



TO PROMOTE POLITICAL
RESPONSIBILITY THROUGH
INFORMED AND ACTIVE
PARTICIPATION OF CITIZENS IN
GOVERNMENT AND TO ACT ON
SELECTED GOVERNMENT ISSUES

THE VOTER

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF TALLAHASSEE

www.lwvtallahassee.org

850-309-3005

TALLAHASSEE

VOLUME 19–NUMBER 1

JANUARY 2011

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 2011

10 Monday 1:00 p.m.

CRTPA Meeting
City Hall, 2nd Floor

11 Tuesday 6:00 p.m.

Leon County Legislative
Delegation Meeting
County Courthouse, 5th floor

12 Wednesday 4:00 p.m.

Tallahassee City Commission
City Hall, 2nd floor

18 Tuesday 3:00 p.m.

Leon County Commission
County Courthouse 5th floor

18 Tuesday 6:30 p.m.

LWVT Board Meeting
LWVF Office, Beverly Court

19 Wednesday 11:30 a.m.

Hot Topics Luncheon
Holiday Inn & Suites
2725 Graves Road

25 Tuesday 3:00 p.m.

Leon County Commission
County Courthouse 5th floor

26 Wednesday 4:00 p.m.

Tallahassee City Commission
City Hall, 2nd floor



HOT TOPICS LUNCHEON

Wednesday, January 19, 2011



In a 2009 interview with the British Journal of Medical Practitioners, our January speaker, Dr. Kenneth Brummel Smith, responded to several timely questions:

Which changes would substantially improve the quality of health care in your country?

A single-payer national health insurance program, dissolution of the fee-for-service model of reimbursement, cost-effectiveness research, regulation of pharmaceutical costs.

Do you think doctors can make a valuable contribution to health care management? If so how? Absolutely – if they put the patient first in all considerations. Dr. Brummel-Smith holds the Charlotte Edwards Maguire Professorship in the College of Medicine. He leads the Department of Geriatrics, one of five academic departments in the FSU College of Medicine. Geriatrics is one of the priority areas in the college’s mission. He will be discussing the new Health Plan, and answering your questions.

Time: 11:30 a. m. – 1:00 p. m.

Place: Holiday Inn and Suites
2725 Graves Road (Just north of I10 on N. Monroe)

Lunch: New York Deli Buffet, Dessert and beverage included.

Cost: \$20.00 payable at the door

Reservations: Please call the LWVT Voice Mail (309-3005) by Friday, January 14.

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**Since the League has to pay for all meals ordered, cancellations received after the deadline will be billed for the cost of the lunch.**  
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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Marilynn Wills, President
893-4104
marilynnwills@msn.com

Rebecca Sager, Vice President
Co-Chair, Voter Services
219-9966
rsager@music.org

Kathy Winn, Secretary
877-0960
kathywinnclan@embarqmail.com

Peggy Ramsey, Treasurer
Chair, Membership Committee
386-7589
ramsey020@comcast.net

M.L. Baker, Voter Editor
Chair, Education Committee
893-5013
mlbaker@fsu.edu

Ben Wilcox, Public Relations
878-0170
benw@infionline.net

Janet Findling
Co-Chair, Voter Services
942-2291
janetfindling@comcast.net

Theresa Chase
Chair, Health Care Committee
383-1348
chasetheresav@yahoo.com

Ruth O'Donnell
Co-Chair, Local Government Committee
668-6911
ruth.odonnell@comcast.net

Dr. Stuart E. Baker
386-1036
sbaker@mailers.fsu.edu

OFF BOARD SPECIALISTS

Erin Edwards, Webmaster
erinedwards22@comcast.net

Barbara Sterling
Co-Chair, Local Government Committee
386-7453
sterlingsilver@earthlink.net

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Best wishes for the New Year from the Tallahassee Board. We ended 2010 with our Holiday Luncheon at the University Club Center. The turnout was very good, as was the food. Our speaker, Professor Diane Roberts, was outstanding. While many are reeling after the November elections and wondering just what is going to happen in Florida, Ms. Roberts was able to lighten the mood with her wit and knowledge of Florida politics.

