

## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF FLORIDA SUPPORTS THE WATER AND LAND LEGACY INITIATIVE

**Background:** At LWVF's 2013 bi-annual convention, the Board and delegates of the League of Women Voters of Florida held a vote on whether or not to support **Florida's Water and Land Legacy initiative**. After lengthy debate, the final vote was 48 to 34 to support the initiative. Thus the Study and Action plan for 2013-2015 was amended to include this support.

**What is this initiative?** In 1968, Florida voters ratified a new state constitution. Article II Section 7 states, "It shall be the policy of the state to conserve and protect its natural resources and scenic beauty." The 1968 Constitution Revision also carried forward in Article XII the Land Acquisition Trust Fund and bond authorization. In 1972, Florida's voters approved another statewide bond issue pursuant to this constitutional authorization to fund the Environmentally Endangered Lands program. In 1990, the Legislature approved 'Preservation 2000' as a ten-year \$3 billion bond issue funded through the Land Acquisition Trust Fund with all bonds set to expire by 2013 pursuant to the original bond authorization.

The 1997-98 Constitution Revision Commission considered several proposals relating to land and water conservation. The final set of proposals by the Constitutional Revision Commission was supported by the League of Women Voters. Revision 1, known as "The Conservation Amendment," was approved by the voters in 1998. Article VII Sec.11(e) was created to authorize the financing of "the acquisition and improvement of land, water areas, and related property interests and resources for the purposes of conservation, outdoor recreation, water resource development, restoration of natural systems, and historic preservation." Following the ratification of The Conservation Amendment, the 1999 Legislature approved Florida Forever as a \$300 million per year conservation acquisition program. Florida Forever was reauthorized in 2008 for \$300 million annually for another 10 years. However, that promise was not kept and in 2010 funding for the program was cut by an estimated 97.5%.

The voters of this state have spoken - preserving this state's natural resources and its scenic beauty is not just a good idea some of the time, it's a Constitutional requirement of our government all of the time. Unfortunately, the funding of Florida Forever has become something of a political football. We have been told that the preservation of our state is a luxury we just cannot afford. On the contrary, if we do not preserve our water recharge areas we will not have enough water to support our homes, our businesses and our population. Our state runs on water and it is up to the citizenry to take this priority out of the political arena and safeguard it in the state's Constitution.

It is the League's legacy to be a force for good in the community.

**What needs to be done:** In order to safeguard Florida's water supply and scenic beauty, 683,149 registered voters in the state must sign petitions available from the Florida's Water and Land Legacy initiative state office in Tallahassee. Will you help?

- Be a Local League Chair for this effort: Contact your president
- Be a petition gatherer: Send your email to Chuck O'Neal ([lwvocnr@aol.com](mailto:lwvocnr@aol.com)) and you will receive a PETITION KIT of petitions, clipboards and pens
- Be a SPEAKER for our League Speakers Bureau and present our PowerPoint presentation to groups all across your area.

**Support:** The website to request petitions along with answers to frequently asked questions is located at [www.FloridaWaterLandLegacy.org](http://www.FloridaWaterLandLegacy.org).