



THE FLORIDA VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF FLORIDA

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Long-time League Members Jean Seigfried and Linda Chapin taking time to enjoy the environment that we all work so hard to protect. (Sandhill Crane Trip, January 2010)

How To Go Green — Florida Style

By Martha Musgrove, Associate Editor, www.FloridaThinks.com

Florida is the “Sunshine State.” That’s our brand. It’s been marketed to tourists since the 1880s. We know sun and what it can do for the economy. So, why is Florida stuck in the Dark Ages when it comes to using the sun to meet energy needs? State utilities spent \$1.56 billion in 2008, for example, to import 22 million tons of coal to fire up power plants.

Wouldn’t it be better to have a mix of renewable energy sources?

Just 2 percent of the Sunshine State’s power comes from renewable energy sources. To begin catching up with the rest of the world, the Legislature should do three things:

- Mandate a renewable-energy standard, just as it previously mandated an energy conservation and efficiency standard.
- Authorize a system for pricing carbon, and
- Allow investor-owned utilities to recover costs.

More than 30 states have adopted laws requiring investor-owned electric utilities to use more wind, biomass and solar. Florida is not one of those states.

Gov. Charlie Crist began calling for a standard and emissions trading system in 2007, linking them to a reduction

of emissions of greenhouse gases. Florida’s House and Senate have since been unable to agree on a standard.

This year’s renewable energy bill was entangled in a clamor by Republicans in the legislative leadership to also open the state’s coastal waters to oil drilling. The blowout of the BP well ended the drilling debate – at least temporarily – and stranded renewable energy standards.

When it comes to power, politics, rate hikes and subsidies, says Barry Moline, executive director of the Florida Municipal Electric Association, “You have to work out a deal that takes into account the existing utility infrastructure.”

Florida’s existing “utility infrastructure” runs on natural gas, oil and coal. The Legislature allowed companies to pass oil-price hikes on to their customers. Clean renewable fuels are more expensive than these fossil fuels, but

the Legislature, so far, has not authorized investor utilities to recoup these additional costs from customers.

Yet, monetary incentives like that do work. After the 2008 Legislature voted to allow companies to recover construction costs of solar facilities, for example, Florida Power & Light – now named NextEra Energy – built three solar-generating centers, putting 110 megawatts on line. The company is now the nation’s largest producer of wind and solar power.

The rap against solar is that it costs too much and requires a back-up system for cloudy days. But after amortizing installation costs, solar becomes one of the cheapest sources of power, requiring no additional fuel and producing no emissions, says NextEra spokesman Jose Suarez. NextEra CEO Lew Hay endorses setting up a national renewable-energy standard and emissions-trading system to set a price on carbon, “Right now carbon is not priced, which makes fossil-fuel generation look artificially cheap.”

Mandating use of renewable energy sources is considered a necessary bridge to achieving any large-scale re-balancing of energy sources. A renewable energy standard, however, is not the only truss available. Another is the “feed-in tariff,” adopted in 63 countries, including most of Europe. Utilities using a feed-in tariff determine what price they are willing to pay to buy power and then contract with generators to provide it, i.e. “feed-in,” power to their systems.

Gainesville Regional Utilities became the first U.S. utility to adopt a feed-in tariff, specifically aiming to boost the use of solar power. It now buys from about 40 providers, who have installed photovoltaic panels atop roofs.

The guaranteed payment to contract generators is about twice what the utility charges its customers. It is willing to cover the difference, because using solar energy re-

duces its polluting emissions from its fossil-fueled power plant, and it anticipates a day when it may have to pay for such emissions through a carbon tax. In 2013 it will bring on line a 100-megawatt biomass generator, fired by wood waste, to replace coal-burning units. Municipally owned, it isn’t required to get Public Service Commission ap-

proval to raise rates but it has warned customers to expect “small increases.”

In Florida, we know renewable energy sources are readily available. What we don’t know is when “green, baby, green” will sound better to our politicians than “drill, baby, drill.”

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Legislative Session 2010: The League's Voice is Heard

by Ben Wilcox

Most disappointing with the recent legislative session, is that other than adopt a new gambling pact with the Seminole Indians, the legislature did nothing to put the state on a more sustainable path in the future. Next year, the stimulus funds will no longer be available leaving the state facing a \$6 billion deficit. That does not include the potential revenue hit the state could take from the oil leak in the gulf. Despite urging from the League, the legislature refused to consider repealing special interest tax exemptions on items like bottled water and Internet sales. And even though the state is facing increasingly difficult economic times, the legislature created more tax exemptions for the sale of yachts, private airplanes and professional sporting events.

At this time, there has been final action on all of the issues that fall under the League's priorities. This turned out to be a very good year for the League in the Florida legislature, primarily because of Governor Crist's willingness to veto bad legislation.

The League's voice was heard as the Governor vetoed HB 1143 (which would have restricted women's reproductive choices), SB6 (the teacher compensation bill), as well as the "pay to play" slush fund bill. The League played an important role in encouraging passage of the bi-partisan Sandra Day O'Connor bill, which strengthens civics education in middle schools.