Thank you, Theresa Chase for arranging the luncheon and Susie Caplowe for taking some great photos of luncheon attendees.

These next few months promise to be very busy for the Tallahassee League. Both the Legislative Seminar and the State Convention will be held in Tallahassee in late March. We will need League volunteers to help at Convention; if you can do so, please contact me at marilynnwills@msn.com.

We are updating our "Know Your Public Officials" brochure and will be providing copies to the public after the printing. We provide these brochures to organizations like the Newcomers, libraries, adult education, city and county commissions. If you know of any organizations that would like to have copies, please let us know.

Our speaker this month, Dr. Kenneth Brummel Smith, will be addressing the new Health Care Program; he will explain the program and answer questions. Later in this newsletter, you can read the remarks made by U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder Jr. and Health and Human Services Director Kathleen Sibelius in response to the court decision in Virginia regarding the requirement that all citizens purchase health insurance. It is important that League members be informed in this area in order to help our fellow citizens.

This promises to be a busy year for the League in Florida; if you can work on transportation, local government, health, or lobby corps, please contact me or any other board member. We need your help.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

Local Government Committee Meets with City of Tallahassee Staff

Local Government Committee members met in December with City of Tallahassee staff in search of answers to Committee questions about two separate issues. Ruth O'Donnell, Barbara Sterling and Sue Gross met with Tallahassee – Leon County Planning Department senior planner Zach Galloway on December 6 and Ruth, Barbara and Peggy Ramsey met with city manager Anita Favors on December 15.

City Ordinance Amending the Tallahassee Land Development Code

We asked to meet with Mr. Galloway to discuss a proposed City Ordinance reported on in this column in December. Ordinance 10-O-14AA would amend the Tallahassee Land Development Code. Mr. Galloway clarified why the ordinance was developed, saying that where there is a multi-modal transportation district such as the new district developing in Tallahassee, development standards that will create a more pedestrian friendly downtown must be used. The new ordinance will also clean up the existing standards for the downtown area to assure improved consistency.

Mr. Galloway provided an overview of the ordinance and was very responsive to the concerns and interests of the participating League members. He showed us the proposed Downtown Overlay Plan-Land Use Map which includes changes made in a 1992 downtown plan as well as those in the new ordinance. One point of interest is that the map changes allow any development for some buildings that previously were only available for state office use. In general, the plan seems a very positive approach to creating a pedestrian friendly downtown and allowing use of state office buildings for other purposes. It should also help with encouraging developers to use some of the vacant building sites scattered around the downtown area.

A concern of one of our group relating to landscaping requirements was discussed at length and Mr. Galloway indicated he will discuss suggestions made at the meeting with his colleagues. League members interested in Ordinance 10-O-14AA can attend and speak at a public hearing on Wednesday, January 26th at the City Commission at 6:00 PM, City Hall.

City Manager's Utilities Advisory Committee

Candidates for city commission office and a few

members of the Leon County Commission raised questions last fall about an advisory board related to the City of Tallahassee's utilities business. Your Local Government Committee met with City Manager Anita Favors on December 15 to learn more about this board. We discovered that it is not a City Commission appointed board but instead a group of people that Ms. Favors has been using for about a dozen years to provide her and utilities staff with advice. The initial group was formed at the time the Florida Legislature was considering deregulation of utilities and its role has broadened since then to advising City staffers on all facets of the utilities services.

The group has fifteen members who represent the whole county. The dates and meeting locations have varied but they are now trying to meet the second Thursday of each month at noon. Locations will continue to vary because they meet at utilities sites around the county.

Ms. Favors gave us names of some members and they are among the "movers and shakers" of Tallahassee and Leon County. She feels the group is "invaluable," particularly since it is not a politically appointed group and people can serve who wouldn't otherwise be able to be on an advisory group.

