a constant vigil.



19 Tuesday 6:00 p.m.  
LWVT Board Meeting  
LWVF Office  
540 Beverly Court

Upon arriving in town, I sent in my membership dues to the League because of my lasting appreciation to the League since they'd mailed me a candidate's guide the first time I voted at age 18 (in California). I became active in the League when I was welcomed to participate in a small study group on election issues (with Ben Wilcox, Marilynn Wills, Norene Chase, Charlene Walker, among others). A couple years later, I took what I learned in that study group and worked for a coalition of voting groups lobbying for election reform at the Legislature. Working for the Florida Voters Coalition, I had the privilege to work side by side with the League's paid advocate--who, having the backing of the Florida League's reputation and great skills of persuasion, was the most effective lobbyist at the Florida Legislature to improve the elections bill that would finally enable all Floridians to vote on durable paper ballots (which can be recounted!).

20 Wednesday  
11:00 a.m.  
Hot Topics Luncheon  
Capital City Country  
Club  
1601 Golf Terrace Dr.

This experience is a large reason I am so committed to the League. The feeling that one is making a difference is very addictive. And the League enables each citizen to directly make a difference on important public policy issues. In League, we benefit from the research and activism of others before us, and we are empowered through opportunities to learn, to be mentored, to figuratively sit at the knee of seasoned and confident citizen advocates.

25 Monday 1:00 p.m.  
CRTPA Meeting  
City Hall, 2nd Floor

During this past election season, I had the privilege to tell many college students about the League. What seemed to pique the students' interest most about League was the opportunity the League provides to learn how to effectively lobby our government. With such a positive response, I began always including citizen advocacy as one way League members can get involved. The response is always one of genuine interest.

26 Tuesday 11:30 a.m.  
City Ethics Advisory  
Panel, City Hall,  
Tallahassee Room

26 Tuesday 11:30 a.m.  
City Ethics Advisory  
Panel, Public Meeting,  
City Commission  
Chambers, City Hall

If you would like to learn more about becoming an effective citizen advocate, or you know a student of any age who wants to be a citizen advocate, whether just beginning on that pursuit or have experience to share with others, then I encourage you to email [lwvtallahassee@gmail.com](mailto:lwvtallahassee@gmail.com) with "Citizen Advocate" in the subject line.

26 Tuesday 6:00 p.m.  
Leon County School  
Board, Howell Center  
3955 W. Pensacola Street

Include in that email a brief note of what you hope to learn or are able to share, as well as the best days and times of the week during which you could attend a workshop. Based upon your responses, we'll convene a workshop this month with Ben Wilcox--current LWVF lobbyist and LWVT member, leading.

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

The workshop will cover both local and state level government: we'll look at laws we've helped get passed; we'll learn how to follow issues mere idea into law; we'll learn how to interpret and how to support League positions on issues. Then we'll team up more experienced Leaguers with the less experienced and meet with elected officials to advocate for positive change in public policy.

It is the perfect time to set out on this journey in Tallahassee because all of our Study and Action Groups, whether Local Government, Education, Health Care, or Sustainability-Climate Change, are actively engaged in shaping our government at the local and state level. At the state level, the LWVT has what we call the Lobby Corps, which supports the Florida League's advocacy efforts at the Capitol. If you are interested in joining Lobby Corps, please let us know that also by emailing [lwvtallahassee@gmail.com](mailto:lwvtallahassee@gmail.com).

I'm in. Are you in? I hope to see you there!

- Rebecca Sager

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**Welcome a New Member:** Commissioner Nancy Miller

### **A Big Thank You to Our WFSU Volunteers**

Thank you to Jalma and Stuart Baker, Janet Findling, Amy Mann, Peggy Ramsey, Jan RuBino, Rebecca Sager, Gaynell Waldo, Marilyn Wills, and Kathy Winn for answering phones at the WFSU fund drive on February 21. And, another big thank you to Mimi Jones and Martha Stewart for representing the League on the air that day.

If you missed your chance to help out, don't despair; there is another spring pledge drive coming up, and your assistance is always welcome.

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### **My League Story**

It was the late M.L. Baker who introduced me to the League. M.L. was chair of the Education Committee so when I mentioned that I had just retired from forty-six years of teaching, she invited me to be her guest at a Hot Topics luncheon. It was impossible to turn down M.L., so I became a member, joining her and the others on the Education Committee. M.L. was an inspiration, adamant about having her members read important books on education by Diane Ravitch, Linda Darling-Hammond and Donald Graves to name a few. When our committee had to present their findings to our Tallahassee League so that they could provide a consensus on the topic of Education, reading those books proved to be an invaluable resource. Now that I am retired, I like being a member of a group that studies and takes a stand on issues important for our democracy.