Fair Districts

The one exception is the legislature's placement of amendment 7 on the November ballot following the FairDistricts-Florida amendments 5 and 6. The League strived to find enough votes to prevent passage of this legislation, but the

leadership of each chamber was able to lock down most of their members and pass the bill by the required 3/5ths vote. It goes directly to the ballot with no chance of a veto by the Governor.

The proposed constitutional amendment would basically nullify the FairDistrictsFlorida amendments 5 and 6 if adopted by voters. The amendment says "communities of common interests may be respected and promoted." This provision would in effect allow the legislature to justify gerrymandering or manipulating district lines for political purposes. It also requires the legislature to give priority to the standards contained in the legislature's amendment over the standards in the FairDistricts-Florida amendments.

Joining the League in opposition to this proposed amendment are a number of allies including the NAACP. Like the Fair Districts amendments, amendment 7 will also have to be adopted by the voters, but it is misleading and difficult to understand its true intent. The League, along with the NAACP and others, have filed a legal challenge that seeks to have amendment 7 removed from the ballot because it purports to do something that it doesn't really do. By placing the amendment after the Fair Districts amendments 5 and 6, the legislative leadership is hoping people will think it also reforms the redistricting process when in fact it really preserves the status quo. The League is hopeful the courts will agree that amendment 7 is deceptive and strike it from the ballot.

Campaign Finance Reform

Another victory for the League was passage of campaign finance reform legislation that will restore some reporting and disclosure requirements for what's known as Electioneering Communication Organizations or ECO's. These political committees typically have nice sounding names like "The Committee for Florida's Future," but in reality they allow people to raise unlimited amounts of money and run political advertising with no accountability. In 2008, a judge struck down the ECO reporting requirements because they were too broad. Passage of HB 131 restores some of those requirements for the 2010 election.

The legislature passed a bill early in the session that contained the ECO reporting requirements, but also would have recreated "Leadership Funds." These are new campaign finance accounts controlled by legislative leaders. The legislation would have allowed legislative leaders to solicit and accept unlimited amounts of contributions from special

interests at any time during the year, even during the legislative session. The League felt this bill would have encouraged "pay-to-play" politics and led the charge, resulting in Governor Crist's veto. Later legislation provided much needed disclosure requirements.

Additional Bills

The two bills that would allow state funded vouchers to go to private schools died in the Rules Committees of both Houses. The Florida Supreme Court has ruled that vouchers to private and parochial schools are unconstitutional. The proposed legislation which the League opposed would have changed the Constitution to allow this practice.

The so-called Taxpayer Bill of Rights or TABOR, introduced by Senator Haridopolos, would have required state government to follow a strict formula for raising and spending funds. The League opposed this legislation in committee, where it died.

The League also opposed Senate Bill 6 which would have tied teacher pay raises to student test scores, rather than degrees earned or years of experience. It also would have abolished the program that rewards teachers for becoming National Board Certified. The bill was passed by the legislature, but Governor Crist vetoed it after the League and others voiced their opposition.

Environmental Issues

For issues affecting the environment, 2010 was a mixed bag. On a positive note, the budget includes \$15 million in funding for Florida Forever, the state's premiere land buying program and \$10 million for Everglades restoration. Also passed at the last minute was Senate Bill 550 which seeks to add new protections for Florida's water resources.

At the urging of the League and others, Governor Crist vetoed a bad bill that would have required all substantive rules adopted by agencies like the Environmental Regulation Commission and the Department of Community Affairs to be ratified by the legislature. The bill would have delayed rule implementation and given the legislature the ability to override rules it didn't like.

The legislature failed to act on a bill to provide incentives to energy companies to develop sustainable energy resources, yet in the House of Representatives, a number of committee meetings were held to lay the groundwork for a bill that would allow offshore oil and gas drilling off Florida's coast. The bill was never voted on because Senate President Atwater wanted to take a more cautious approach. The League was prepared to oppose the legislation if it had come up in committee.

The failure by the legislature to "reauthorize" the Department of Community Affairs has the most potential for environmental harm. The agency, which regulates growth in the state, will continue to exist in "limbo" for another year, but it will be much more vulnerable to elimination, dismantlement and political pressure next year. The League will continue to advocate for the reauthorization of the Department of Community Affairs whenever possible. •

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"Thanks very much to all League members who helped us in our advocacy efforts this year. Our success is due to you." — Ben Wilcox, LWVF Lobbyist

League Files Suit to Stop Legislature's "Poison Pill" Amendment 7

In May, the Florida NAACP, Florida League of Women Voters, and Democracia Ahora filed suit in Tallahassee, seeking the removal of a misleading ballot amendment, Amendment 7 from the November ballot. This "poison pill" amendment, placed on the ballot by Tallahassee politicians, is a brazen attempt by those in power to continue their absolute control of the redistricting process. Amendment 7 parades as an amendment measure to create "standards" for the legislature to follow when they draw their own district lines and those of congressional districts. But in reality the legislature's amendment is an attempt to eliminate all rules and give the politicians free reign to draw districts that only serve to protect their own political futures. It is intentionally written to fool voters about its chief purpose and true effect.