Leon County Commissioner Bill Proctor raised concerns about utilities rates at County Commission meetings and during last year's County Charter review. He wanted to establish an advisory group that would work on how to decrease utilities costs for people who cannot afford current rates. Ms. Favors indicated to the League members with whom she met that the utilities function of the City is a business and cannot write off people's bills. She explained that there are many programs currently in place to assist people who are having difficulty paying, including referral to federal programs. Residents can also use a process available to them for questioning their bills.

In response to our questions about how income from utilities services is used, Ms. Favors said a specified percentage each year goes into the City general fund and is then allocated out to various departments.

Our meeting with Ms. Favors was very informative and answered a lot of Local Government Committee members' questions. She also provided staff contacts for further research and the Committee

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will consider at our next meeting whether additional meetings will be useful. All League members are welcome at Local Government Committee meetings. We would love to have you join us!

Ruth O'Donnell
3509 Trillium Ct.
Tallahassee, FL 32312
850-668-6911 (phone & fax)
850-322-5005 (mobile)

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The following has been excerpted from articles in *Education Week*, December 23, 2010. If you would like to read the entire texts please let me know and I would be glad to send them to you.

M. L. Baker, mlbaker@fsu.edu

FLA. GOV.-ELECT STIRS DEBATE WITH VOUCHERS PROPOSAL

Private school vouchers for all children was among the suggestions of Gov.-elect Rick Scott's education transition team.

"Education savings accounts" would provide a voucher worth 85% of what the state spends on a student in public school to each child who goes to a private school.

The vouchers could also be used for private tutoring, virtual schools and colleges or to purchase books for dual enrollment programs. The money could also be put into college savings plans.

The education transition team is chaired by Patricia Levesque, executive director of former Jeb Bush's Foundation Florida's for Florida's Future. In a report to Scott this week, the team says the state would save 15% for every student who gets a voucher.

Wayne Blanton, executive director of the Florida School Boards Association, questioned the math. Another problem was that private schools are not held to the same standards as public schools.

Ron Meyer, a lawyer for the Florida Education Association, said the proposal also faces "a huge constitutional issue." The Florida Supreme Court stuck down a more limited voucher program that Bush launched, ruling it violated a provision in the Florida Constitution requiring a uniform system of public schools.

The transition team acknowledged that pitfall by also recommending a review of the constitution's education article to determine if it "is still appropriate for the changing environment of the 21st century".

4 League of Women Voters January 2011

An amendment to legalize vouchers would require approval by at least 60% of the Florida voters and likely wouldn't go on the ballot until 2013.

Education funding at the federal level is complicated. Funding for K-12 will be frozen at current levels for two more months leaving the new Congress to set final spending levels for fiscal 2011.

House Republican leaders have pledged to restore federal spending to fiscal year 2008, but have not indicated where they would like to see the cuts made.

This kind of timing is hard on districts who are trying to plan for the school year. Many feel that negotiating between a freeze and a cut back is a no win situation for education.

There appear to be some teacher qualification issues that will be coming up in 2011 as well.

Race to the Top funds should be safe as that program was funded by the recovery act and not the regular fiscal year 2010 budget.

Advocates for pre-kindergarten programs were dismayed when the bill that would have increased spending for those programs was scrapped.

The article quotes Senator Tom Harkin, D, Iowa, chairman of the Senate committees for education and spending policies, as saying the Senators were giving away billions in tax cuts for the rich while arguing to cut programs that provide working class families with quality child care and pre-school programs for their children.

HEALTH CARE COMMITTEE

There is no report from the Health Care Committee for their December meeting.

The Committee will meet in January on Thursday, the 27th at 3:00 p.m. at the home of Theresa Chase, 2299 Trescott Drive.



