

THE FLORIDA VOTER

The League of Women Voters of Florida
Volume 56, Issue 5 Winter Edition



ADVOCATES

2009 PRIORITIES

GOVERNMENT IN FLORIDA • HEALTH CARE • EDUCATION

Assess Develop Validate Organize Communicate Act Testify Educate Shape

Two and a half days of round-the-clock presentations and meetings with state leaders, and those who influence them, await you in Tallahassee at the LWVF 2009 Legislative Seminar on March 22-24, 2009. Members of the Senate, House, lobbyists, and others on the "inside" will help us learn more about key issues impacting our communities and affecting the quality of life across the state.

The 2009 LWVF Legislative Seminar is designed to help us become better educated on the LWVF program positions and Legislative Priorities. Two outstanding workshops have been scheduled for Sunday afternoon. First, Ken Brummel-Smith, M.D., Florida State College of Medicine will speak and provide a power point presentation on HEALTH CARE that our president, Marilyn Wills states, is "not to be missed." Immediately following, we'll get the latest information on EDUCATION from Drs. Frances Haightcock, Chancellor of Public Schools and Willis Holcombe, Chancellor of the Community College System with the Florida Department of Education. The popular "Making Connections" discussion group hosted by LWVF Directors and Membership Chairs, Deirdre Macnab and Pamela Goodman, brings together League members from across the state for an informal time to meet and share successes following the reception and dinner on Sunday evening.

The LWV of Tallahassee is "Host League" for the annual opening reception and dinner at the exciting Paradigm Restaurant. You will have an opportunity to meet the new lobbyist from WildLaw, Heather Walker, who will discuss key issues for the League to focus on regarding our priorities during the 2009 Legislative Session.

Monday morning's session in the Capitol Cabinet Room provides the opportunity to receive answers to YOUR questions about LWVF Legislative Priorities and other issues of importance. Members of the Senate, Representatives, lobbyists, LWVF leadership, and others on the inside will discuss key issues facing the state. After a short Dutch treat lunch, off we trek to spend the afternoon at the State House lobbying local delegations and attending scheduled House and Senate committee meetings. A reception/dinner will take place at the Doubletree Hotel Tallahassee on Monday evening featuring a keynote speaker. We say farewell at a Tuesday Breakfast in the historic Governor's Club with our last guest speaker. You, however, can spend the rest of the day with more lobbying, attending committee meetings or possibly a floor session. Announcement of confirmed guest speakers will be posted on our web site at www.lwvfla.org.

Legislative Seminar registration fee is \$150/person, inclusive, due at the LWVF office by March 17. Registrations received by March 8, qualify for a \$10 per person discount. After March 17, the registration fee rises to \$160/per person but you can reserve and pay at the door. Take advantage of the discount and register early at \$140/per person by March 8. The registration form for the seminar is included in this issue.

You will make your room reservations directly with the beautiful Doubletree Hotel Tallahassee, 101 South Adams Street, Tallahassee at **1-800-222-8733**. The hotel is offering a special room rate of \$157.00 + tax per night, single or double, with a two night minimum requirement. **Hotel reservation cut off date is Thursday, February 19, 2009. CALL TODAY!**

**The League of Women Voters
of Florida**

Volume 56, Issue 5 Winter 2008
Published Quarterly

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Established in 1939, the League of Women Voters of Florida is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages citizens to play an informed and active role in government. At the local, state and national levels, the League works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. Any person of voting age, male or female, may join the League. All members receive the National VOTER, Florida VOTER, and the VOTER of their local League.

President's Perspective

Marilynn Wills

Yes, League Members, the general election is over, and, happily for the Florida Division of Elections, our state did not make the national news.

While, the expected turnout of 85% did not materialize in Florida, 75% of Florida voters did cast a vote on November 4. Conventional wisdom indicated that the makeup of the turnout would not change dramatically. However, Project Vote analyses show that, nationally, African-Americans, Latinos, and young voters cast millions more ballots in 2008 than in 2004.

In Florida, the total increase in ballots cast was 813,424, a 10% increase from 2004. Increases occurred in the White, African-American, and Latino voting groups. Sounds good, doesn't it? Well, there is one group where Florida did not show an increase, but, instead, showed a decrease of 31,000 votes – the 18-29 or Youth vote. This occurred, even though there was an increase in new voters in the state; perhaps, increasing civics education in our schools would help to alleviate this problem.

Another interesting set of statistics from the Florida Secretary of State's website: Twenty five of the forty State Senate seats are uncontested, and 44 of the 120 House seats are uncontested.