Amendment 7 was passed in direct response to the placement of two citizen-initiated amendments on the ballot, FairDistricts Amendments 5 and 6. These two amendments will create real mandatory and enforceable standards for redistricting at the legislative and congressional level. Amendments 5 and 6 will prohibit the current practice of drawing districts to favor an incumbent or political party. By placing Amendment 7 on the ballot, a majority of the legislators proved beyond a reasonable doubt that they want to continue to use redistricting as their own personal political, incumbent protection plan.

"Amendment 7 is a sham. In placing it on the ballot, the Legislature wants the people to think it does one thing when it clearly does another. While FairDistricts Amendments 5 and 6 contain mandatory and enhanced protections for minority voters,

Amendment 7 makes those protections optional. The potential impact of Amendment 7 on minority voters in the state of Florida is deeply troubling," says Adora Obi Nweze, President of the Florida NAACP and plaintiff in the case.

Deirdre Macnab, State President of the Florida League of Women Voters and a fellow plaintiff says, "These legislators claim that Amendment 7 is needed to 'clarify' provisions of the FairDistricts Amendments 5 and 6. But that claim is deceptive and false. They are just trying to hold on to their power."

"The present system was designed by those 'in power'. So, it would be no surprise that those in power placed Amendment 7 on the ballot to confuse voters to try to hold on to that power," says former State Comptroller, General Bob Milligan. Milligan is also a plaintiff in the suit.

"Our forefathers believed in responsive government and our constitution says that all political power resides in the people. The legislators want to continue drawing district lines to favor themselves. Their amendment should be off the ballot!" says plaintiff Nathaniel Reed, former Assistant Secretary of the Interior under Presidents Nixon and Ford.

"Amendment 7 serves only to confuse voters and puts the rights of minority voters at the mercy of those in power. Politicians are trying to eliminate the assurances in Fair Districts Amendments 5 and 6 that minority voting rights cannot be diminished in redistricting," says Jorge Mursuli, President of Democracia Ahora and an individual plaintiff in the lawsuit. •

WANT TO HELP ON OPERATION LANDSLIDE for FAIR DISTRICTS?

Contact Pam Goodman (Pamelagoodman@aol.com) to get on this committee, and for more information on educating the voters in your area.



League members rallied in opposition to the legislative "Poison Pill" amendment, citing widespread support for anti-gerrymandering amendments (5 and 6).

President's Letter: Admiration for Jobs Well Done

Dear Members,

Recently Voter Service Chair **Pat Drago** and I addressed our state's Supervisors of Election and staff in Sanibel Island. I want you to share the strong round of applause and words of appreciation we received from this important group. Over and over we heard strong accolades from Supervisors about our League work around the state, and how they appreciated our impact.

From Tallahassee to Miami Dade, thanks to you, 2010 is progressing as an exciting and historic year for Florida and the League of Women Voters.

Frankly, there's too much to tell, so we've prepared "Just What Has Your State League Done" with the top 20 accomplishments of this board's first year in office in bullet points, brief to the point.

I must begin with the huge step of having our Fair Districts amendments finally qualifying to reach the ballot, a huge step for Floridians and critical to finally achieving Fair Districts. And as you know we are now a plaintiff in the lawsuit against the Secretary of State due to the Legislature's action placing the deceptive Amendment 7 on the ballot to undermine amendments 5 and 6. Their self-serving work shall not stand, and we are working as co plaintiffs with the NAACP, Democracia Ahora, Former state Comptroller **Bob Milligan** and Former Secretary of the Interior under Nixon and Ford, Nathaniel Reed to fight this deceptive effort by our Legislative leaders.

By now I hope you have all read our FINAL CAPITOL REPORT, an excellent brief by our consultant **Ben Wilcox** on the remarkable impact of the League's work this year in the Legislature, as he ably worked with **Marilynn Wills** our Action VP and our resolute Lobby Corp under **Rebecca Sager**. From defeating slush funds to SB 6, passing stronger Civics Requirements to more disclosure for campaign finance, your voices were heard, and responded to by our Governor and key legislators. Our annual seminar saw an almost doubling in participation, with a kickoff on the top of the Capitol, and recognitions in the Cabinet Room (where we received a Resolution of Celebration from **CFO Alex Sink**, accompanied by **Governor Crist** and **AG McCollum**), and on the floor of the Senate (thank you **Senator Dockery**), and House (thank you **Representative Kelly Skidmore**).

I am also delighted to announce we have added two new full Leagues: Charlotte County and Sanibel, both former member at Large Units, which were recognized by National, and continue to show healthy membership growth.