HEALTH REFORM WILL SURVIVE ITS LEGAL FIGHT

By Eric H. Holder Jr. and Kathleen Sebelius
Tuesday, December 14, 2010

In March, New Hampshire preschool teacher Gail O'Brien, who was unable to obtain health insurance through her employer, was diagnosed with an aggressive form of lymphoma. Her subsequent applications for health insurance were rejected because of her condition. With each round of chemotherapy costing \$16,000, she delayed treatment because she knew her savings wouldn't last.

Then President Obama signed the Affordable Care Act. Thanks to this law, O'Brien is getting treatment through a temporary program that provides affordable coverage to people who've been shut out of the insurance market because of a preexisting condition. Even better, she knows that in 2014 insurers will be banned from discriminating against her or any American with preexisting conditions.

That's what makes the recent lawsuits challenging the Affordable Care Act so troubling. Roughly 20 cases question the new law's individual responsibility provision, which says that Americans who can afford to must maintain basic health coverage.

Federal courts in Michigan and Virginia have upheld the law as constitutional, but Monday, a federal court in Virginia reached the opposite result. These and other cases will continue through our courts as opponents try to block the law. But these attacks are wrong on the law, and if allowed to succeed, they would have devastating consequences for everyone with health insurance.

The majority of Americans who have health insurance pay a higher price because of our broken system. Every insured family pays an average of \$1,000 more a year in premiums to cover the care of those who have no insurance.

Everyone wants health care to be affordable and available when they need it. But we have to stop imposing extra costs on people who carry insurance, and that means everyone who can afford coverage needs to carry minimum health coverage starting in 2014.

If we want to prevent insurers from denying coverage to people with preexisting conditions, it's essential that everyone have coverage. Imagine what would happen if everyone waited to buy car insurance

until after they got in an accident. Premiums would skyrocket, coverage would be unaffordable, and responsible drivers would be priced out of the market.

The same is true for health insurance. Without an individual responsibility provision, controlling costs and ending discrimination against people with preexisting conditions doesn't work.

The legal arguments made against the law gloss over this problem even as opponents have sought to invent new constitutional theories and dig up old ones that were rejected 80 years ago.

Opponents claim the individual responsibility provision is unlawful because it "regulates inactivity." But none of us is a bystander when it comes to health care. All of us need health care eventually. Do we pay in advance, by getting insurance, or do we try to pay later, when we need medical care?

The individual responsibility provision says that as participants in the health-care market, Americans should pay for insurance if they can afford it. That's important because when people who don't have insurance show up at emergency rooms, we don't deny them care. The costs of this uncompensated care - \$43 billion in 2008 - are then passed on to doctors, hospitals, small businesses and Americans who have insurance.

As two federal courts have already held, this unfair cost-shifting harms the marketplace. For decades, Supreme Court decisions have made clear that the Constitution allows Congress to adopt rules to deal with such harmful economic effects, which is what the law does - it regulates how we pay for health care by ensuring that those who have insurance don't continue to pay for those who don't. Because of the long-held legal precedent of upholding such provisions, even President Ronald Reagan's solicitor general, Charles Fried, called legal objections to the law "far-fetched."

As these lawsuits continue, Americans should be clear about what the opponents of reform are asking the courts to do. Striking down the individual responsibility provision means slamming the door on millions of Americans like Gail O'Brien, who've been locked out of our health insurance markets, and shifting more costs onto families who've acted responsibly.

It's not surprising that opponents, having lost in Congress, have taken to the courts. We saw similar challenges to laws that created Social Security and established new civil rights protections. Those

challenges ultimately failed, and so will this one.

Rather than fighting to undo the progress we've made, and returning to the days when one out of seven Americans was denied insurance due to their medical histories, supporters of repeal should work with us to implement this law effectively. The initial decisions about the Affordable Care Act will be reviewed on appeal. We are confident that the law will ultimately be upheld.



“Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.”

-Martin Luther King, Jr.