Also, thirteen years after the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) was enacted, only a handful of states are consistently complying with the requirement to offer voter registration help to clients and applicants of public assistance programs.

So, while our efforts during the past election season are commendable, the League of Women Voters of Florida still has a great deal of work to do. Our legislative priorities include election reform, civics, and redistricting, and we need the help of all League members to achieve our goals.



Marilynn

LWVF STATEMENT OF 2009 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Marilynn Wills

The LWVF has selected Legislative Priorities for the 2009 Regular Session of the Florida Legislature.

Government: Promote an open government that is responsive to the people of the state.

Finance and Taxation: Support a state fiscal structure that is equitable in its distribution of the tax responsibility and responsive to public needs.

Redistricting: Support single-member election districts that are equal in population, provide access for minorities, and are not determined by the Legislature.

Citizen Initiatives including the Statutory Initiative: Support citizens' right to have both constitutional and statutory initiatives.

Election Law: Promote integrity of process for matching voters to statewide database under HAVA; support automatic restoration of voting rights for felons who have been released from prison.

Education in Florida: Support for a free public school system for Florida with high standards for student achievement and with equality of education opportunity for all.

Funding: Support adequate funding for the public school system,

Accountability: Support a reliable accountability system that measures the achievement of all students whose education is provided by public expenditures.

Civics Education: Promote the extension of the civics education requirement.

Social Policy in Florida: Secure equal rights and equal opportunity for all. Promote social and economic justice, and the health and safety of all Americans.

Health Care: Support a health care system that provides access to a basic level of quality health care for all Florida residents and controls health care costs.

Tidbits from Tallahassee

By Peg McGarity, Executive Director



Welcome to 2009. With the beginning of a new calendar year we are just about three quarters of the way through our League year. So far our League year has been an exciting and productive time with one of the highlights of extending a warm welcome to the LWV of Osceola County, our new State League, MAL Unit.

LWVUS President Mary Wilson made an overwhelmingly successful "Visit to Florida" to promote the LWVUS public service spots that appeared on Miami, Tampa and Jacksonville busses featuring Vote411.org as a one-stop-shop for election information. She met with local and state election officials, and reached out to voters and the media with important voter education messages. The LWV of Miami-Dade County, Palm Beach County, Hillsborough County, St. Petersburg Area, North Pinellas County, Jacksonville/First Coast and Tallahassee are commended for their exceptional efforts of hosting events, scheduling appointments and media interviews for President Wilson's visit. What a great

team effort.

With the 2008 partnership and financial support of The American Express Foundation, FLAME (Florida Lawyers Association for the Maintenance of Excellence), BankAtlantic Foundation, and AutoNation, the League of Women Voters of Florida Education Fund more than doubled the distribution of the 2008 Special Election Edition of *The Florida Voter*. We applaud our corporate partners for their commitment to help improve the quality of life and build our communities across the state through knowledge, education and participation. The project was an overwhelming success with all 28 local Leagues participating in the publication distribution and the expansion of distribution in 13 new county areas across the state.

The state office is starting the new calendar year preparing for the January 31, 2009 LWVUS Membership Database update, opening of the 2009 Legislative Session on March 3, 2009, the 2009 LWVF Legislative Seminar on March 22-24, 2009 in Tallahassee and the 2009 Convention in Jacksonville on May 15-17 2009. Please visit our website at www.lwvfla.org for on going, current updates.

The state office mission is to provide prompt and courteous service to local Leagues, the LWVF and LWVFEF Board of Directors, LWVUS, the business community, groups/organizations, and all citizens both locally and across the state. Please contact us with any thoughts you may have that can help us serve you better.

The greatest highlight of the year so far is the increase in the League of Women Voters of Florida membership. The fantastic membership recruitment programs local Leagues have implemented are really working. Congratulations on a job well done local Leagues.

2009: A New Record for Florida LWV MEMBERSHIP GROWTH? JUST ASK!

By Deirdre Macnab, State Membership Director, LWVF

"Have you ever considered joining the League?" Yes, it's these words exactly that bring more new members than any other. How often have you uttered them to your friends and family? Over and over, it is the personal ask that gets our members to join. How can you tell if a friend or family member is a prospect? Do they read the paper? Like to talk politics and policy? Do they read news magazines...are they interested in statistics and deeper background on public challenges and problems? If so, pretty good chance that they'll be interested!