With huge thanks to the leadership of **Pam Goodman**, and assistance by **Annie Betancourt**, **Peg McGarity** and **Felisha Reyes**, we had a 50% increase in attendance at Legislative Seminar and gave **Secretary of State Kurt Browning** the League's "Making Democracy Work" award for his important work implementing the many changes in election law during the politically charged and active 2008 election.

We need to ensure voters understand the key importance of Amendment 5 and 6 in helping to free our government from the jaws of political gerrymandering.

With **Crystal Goodison's** leadership, we ran our first Seven Wonders trip with a sell out sign up after two weeks, and many requests to continue with more (and made a profit to help contribute to the LWVF Education Fund).

At the local level, Jacksonville League has introduced a new Civics program in tandem with the local political parties, Orange County has initiated the first national collaboration with a commercial TV station for a weekly show on public policy issues, Seminole County has initiated a regular radio show featuring their HOT TOPICS programs, and you can read about several of our other local initiatives in Spotlight on Local Leagues.

Excitingly, the League is once again poised to partner in some statewide candidate forums, ably supervised by Voter Services Chair **Pat Drago**. Also, working with Charley Williams, we are rolling out Voteanywhere.org to key markets to encourage citizens to better understand their options in casting their votes. We reached concurrency on some of our Local League transportation positions enabling local leagues to be more proactive on Transportation projects in their area.

And we are delighted to welcome new board members **Sharon Barnett** as Program chair and **Elayne Goodman** as our new Corporate Development chair, while we regretfully accepted the resignation of **Peg McGarity**, our highly esteemed and hardworking Executive Director these past almost four years. Peg, while working as a part time ED, has commuted almost weekly from her home in Manatee County, driving 5 hours each way as she has kept our organization moving forward. We've come along way in these past four years, and Peg deserves high praise and huge thanks from all of us around the state for helping take the Florida League to the next level.

And finally, a look forward: this November we face two huge opportunities — turning out an informed electorate and getting Fair Districts passed! We need to ensure voters understand the key importance of Amendment 5 and 6 in helping to free our government from the jaws of political gerrymandering. Will you help?

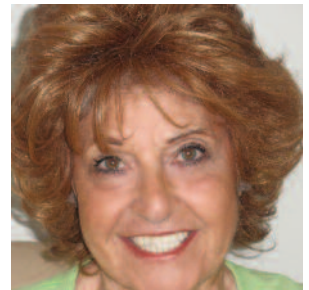
As president, I thank you for your League membership and support. And, I want to express the admiration that I feel as I travel around the state and meet our members and see first hand their inspiring work in communities across this state. One veteran long-time member told me, "there is a time to move mountains, and a time to enjoy the view." I have to tell you what an inspiration it is to be leading an organization of people who believe mountains can be moved. . . and don't hesitate or falter when that job needs to be done. Thank you! With your voice we CAN move mountains!

In League,

P.S. Have you introduced a friend to the League? This is the year to get at least 2 or 3 friends to join you at a HOT TOPICS – Florida needs our help! Just last week I spoke with someone who was disappointed they had not been invited to join! Reach out...ask someone!



Deirdre Macnab, LWVF President



Elayne Goodman, New Director



Sharon Barnett, New Director



Rep. Kelly Skidmore

TOP 20 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

What Has Your State League Been Up To This Past Year?

- **ACCOMPLISHED TOP PRIORITY:** Through a carefully coordinated statewide effort, helped collect 1.7 million petitions to successfully get amendments 5 and 6 on ballot!!
- Launched lawsuit against Secretary of State for Legislative action placing Amendment 7 on ballot.
- **BIG IMPACT ON LEGISLATIVE SESSION 2010:** Led the charge to kill the Leadership Funds bill (Slush Funds) through a Governor's Veto, helped win passage of stronger Civics bill in middle school (Sandra Day O'Connor bill), helped kill bill that would have required Legislative Approval for conservation laws, helped defeat SB 6 education bill, encouraged some additional disclosure for campaign finance contributions, helped prevent TABOR from proceeding, helped assure federal matching funds for our libraries
- Re-developed state website (have you seen it? www.TheFloridaVoter.org)
- Re-designed FLORIDA VOTER newsletter to include more pictures and more information on issues the League is following. Expanded distribution list to include all state elected officials and local county elected officials.
- Improved communications through monthly presidents calls, and launched the pilot of FLORIDA ON THE LINE, a monthly statewide conference call for members only on key issues.
- Worked to bring two Member at Large units to full Local League status (Sanibel and Charlotte County!)
- Increased membership from January 31, 2010 to June 2010 by 5%.
- Added a board Development Director.
- Reinitiated statewide candidate forums again with key partners for the 2010 elections.
- Doubled the participation in Legislative Seminar through a blockbuster program of events and reducing registration fee by almost half.
- Almost doubled participation in Leaders Council by adding special events and an almost 30% reduction in registration fee.
- Initiated SEVEN WONDERS OF FLORIDA weekend trips for members and sold out first trip to see the migrating Sandhill Cranes. More trips coming!
- Established a new consultant network for Local Leagues that pair Local league presidents with an experienced innovative leaders based on other state models
- Rolling out pilot program of www.Voteanywhere.org, a microsite which successfully increased mail in ballots and early voting in Central Florida in 2008. Purpose: Help voters update their registration and know how and where to vote.
- Expanding VamosAvotar.org to encourage Florida's Hispanic voters.
- Provided a Visioning workshop and Media Training at Leaders Council.
- Expanded distribution and frequency of league editorials and action alerts resulting in a large increase of media visibility for league work and views.
- Hosted the pre-release premiere of GERRYMANDERING: THE MOVIE and hosted a Caucus at Convention on lifting the travel ban to Cuba.
- Targeted increases in membership in target areas with expanded use of social media with a new FACEBOOK page and distribution of editorials to Hispanic media through our Latino outreach.