Joyce Edwina Coombs, 66, of St. Thomas, Jamaica passed away December 4, 2010 in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania. Joyce had lived in Tallahassee for 25 years and leaves behind many devoted friends and family. A lover of education, she was the first of her family to graduate from college earning her Masters Degree in International Relations from Long Island University in New York. She worked for the Florida Department of Commerce as an International Trade Representative which saw her travel all over the world. Joyce served on the board of the Tallahassee League until she became ill in 2010 and was a member of the State Board from 2005-2007. We will miss her.



POLL WORKING FOR THE LEAGUE

Our main fund raising event during election years 2008 and 2010 was our Adopt-A-Precinct project. LWVT members volunteered to serve as poll workers, who are paid for training and poll working at the rate of \$7.75 per hour. They served as Inspectors which involves working with the voters as they sign the registers. The money they earned was donated to LWVT.

The precinct we adopted was located at Timberlane Community of Christ Church. Some members also worked at other precincts. A huge thank you goes to Marilyn Wills, Janet Findling, Kathy Winn, Ruth O'Donnell, Rebecca Sager, Sandford Safron, Stuart Baker, Doris Partridge and Peggy Ramsey, who earned \$1,930.16 for the 2010 election year's primary and general elections.

The LWVT Executive Board, based on past experience, had voted to use the donated funds on publicity for the Vote 411 Voter Guide. The donation was to cover such items as yard signs, advertisements in Capital Outlook newspaper, and flyers. The total expenditures for these items were \$1,944.58 so we are left with a small deficit of \$14.42.

We hope to continue to do this during future elections and would be pleased to have more Leaguers participate. What could be more appropriate than for LWVT members to earn money to donate for all our projects than to work at the polls?



When the political columnists say 'Every living man', they mean themselves and when candidates appeal to 'Every intelligent voter', they mean everyone who is going to vote for them.

Franklin P. Adam



Practical politics consists in ignoring facts.

Henry Brooks Adams



There is just one rule for politicians all over the world. Don't say in power what you say in opposition. If you do you only have to carry out what the other fellow found impossible.

John Galsworthy



FROM NATIONAL

Dear League Members,

At this time of year, we usually look back at our past accomplishments. League members have a great deal to look back on with pride, not only for the 90 years we have been celebrating, but for this election season's hard work and accomplishments. True to those 90 years, the League stood up for voters as well as for openness and transparency in our election process. We spoke up against secret money in elections and exposed efforts to discourage certain groups of voters from going to the polls. We reached out to young voters through our high school registration project. We created opportunities for voters to get nonpartisan voter information through candidate forums and voter guides. We provided voters the information that they needed to register, to get informed and to vote through Vote 411.org and other efforts.

Across the country, Leagues took on issues of importance to their communities in this election. Whether we actively campaigned for or against ballot issues, or educated the public on the true ramifications of those issues, we demonstrated the importance of this organization and what it stands for. We were so vital and so visible, that we even scared some folks. The stories that we are hearing from Leagues about this election season, positive and not so positive, reinforce the need for Leagues to keep up the good work.

Thank you all for everything you do every day; it could not be more important. I wish you and yours a wonderful holiday season and the very best in the New Year!

In League,
Elizabeth



ANNUAL MEETING



photo by Susie Caplowe

Top Row: Theresa Chase, Wilbertine Philpot, Diane Roberts, Ben Wilcox

Middle Row: Linda Davis, Barbara Sterling, Charlotte Hand, Anita Davis, Norene Chase, Marilynn Wills

Bottom Row: Rachael Sutz Pienta, John Lorenz, Jenny Block, Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda, Anne Laura Rehwinkle, Dan Hendrickson



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\$75 Household Membership	\$ _____	
\$50 Individual Membership	\$ _____	
\$25 Student Membership	\$ _____	
I am enclosing \$5 for the LWVF Lobby Fund	\$ _____	
Additional Gift to the LWVUS Education Fund	\$ _____	(tax deductible)
TOTAL	\$ _____	

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