Invite them to your League's HOT TOPICS to hear one of your speakers. And if your League doesn't have a monthly HOT TOPICS program, think about being the catalyst that starts one!

In several counties, Leon, Orange, The Villages, and many others, the monthly program is a great drawing card for members, and a rallying point for bringing in new faces and new energy.

Let's not waste any opportunity when we are gathered at candidate forums, luncheons, parties -- just ask if they know about the League and would like to learn more?

I have seen firsthand locally in our League the friendships that flourish and last through the years, with annual trips taken together, luncheons and book groups formed, all from friendships started in the League.

As one woman said, when she moved to our city, her mother insisted: "If you want to meet the interesting people, you must join the League!" She did, and now an active member, has thoroughly enjoyed the friendships she's made, the knowledge she's gained, and the difference she's made.

Don't delay, invite your friends and family this year to join one of the most trusted non profit organizations in the country. From helping Florida legislate a paper trail, to ensuring fair elections, better public schools, and a whole host of changes, you help your friends leave their most lasting and treasured legacies...a better community for all. Just ask them to join!

Welcome Heather Walker

LWVF is pleased to welcome Heather Walker as our professional lobbyist. Heather is an attorney with Wildlaw and will be leading our lobbying effort in Tallahassee. Heather is also a member of the LWVF and, until recently, resided in the Orlando area.



C. Heather Walker grew up in Orlando, FL. She received a B.A. with honors from the University of Florida dual majoring in Political Science and Economics. She went on to graduate magna cum laude from the Georgetown University Law Center. While a law student, she served on the editorial board for the International Business Law and Policy Journal and was recognized as an expert in the field of the law of outer space by the legal advisory group for the United Nations. Heather also interned at the Department of Justice and at the Federal Communication Commission. During her internships, she helped develop federal policies for the "No Call" list, 3G spectrum sales, cell phone E911 location rules, and international payment rules. After graduating, she stayed in D.C. and worked for a few years at a K Street law firm advocating on domestic and international communications issues at several federal agencies and on Capitol Hill.

Since moving back to Florida several years ago she has worked with several non-profits to advance policy initiatives. Most recently, she helped the Florida Alliance for Healthy Indoor Environments develop the *Green Cleaning for Your Institute* program to prevent harm in our schools and government offices. Heather also served as an adjunct and a visiting law professor at Barry University Law School and at Rollins College.

Again, we extend a big welcome to Heather and a reminder to all League members that the amount of contract time we can extend to Heather depends on the amount of Lobby Fund money we raise. You should have received a LWVF Lobby Fund solicitation letter recently; if you have not yet made a donation, please do so today.

2009 Legislative Seminar Sunday, March 22 – Tuesday, March 24, 2009

League of Women Voters of _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

E-mail _____

Portfolio _____

First time at Seminar? Yes No

Amount enclosed \$ _____

Guest Meals:	Sunday 03/22/09	Dinner \$45.00
	Monday 03/23/09	Dinner \$45.00
	Tuesday 03/24/09	Breakfast \$30.00

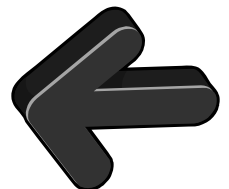
REGISTRATION FEE

By March 8, 2009	\$140
March 9 to March 17, 2009	\$150
After March 17, 2009	\$160

**Cancelled registration
subject to a \$25 processing fee**

Hotel reservations must be made directly with the Doubletree Hotel Tallahassee, 101 South Adams Street, Tallahassee, FL 32301 **by Thursday, February 19, 2009.**
Tel: **1-800-222-8733**. Room rate, single or double, \$157+tax per night. Minimum two nights stay required.
Tell them you are with the League of Women Voters.

**Complete this form and send with your check for the amount due to:
League of Women Voters of Florida
540 Beverly Court, Tallahassee, Florida 32301**



In the news...

Former LWVF President and present LWVUS Board member **Dianne Wheatley-Giliotti** has the National Voter Service portfolio. LWVF Treasurer and Lee County member **Clara Anne Graham** has been appointed to the LWVUS Climate Change Committee.

Jeanne Zokovitch, LWVF lobbyist for the past four years, is now on the staff of the Barry University Law School in Orlando. Jeanne is developing their Environmental Law Program. We are sorry to lose her but wish her well in her new endeavor.

League member **Charlene Walker** has moved from Tallahassee to Lake County and will be an LWVF Off Board Director for Transportation.