Charley Williams, Pres OC, Steve Jenkins VP Charlotte County, Greg Hess, Member and Underwriter for OC HOT TOPICS



The League and all the members of the Board wish to sincerely thank Peg McGarity for her valued service to the organization, her dedication and her wisdom!

Your Florida Delegation Makes A Difference!

- 700 Delegates from across the country
- Keynote speakers: Congressman John Lewis, Georgia and Secretary Katherine Sibelius, US
- Budgets passed
- PMP increase of \$.40
- Two new national studies: *The Federal Role in Public Education* and *Privatization: Its Impact and its Efficiency*

NATIONAL RESOLUTIONS

Support of legislation to permit same-gender couples to marry under civil law.

Motion to adopt concurrence position on Marriage Equality to be added to the Equality of Opportunity position: The League of Women Voters of the United States supports equal rights for all under state and federal law. LWWUS supports legislation to equalize the legal rights, obligations, and benefits available to same-gender couples with those available to heterosexual couples. LWWUS supports legislation to permit same-gender couples to marry under civil law. The League believes that the civil status of marriage is already clearly distinguished from the religious institution of marriage and that religious rights will be preserved.

Support of lifting the travel ban to Cuba

Motion to support lifting the travel restrictions for Americans going to Cuba.

Support of National Popular Vote, a vote around the electoral college

Motion to adopt concurrence, LWWUS position on selection of the president: "We support the use of the National Popular Vote Compact as one acceptable way to achieve the goal of the direct popular vote for election of the president until the abolition of the Electoral College is accomplished"

Support of expanding IMPROVED Medicare

Motion that calls upon the LWWUS Board to advocate strongly for bills that legislate for expansion of improved Medicare.

Support letter to Pres and Congress asking for stricter regulation of drilling on land and in sea

Motion to adopt a resolution in support of safe drilling and mining for energy resources: to support and lobby for significant strengthening of appropriate regulation, oversight, inspection, and penalties associated with the development of fossil fuel resources. This strengthening should include elimination from national legislation of the exemptions for drilling and mining, as well as additional legislation requiring the federal agencies to regulate drilling and mining in a manner consistent with the preservation of a healthy environment. We also call on the Board to communicate with the President and the Congress putting them on notice that Leagues across the country are deeply concerned about this issue.

The LWWUS further urges the legislative and executive branches of the federal government to immediately take all necessary steps to maximize to the extent practicable the ability and efforts of all relevant federal agencies and departments to take action, and to work with the U.S. coastal states and communities most directly and immediately affected, to respond creatively, efficiently and effectively to the environmental, health and economic crisis created by the oil flowing from the out of control BP oil well in the Gulf of Mexico and by the efforts to contain and disperse it.

In addition, the League called upon the Senate to change its rules to limit the use of the filibuster and added the principle of TRANSPARENCY to the SARA Resolution, as adopted at the 2004 LWWUS Convention and amended at the 2006 LWWUS Convention.

IN OTHER ACTIONS

Dianne Wheatley Giliotti: Elected to National Board, second term

Pam Goodman: National LWW Nomination Committee for 2009-10

Chris Straton: Resolutions Committee

Clara Ann Graham: Climate Committee

Caroline Emmons Schramm: Ruth Schur Fellow

Katie Ross: Organized Young Professionals Caucus

Annie Betancourt: Organized "Lift the Travel Ban to Cuba" Caucus



Florida's large 24-member delegation celebrates with outgoing national president Mary Wilson and incoming national president Elizabeth MacNamara.

Solar Generates Jobs and Tax Revenues NOW

by James M. Fenton, Ph.D., Director,
Florida Solar Energy Center

If you are really concerned about Florida's economy, you want to put people to work NOW. Florida Power & Light (FPL) recently completed construction of a 25 megawatt photovoltaic facility in Arcadia (DeSoto County), FL, which benefited the local economy by creating more than 400 well-paying construction jobs. The 90,000 solar panels produce enough power to serve 3,000 homes. In addition, the

county will receive annual tax revenues due to the increase in property value that will amount to \$2 million for schools and other local services by the end of next year. A short two years from planning to completion. This FPL solar facility and two others under construction at

an estimated cost of \$700 million will produce a total of 110 megawatts of clean electrical energy, equivalent to taking 25,000 cars off the road. The average FPL customer will see a rate increase of about 31 cents per month for this solar energy.