Shirley Ellis

- story gathered by Martha Stewart

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### **Presidential Proclamation -- Women's History Month, 2013**

For more than two centuries, our Nation has grown under the simple creed that each of us is created equal. It is a notion that makes America unlike any other place on earth -- a country where no matter where you come from or what you look like, you can go as far as your talents will take you.

Women's History Month is a time to remember those who fought to make that freedom as real for our daughters as for our sons. Written out of the promise of the franchise, they were women who reached up to close the gap between what America was and what it could be. They were driven by a faith that our Union could extend true equality to every citizen willing to claim it. Year after year, visionary women met and marched and mobilized to prove what should have been self-evident. They grew a meeting at Seneca Falls into a movement that touched every community and took on our highest institutions. And after decades of slow, steady, extraordinary progress, women have written equal opportunity into the law again and again, giving generations of girls a future worthy of their potential.

That legacy of change is all around us. Women are nearly half of our Nation's workforce and more than half of our college graduates. But even now, too many women feel the weight of discrimination on their shoulders. They face a pay gap at work, or higher premiums for health insurance, or inadequate options for family leave. These issues affect all of us, and failing to address them holds our country back.

That is why my Administration has made the needs of women and girls a priority since day one -- from signing the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act to helping ensure women are represented among tomorrow's top scientists and engineers. It is why we secured stronger protections and more preventive services for women under the Affordable Care Act. It is why we have fought for greater workplace flexibility, access to capital and training for women-owned businesses, and equal pay for equal work. And it is why we have taken action to reduce violence against women at home and abroad, and to empower women around the world with full political and economic opportunity.

Meeting those challenges will not be easy. But our history shows that when we couple grit and ingenuity with our basic beliefs, there is no barrier we cannot overcome. We can stay true to our founding creed that in America, all things should be possible for all people. That spirit is what called our mothers and grandmothers to fight for a world where no wall or ceiling could keep their daughters from their dreams. And today, as we take on the defining issues of our time, America looks to the next generation of movers and marchers to lead the way.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 2013 as Women's History Month. I call upon all Americans to observe this month and to celebrate International Women's Day on March 8, 2013, with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities. I also invite all Americans to visit [www.WomensHistoryMonth.gov](http://www.WomensHistoryMonth.gov) to learn more about the generations of women who have shaped our history.

WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-eighth day of February, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-seventh.

BARACK OBAMA

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## Health Care Action and Study Group

Please plan to come to our next Hot Topics Luncheon, featuring *Implementing the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act in Florida: Medicaid Expansion, Exchanges and Strengthening Medicare*, on March 20 as we join together to share the knowledge and resources gained on this hot topic of health reform. It will be a great opportunity to learn the latest information and be with other wonderful folks like yourself advocating for the people of the Great State of Florida!

- *Health Care Study and Action Group*

Two members of the Health Care Committee attended *Health Care Reform: Legal and Ethical Questions About Where We Go from Here*, a meeting jointly sponsored by the Center for Innovative Collaboration in Medicine and Law and the Florida Bioethics Network on February 4, 2013. Presenters addressed the history of health care reform in the U.S. and the Supreme Court decisions approving the mandate for individual insurance coverage and striking down the requirement for states to expand Medicaid.

- Jill Quadagno, Ph.D., and professor of Sociology at FSU, pointed out that conservatives were for the mandate before they were against it. And the Republican-led Congress developed legislation (call HEART) with

provisions similar to the PPACA in 1993, the year following President Clinton's failed effort.

- Jeff Kahn, J.D., Larson Professor of Law at FSU, pointed out confusing language in the PPACA concerning the mandate and how taxpayers who choose to take the "shared responsibility payment penalty" will be assessed payment by the IRS.
- Mark Seidenfeld, J.D., M.A., recognized as one of the country's leading scholars on federal administrative law, explained that the Medicaid expansion requirement was struck down by the Supreme Court because it was seen as a new program, part of a national program to ensure everyone has health insurance, rather than as an expansion of a health care program for the poor.
- Mark Miller, Esq., with the firm of Holland and Knight LLP, pointed out that some initiatives in the law (such as bundling), designed to decrease cost and improve quality, could actually have the effect of incentivizing providers to order more services and may be at odds with existing laws regarding monopolies and patient choice.
- Ken Brummel-Smith, M.D., from the FSU College of Medicine, highlighted some of the provisions of the PPACA likely to affect seniors.
- Paolo Annino, J.D., Ph.D., of the College of Law, provided a statistic worth remembering: The lives of 5,000 Floridians would be saved each year if Florida expands Medicaid coverage as provided under the law