Executive Director **Peg McGarity** and President **Marilynn Wills** attended the PAVP conference in Lansdowne, Virginia where they worked on CAPWIZ, NOI(online advocacy), and Voter Service. Florida is one of several states receiving a grant from LWVUS through the Public Advocacy for Voter Protection (PAVP) project; the LWVUS continues to work with participating state Leagues in fighting efforts that would disenfranchise eligible citizens

League of Women Voters Local Leagues' 2008 Election Reflection!

BROWARD LEAGUE SHARES ELECTION FRENZY WITH RUSSIAN DELEGATES

Election cycles always bring out commitment and activism in the local leagues. Last winter as the Broward league revved up for an election to be well documented in history books, our membership planned and implemented important efforts in voter education and registration. Programs were developed and directed towards our growing immigrant population. We readily identified the Hispanic and Haitian communities. Through various meetings with the SOE offices and local neighborhood groups we learned how increasingly multiethnic our county has become. The League addressed the absolute need to establish an ongoing system to provide civic education for our new neighbors and first time voters. MY VOTE MY VOICE was presented at public libraries starting this summer. As a result, the League continued to learn more about our community and US Governance. We addressed a wide variety of questions and concerns from our multiethnic nationals.

Late March, Cynthia Hollar approached the Board regarding interest in participating in The Open World Leadership Center Hosting program. Open World (www.openworld.gov) is a congressional committee designed to engage emerging leaders from former Soviet Republics in conversations and relationships with US citizens. The 2008 program theme was "Accountable Governance." Russian delegates were chosen based on their commitments to further reform of the new Russia democracy by exchanging views with American counterparts and by gaining a clearer understanding of the relationships between the various branches of US government. Open World set extensive parameters which included interactions on the federal, state and local government levels, with civic organizations, with NGOs and in intimate family stays. Cynthia agreed to administer the program and spent the next seven months committed to developing a program not only to address all this but also to afford opportunities for our guests to savor South Florida culture and social activities.

On October 31st, Karp Didenko, Oksana Kurovskaya, Olga Kuznetsova, Andrey Starkov and Roman Shikin arrived. The League welcomed our delegates at a reception at the Home of Timothy and Joyce Cross. Hal and Marcia Barham graciously provided an early Thanksgiving celebration. The delegates' immediate and continued enthusiasm regarding our election was electrifying. Non stop days afforded them an intimate first hand view of this historic American election. And it blessed us with a dearer appreciation of our rights and our dedication to protect these rights and privileges.

Cynthia's unending commitment to the project secured access to the SOE throughout election day, a complete day committed to local governance hosted by Coral Springs, and a day learning about county administration. Nova University generously provided a day dedicated to higher education and service delivery including developing and implementing long distance education. Mitch Berger and Leonard Samuels discussed electoral law. Rep. Ari Porth, Cindy Seltzer from Children's Service council, students from Kid's Voting, the staffs of both Becon TV and National Public Broadcasting's WPBT, Mike Mayo, GOTV, and Superintendent Notter, all generously gave of their time.

Exhausted, eight days later, I wonder whose opportunity, whose education was greatest. These leaders dedicated to the recently democratized Russia had opportunities to be in the midst of a great election; to watch, question, photograph lines, reflect and cheer our president elect. They interacted with elected officials and leaders throughout Broward county; freely asking for information on issues important to their homeland communities and their form of governance. They openly discussed current and past Russian philosophies with American counterparts. And of course they savored our beaches, our shops and some relaxed social discourse over good meals or in a comfy chair at the end of the day. So yes, they reaped a great deal and were sincerely appreciative. All of those mentioned above and numerous others involved most certainly came away with a sense of intrigue. As for me, my new friends have challenged me to a renewed view and understanding of governance. I enjoy a sense of pride being reassured that free and democratic nations can lead the world forward into extended peace and prosperity. Nations and people willing to work in accountable and transparent ways, to teach one another and share experiences, to accept and respect one another will most certainly be able to travel together towards an ever improving future. Thank you Cynthia Hollar and the 2008 South Florida Open World Delegation.