NOW, if Florida had a Renewable Portfolio Standard then FPL would be allowed to expand the amount of solar by say a factor of ten, the average rate increase per customer would be \$3.10 per month for 1,100 megawatts of solar energy at peak at a cost of \$7 billion. However, the actual cost could be much less, as FPL would be able to benefit from economies of scale and current discounted solar electric system prices. The less than \$3.10 (about the cost of one gallon of gasoline) per month would be used to generate over 15,000 direct jobs and more than 50,000 total jobs for the State of Florida and annual tax revenues of \$88 million within two years, well before the nuclear power plants are turned on and before any oil revenues or oil spills wash a shore in Florida!

If all the residential rate payers sacrificed the use of the equivalent of one gallon of gasoline, not just FPL customers, we would have over 2,000 megawatts (the equivalent output of two nuclear power plants) at peak, over 30,000 direct jobs and more than 100,000 total jobs for the State of Florida and annual tax revenues of over \$170 million.

Requiring a 20% Renewable Portfolio Standard by 2020 may not be soon enough or big enough. The citizens of Florida should demand of their legislature to keep the money and jobs in Florida -- pass a Renewable Portfolio Standard NOW.

Requiring a 20% Renewable Portfolio Standard by 2020 may not be soon enough or big enough.



First Timer's View of Legislative Seminar

by Teresa Jenkins, Charlotte County

As a new President of the Charlotte County League, I was delighted to attend and represent our members at the 2010 Legislative Seminar in Tallahassee, "Celebrate and Advocate."

We started the program with a welcome reception and dinner on the 22nd floor of the Capital Building followed by a discussion on the League's number one priority -- ensuring Fair Districts Amendments are approved by voters this November. If we don't get it done this year, we will have to wait another 10 years, so I left the session "fired up" to ensure our voters are informed at the polls.

The next day started with a breakfast buffet and speakers from the Florida legislature. It was inspiring to see so many legislators give their time to address the Florida LWV. In addition to legislators, we heard a speaker from the Florida School Board Association who provided a great segue to observing the Senate General Session wherein bills addressing Florida education were discussed. Both the House and the Senate recognized the League and its 90th birthday celebration in their respective General Sessions which was heartwarming.

All in all it was a most enlightening Seminar and I encourage everyone to attend next year.



First VP Annie Betacourt (l) and LWV President Deirdre Macnab (r) present Secretary of State Kurt Browning with the 2010 Making Democracy Work Award.

League Spotlights

by Adrienne E. Katz Katz

It is evident that a number of Florida Leagues are seeing our state's problems in a similar light. Many "Hot Topics" have focused on WATER as a major issue, and various specialists have provided much-needed information to our Florida Leaguers to help us make enlightened decisions and take positive action. Armed with this knowledge, we can influence legislation that affects our communities.

Fair Districts is another favorite topic discussed in recent months by Florida Leagues, and again, providing information about Amendments 5 and 6 (and getting out the vote) is a priority that will succeed only with a concerted effort statewide.

Involvement (phone calls, e-mails and letters) by individual members has resulted in the League's making a significant impact on some Legislative priorities. This is an ongoing process until the end of the Legislative Session, requiring daily attention to Action Alerts sent from the Florida League and our lobbyist, Ben Wilcox. We know we

"can't win them all," but we have to keep trying to make our voices heard.

Alachua County

We celebrated the League's 90th Birthday by honoring "Women as Protectors," "Women as Professionals," and "Women as Risk Takers." We held a Candidate Forum for the City of Alachua and plan a May 3 Town Hall Panel on Amendment 4, "Hometown Democracy." Our Forum on Water, presented by the Natural Resources Committee, was titled "Springs in the Heartland of Florida."



Crystal Goodison, Alachua



Carla Benninga, President of Sanibel League



Teresa Jenkins, President of Charlotte League (with VP and husband Steve)



League members answering phones during election season.

Broward County

CELEBRATING 90 YEARS OF VOTER EDUCATION AND VOTER SERVICE, Broward and Palm Beach celebrated Happy Birthday with their keynote speaker, Muriel Siebert, the first woman to own a seat on the N.Y. Stock Exchange, at the 90th Celebration Luncheon, April 10, 2010, the Crowne Plaza Hotel, West Palm Beach.

Jacksonville First Coast League

Two distinguished guests appeared on the League of Women Voters Jacksonville First Coast TV program during National Sunshine Week to talk about the importance of ethical and transparent government.

Buddy Schulz, partner in the law firm of Holland and Knight, and Harry Shorstein, Shorstein & Lasnetski, spoke with Kathy Carithers on "Politics is your Business."

Three years ago, amid questions of Sunshine Law violations on the Jacksonville City Council, a grand jury was impaneled to investigate the allegations. Buddy Schulz was the foreman of the state grand jury that listened to hours of testimony. Harry Shorstein was the state's attorney at that time. Carithers asked both lawyers to comment on the Charter Review Commission's recommendation to the City Council regarding ethics reform.