- Kathy Winn

The Health Care Study and Action Group met on February 25 to discuss the Florida Legislature's Select Committee Meetings on the PPACA, the March Hot Topics on Health Care Reform, and our group's 2013-2014 Program statement in preparation for the annual meeting. The local and state media have written cogently to keep the public up-to-date, but in case you haven't heard over the last month--Governor Scott made a statement of limited support for Medicaid expansion, the insurance exchange in Florida will be run initially by the federal government beginning in October and the Legislature will decide the health law's path in the session days starting on March 5. For some great reporting on implementing the PPACA in Florida and around the country, you can link to [kaiserhealthnews.org](http://kaiserhealthnews.org) and [healthnewsflorida.org](http://healthnewsflorida.org). And don't forget to read the *LWVF Capitol Reports* that are delivered right to your email inbox throughout the session and cover all the League's priorities.

Members also attended the Bloomberg Government Briefing event in association with the Tax Institute at H&R Block on *Implementing the Affordable Care ACT: Enrollment, Education and Taxes* on Feb. 28 to learn how to help uninsured taxpayers gain access to information and enrollment assistance through the partnership of government agencies and private sector entities. More information from this event will be available at our March 20 Hot Topics. And you may link to <http://about.bgov.com/> for reports on the Bloomberg Government events.

The National Health Observance for March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness. For information, please link to <http://www.healthfinder.gov/NHO/>.

A new documentary, *A Place at the Table*, on hunger in America is gaining much media coverage and we encourage you to check it out at <http://www.magpictures.com/aplaceatthetable/> and <http://www.takepart.com/place-at-the-table>. It is a stark reminder of the food insecurity and environment issues brought to our attention by the local Unnatural Causes initiative of 2010 about racial and socio-economic inequities and their links to health disparities.

Attend our next Health Care Group meeting on March 11 at 2:00 p.m. (2299 Trescott Drive) and Hot Topics on March 20 to let us know what you think. Be well.

- Theresa Chase

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## Public Education Study and Action Group

While the official opening of the 2013 Florida legislative session is March 5, committee meetings have been going for

the past three months. Education issues have already figured prominently, and virtual classes and charter schools are just two of the issues being addressed.

Joanne McCall, Vice President of the Florida Teachers Association and Bill Mattox, resident fellow at the James Madison Institute spoke to these issues at our February Hot Topics Supper. Their presentations led to a lively question and answer period.

According to Ms. McCall, charter schools were designed originally for innovation; they were not designed for nonaccountability. She asked the question, "How do you compare the charter school to the traditional public school if they are not held to the same standards?" If public dollars are funding charter schools, then those schools should be held accountable; the public deserves to know. McCall also made mention of the bill currently in the legislature that would allow charter schools to use existing school buildings that are unused or underused; this could be problematic since public dollars paid for the buildings, and some charters are "for-profit" entities. Another issue addressed was the virtual class; the legislature has mandated that every student has to take a virtual class but has not addressed accountability issues. She also addressed the fact that the FCAT concentrated on reading and mathematics, ignoring other courses like art and science. It did not concentrate on developing critical thinking skills, but the change to core curriculum will broaden the scope of courses measured as well as deeper learning. McCall said that the FCAT was originally meant to be used as a diagnostic instrument and not the high stakes test that it has become.

There also seems to be some question on evaluating teachers who do not teach a common core subject; those teachers will be evaluated by a school-wide average. This could have a deleterious effect on teachers who are doing an excellent job of teaching but are in schools that are receiving low grades. Ms. McCall indicated that measures like this are causing student members of the FEA to leave the state for teaching jobs in other states.

Bill Mattox stated that sometimes what is available in the public schools is not what a child needs. He believes that virtual classes and charter schools are innovations designed by "forward thinking policy makers." He stated that the corporate tax scholarships have allowed students to move to "better" schools. Mattox stated that virtual schools had aided students who wanted to spend more time on music and gymnastics training; he had examples of six students who had successfully used virtual classes to complete their high school educations while concentrating on other areas of interest. As some members pointed out, these six students happened to be self-motivated, and this is not always the case with the majority of students.