Alice Levy
VP Administration, LWV Broward

Lobby Fund Donors (March 5 to December 1) Your contribution to the Lobby Fund, at any level, supports engaging a professional to represent league issues to the Florida Legislature and the Administration. The strength of our voice at the Capitol depends upon our finances. * Denotes Multiple Donations

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In support of conservation, you may make your LF or EF donation by credit card at our secure website www.lwvfla.org

Education Fund Donors (March 5 to December 1) Your tax deductible contribution to the Education Fund, at any level, supports our non-partisan education activities...our voter services programs; our conferences; our publications and our assistance to local Leagues. *Denotes multiple donations

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Kay E. Burk	Betty Gabryshak	Joan Langley	Florence Neidig	Sherry Schnee	Gertrude Winsberg
A. Lee Burns	Esther Goldstein	Dina Lareau	B. Neurohr	Valerie Schweppe	Robert Wilfong
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Terry Coble	Priscilla Griffith*	Doris Lindsay*	Leonore & John Patterson	Tracy Siani	Carole Wright*
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SPOTLIGHT On Local Leagues

Osceola County held two forums for local candidates -- one for those elected by Districts or Seats and one for county-wide candidates. These were our first efforts at forums and were held at the public library with lunch provided at no cost. We also went to Valencia Community College to do an informational session on the Constitutional Amendments and also attended their candidate's hobnob.

Villages/Tri-County Area MAL cosponsored a tri-county local candidates forum in conjunction with the Lake County League and AAUW. Of the 31 local tri-county area candidates on the ballot, 25 were in attendance. Close to 250 people were in the audience. We distributed close to 4,000 Special Election Editions of the Florida VOTER throughout Marion & Sumter Counties. Pretty good for a small group!

St. Lucie County did a television show addressing all the amendments and a forum with the candidates. It was on all local stations 3 times a day everyday. We had a local number to call the LWV if you needed more information and the response was very strong!

Collier County had over 4000 visits to their website in October and included their candidate forums on the site for viewing **LWV Sarasota County**, in addition to numerous candidate forums for local and state races, voter registrations, amendment presentations, and a radio interview, put on 3 Candidate Fairs. They did one Fair for the primary election and then two, one in the north and one in the south ends of our county, for the general election. These were supported by a grant from the Sarasota Gulf Gate Rotary and the help of the Friends of Gulf Gate Library. The events provided both the formal question/answer format and a more informal setting for one-on-one conversations for citizens and candidates.

LWV of Volusia County participated in many Voter Service activities this past election season, including the education of voters on the State Constitutional Amendments that were on this year's ballot to a wide variety of organizations. We are also proud of our work organizing televised candidate forums of selected local races with WDSC, PBS channel 15, Daytona State College, working with the Volusia County Department of Elections with absentee ballots and providing candidate information to voters on our Website featuring candidates' responses to questionnaires that we sent to them.

The LWV of Miami-Dade County conducted a series of forums and speaking engagements designed to explain the lengthy ballot questions to the electorate. On October 15th, we held a well-attended Hot Topics luncheon on the six proposed state constitutional amendments on the ballot. Our president spoke on radio talk shows regarding pro and con arguments for each amendment, and we presented at retirement communities and churches. We also distributed the Special Election Edition of The Florida Voter to patrons of all local public libraries through the Miami-Dade County library system.

Orange County League had 400,000 hits on Website for October, 11 billboards donated by Fry Hammond Barr and Bighthouse for www.VOTEANYWHERE.ORG campaign, two Adopt a precinct projects raising \$2,500, 3 Voter HOTLINE panels staffed by LWVOC aired on Channel 6 and 2 and 35 candidate forums!

Palm Beach County made speaking presentations to close to 100 organizations on the amendments and ran a Voter Service Hot Line for the two weeks preceding the election!

A unique partnership among the **Space Coast League**, Brevard Community College (BCC), *Florida Today* and the Tiger Bay Club yielded televised and streaming video of county, state and congressional candidate forums. Live audiences participated by submitting their questions to the moderator. Bringing these forums into citizen's homes ensures that voters have access to live candidate debates up close and personal, thereby enabling them to make informed decisions.

The **Tallahassee League** in conjunction with WFSU-TV again sponsored Bandwagons for the primary and general elections for candidates from Wakulla, Leon and Gadsden counties. These programs have an old time air about them where candidates give three minute stump speeches and have up to ten supporters cheering and waving banners for the camera. This was the first year that candidates from other counties were given the opportunity to participate. The raising of funds by Adopt-a-Precinct activities allowed the League to purchase four billboards in the city of Tallahassee promoting VOTE411.org. Voters were directed to the Tallahassee League website for a voter's guide that included photos, bios, answers to questions posed by League members and the opportunity to watch a clip from that candidate's appearance on Bandwagon. During the month of October and the early part of November, the website had over 93,000 hits.



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF FLORIDA
540 BEVERLY COURT,
TALLAHASSEE, FL 32301-2506

Telephone: 1-850-224-2545
Fax: 850-222-4485
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