Mr. Schulz explained the grand jury process and spoke about the grand jury's presentment. The City Council bill that was recently introduced that would revise the frequency of Council Sunshine education from once a year to every two years, was among other topics discussed in the half-hour program.

Orange County

The League launched its Speakers' Bureau activities in a church, two libraries, an Assisted Living Facility and a community college — all on the theme of commemorating Women's History Month. The presentations included achievements of women, obstacles overcome and problems still to be addressed, the history of the League of Women Voters, the importance of registering to vote, learning about issues and candidates, and actually voting.

Older audiences especially appreciated the perspective of how far women have advanced during their lifetimes. Women make up nearly half of the current graduating classes in medical and law schools as well as incoming freshman in universities nationwide. There were shocking statistics as well, such as learning that more women worldwide die from domestic violence than cancer, malaria and auto accidents.

LWVOC Co-President Ann Hellmuth and Caroline Emmons-Schramm took part in a program on Why Women Should Vote at Valencia Community College. The event, which featured the movie "Iron Jawed Angels," was organized by League member Barbara Shell, Valencia's director, community and alumni relations.

Lee County

Members participated in a Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration, wrote letters to the newspaper editor against drilling near Florida's coastlines, and provided information and encouragement to members to work on behalf of the Fair Districts amendments.

Jennifer Hecker, National Resources Policy Manager of the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, spoke at Hot Topics in February. Her talk was entitled "Water, Water, Everywhere, but Not a Drop to Drink."

Jennifer pointed out that over 97% of the earth's water is salt water, while less than 1% is fresh drinkable water. One problem is that Florida gets 90% of its rainfall June through September; another is that we consume 90% of the water each year and that consumption is expected to double in the next twenty years as the population increases.

Jennifer listed several ways in which water pollution could be prevented. One way is to build high-rises, which clusters density without increasing density elsewhere. This also would decrease air pollution because so many places would be within walking distance. Homeowners can reduce water pollution and usage by collecting rain water in barrels for irrigation, use ecofriendly mulches, fertilizers and pest control reagents (it costs up to \$3500 to clean up six dollars of fertilizer), use eco-friendly plants and replace impervious landscape with crushed shell, rather than asphalt. And last of all, become a partner in the Conservancy.

Pensacola Bay Area

Linda Young, Director of the Clean Water Network, presented a picture at "Hot Topics" of the battle underway for the control of water in Florida. "Water is the new oil." The controversy encompasses supply, quality and usage. Major

contenders for usage of water are agriculture, development, industry, water suppliers, golf courses and residents. The battle is being waged on various fronts: the court of public opinion, regulation arenas and in the courts.

Manatee League

Gangs in Manatee County are a major problem for the community, and the most effective solution lies in working with kids and their parents, according to experts from the Manatee County School District and Sheriff's Office.

Introduced by Manatee League co-President Nancy Horne, recent speakers shared how gangs recruit members, why kids join, their emblems, hand signs, tattoos, colors and graffiti. With an estimated 650 to 800 members, gangs are responsible for much of the crime committed in Manatee County, the experts said. Many gangs use school systems as a base for their illegal activities such as drug dealing. They begin recruiting early, drawing in kids from elementary grades. Those who work with gang members find they join for a number of reasons, including: protection from other gangs and bullies; desire to share in the profits; and for the camaraderie—the feeling of belonging. Initiations can be brutal, and usually involve commission of a crime or act of violence.

In addition to law enforcement, both the Sheriff's office and the school system are using intervention programs to head kids in the right direction. Nonprofit groups such as Boys and Girls Clubs are also helping in the fight against gangs. However, working with the families plays the most important role. As Sgt. Gary Combee, head of the Sheriff's Office Gang Suppression Unit, said, "It is really about what is going on at home." We hope to hold a follow-up program sometime in the future, to gauge progress in this important local issue that affects so many lives.

WINTER PARK, FLORIDA

LEADERS COUNCIL 2010

80 Registrants

Budget Approved for LWVF and LWV Ed Fund

A Per Member Payment increase of \$2.00 approved (meaning each member now contributes \$15 to the LWVF state budget)

Resolution passed: To write to Governor Crist formally urging a VETO of HB 1143, Ultrasound bill

Workshops:

Using Constant Contact to Expand Impact: Sandy Parker

Presidents Meeting

Transportation Study

Visioning the Next Ninety; facilitated by Marilyn Crotty

The Media and the League: A Powerful Partnership for Change: Mary Hammill

In Memory Of

Oradell (Dell) Trayer

Dexter Morgan Easton



EVERGLADES COALITION 2010 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Kathleen Slebodnik, LWVF Off-Board Chair, Everglades

"The Changing Face of Everglades Restoration" was the theme of the 25th Everglades Coalition (EVCO) Annual Conference held January 7-10, 2010 in Palm Beach Gardens. I attended as the LWVF's coalition liaison.