Mr. Mattox stated that the best education has a child-driven curriculum that tailors education to the needs of the child, offering as many options and choices as possible. One suggestion he gave was that a U.S. history class that would be perfectly suited to a "boys game." He also stated that it is not sinister if a charter school is a for-profit company; he gave the example of textbooks produced by for-profit companies. Mattox says, "Yes to charter schools, Yes to private schools, Yes to digital schools," although he concedes that these are not for everyone.

Mr. Mattox thinks that competition among the types of schools will give us better schools. He agrees that there are problems that have to be worked out, including evaluations of teachers, and the fact that virtual school test taking is not monitored. However, he does support all of the options mentioned earlier including the parent trigger bill.

- Marilyn Wills

## **Local Government Study and Action Group**

The Local Government Study & Action Group met on February 5 at the home of members Jan and Richard RuBino to discuss a request from the Leon County Manager's office regarding presenting the County's annual report to Tallahassee League members. Readers may recall that a similar presentation was made at a Hot Topics last year. While we thought that presentation interesting, we are more interested in learning about future plans than hearing a report of past progress. At the suggestion of President Rebecca Sager, we are proposing a joint presentation where the Tallahassee City Manager and Leon County Manager can educate league members about current and planned issues and actions each of the two local governments is experiencing. Planning for an event of this type is in process.

We continue to follow the work of the City of Tallahassee appointed Ethics Panel and our group will be represented at their next meeting. Integrity Florida is a group with which we intend to make contact. We also want to find out if the state League is pursuing the ethics issue in any way.

Richard RuBino reported on a Florida Planners Association meeting he attended where several items of proposed legislation related to the authority of local government were discussed. One of them narrows the permissible options regarding mobility planning. Another would place some growth management regulations into "hibernation" for a few years in the hopes of improving Florida's economy. Both of these are of concern and we will be learning more later. Richard also attended a Tallahassee-Leon County Planning Commission meeting just prior to our meeting so he was able to provide up-to-date information on the status of comprehensive plan amendment requests related to land use. He provided out an excellent handout describing the amendment process.

John Lorenz brought an opinion article in the Miami Herald about a judicial decision, *Fred Grimm: Turns Out, Unseemly Practices Aren't Illegal for Developers*, to the group's attention (<http://www.miamiherald.com/2013/02/02/3214501/fred-grimm-turns-out-unseemly.html>). We had a lively discussion about the author's points, mainly that a judge said some actions taken by developers to get what they want, may not be right but they aren't illegal. We continue to be amazed at what developers get away with in our state!

The group heard from Crystal Jones, FSU Intern about the training sessions provided by Rebecca Sager, Ruth O'Donnell and Richard RuBino and that she is now prepared to begin observing, either in recorded format or in person.

Our next meeting is scheduled for March 12, 7:00 PM at Ruth O'Donnell's home (3509 Trillium Court). This is a schedule change from the March 5 date we agreed to at our meeting.

- Ruth O'Donnell

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## Climate Change and Sustainability Study and Action Group

Our group has met twice with stimulating discussions on the direction we can take for a study and action issue. We have scheduled our next meeting on March 11, 2013, at 4:00 p.m., 565 East Tennessee Street, the ReThink Energy office across from Leon High School. Join us as we plan our study and action item. Many of us are interested in promoting solar energy; two interesting reports on utilizing more solar energy in Sacramento, California, and Boulder, Colorado, have been presented.

In the meantime you can review these energy saving tips from [www.USA.gov](http://www.USA.gov):

1. Caulk and weather-strip areas of your home to prevent air leaks.
2. Let natural light from the sun into your home during the day by opening your curtains. Sunlight will naturally help heat your home.
3. Install a programmable thermostat or set your current thermostat about 10 to 15 degrees lower than normal for the hours when you won't be in your home.
4. Turn down the temperature of your water heater; heating water can make up 14 to 25 percent of your energy bill.
5. Air dry your laundry outside when possible. You can save energy and up to \$20.00 a month by doing so.

- Dot Skofronick

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## 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 [lvwtallahassee@gmail.com](mailto:lvwtallahassee@gmail.com) with "Opt Out" in the subject line.

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## VOTER DEADLINE

The April Voter deadline for submission of material is March 29. Please e-mail your articles to [lgdavis75@gmail.com](mailto:lgdavis75@gmail.com).

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