Background

LWVF is one of 53 environmental and public service organizations that belong to EVCO.

The coalition was organized in 1968 to fight for Everglades National Park water rights and to place the Big Cypress watershed under the protection of the National Park System.

In 1984 the coalition was reorganized and expanded to achieve protection and restoration of natural systems in the entire Everglades ecosystem, from the Kissimmee River and Lake Okeechobee through the Florida Keys and Florida Bay.

The coalition experienced a landmark year in 2000 with congressional approval of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) and its first projects. Since then, the coalition has transitioned to ensure the reality of a restored and sustainable Everglades ecosystem and further the protection of the Everglades watershed. Scientists say that restoration will mean finding a way to catch and flow southward about 1.5 million acre-feet of water per year, a staggering volume equivalent to 740,000 Olympic-size swimming pools.

Purchase of U.S. Sugar Lands

The mood was euphoric at the 2009 conference last year because of Governor Charlie Crist's offer to purchase approximately 180,000 acres of Everglades Agricultural Area land below Lake O from U.S. Sugar Corp. Since then, the amount of land to be purchased has been reduced to 73,000 acres with an option to purchase the remaining acreage when and if funds become available. Currently that sale is facing challenges in court by Florida Crystals Corp. and the Miccosukee Indian Tribe who live on a reser-

vation in the Everglades, as well as Florida's economy.

Tamiami Trail Project

It was a jubilant afternoon on December 4, 2009, as more than 300 Everglades restoration supporters gathered at the Tamiami Trail site in Miami-Dade County to celebrate a key restoration project and a turning point in ecosystem restoration. Ground was broken for an elevated, one-mile long sky-way to replace a portion of the Tamiami Trail, an east-west highway that has blocked natural freshwater flows for decades. The project will help revive wetland habitat for more than 60 threatened and endangered species as well as supply much needed fresh water to Everglades National Park.

The Army Corps of Engineers is overseeing project construction and the Department of the Interior is providing most of the funding. Other partners include the state of Florida and the SFWMD. In addition, this project will reinforce an additional 9.7 miles of the Trail, which will allow higher water levels in the adjacent canal. Projected completion is in 2013.

Picayune Strand Restoration Project

January, 2010, saw another "turned dirt" project begun in Collier County on a site once slated for a housing development known as Southern Golden Gate Estates. At a cost of \$53 million and encompassing 55,000 acres, restoring Picayune Strand involves plugging 83 miles of canals, removing 227 miles of roads, and management of non-native

vegetation. This is the first CERP project to be financed with federal money and has the added benefit of being stimulus dollars for job creation in construction and related industries.

More Evidence of Progress

Throughout the conference, speakers noted that more restoration activity is now taking place than has occurred in the last 30 years. We are currently blessed with an administration in Washington that is finally backing up its



This photo of a heron in the Everglades was used with the permission of Phil M. Love, Photographer. Phil specializes in all forms of photography, particularly, landscapes, wildlife, and sports, both in the U.S. and in Europe. For more information visit pmlphotography.com

commitment with dollars. Both the state legislature and the district have budgeted funds for land acquisition and key projects. But while momentum is currently high, challenges remain. We must continue to reinvest in the science of restoration, do a better job of controlling invasive species, and solve the problem of pollution coming into the system north of Lake O.

One speaker aptly reminded us that elections change administrations and their appointees, and the only real protections the Everglades have are education and information. The conference made a strong case for engaging young people in restoration efforts and bringing them into the Everglades so that they learn to value this national treasure.

Acknowledgement

EVCO has acknowledged the Palm Beach League of Women Voters and its president, Kathe Thompson, for its sponsorship at the conference. PBLWV had a table which displayed League materials, and several of its members acted as hostesses for the event.

Additional Information: There are many good sources of more information available on Everglades restoration. www.evergladescoalition.org
www.evergladesreport@evergladesplan.org

One speaker aptly reminded us that elections change administrations and their appointees, and the only real protections the Everglades have are education and information.

THE LEAGUE IS NOT FOR WOMEN ONLY!

Our name may be League of "Women" Voters, but we have men as members, and in leadership positions, as well. Ask a man to join today.



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Thank you to
AUTO NATION for
a \$1000 contribution.

Palm Beach recently received a
generous bequest of \$50,000.

For more information on how to
remember the League in your will,
contact Sandra Colyer, LWVF Treasurer,
850/224-2545.

Your tax-deductible contribution to the
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League Files Suit to Stop Legislature’s
“Poison Pill” Amendment 73
President’s Letter: Admiration for Jobs Well Done.....4
Top 20 Accomplishments, What Has Your State League
Been Up To This Past Year?.....5
Report from LWVUS National Convention, Atlanta, GA —
Your Florida Delegation Makes A Difference!.....6
Solar Generates Jobs and Tax Revenues NOW.....7
First Timer’s View of Legislative Seminar7
League Spotlights8,9
Leaders Council 20109
In Memory Of9
Everglades Coalition 2010 Annual Conference.....10
Donor Page.....11

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