



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 17-NUMBER 9

NOVEMBER 2009

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NOVEMBER 2009

03 Tuesday 6:00 p.m.

Tallahassee-Leon County Planning
Commission Public Hearing
Frenchtown Renaissance Center
435 North Macomb Street

03 Tuesday 7:00 p.m.

Local Government Committee
Ruth O'Donnell 3509 Trillium Ct.

10 Tuesday 4:00 p.m.

Tallahassee City Commission
City Hall

16 Monday 1:00 p.m.

Capital Region Transportation
Planning Agency
City Hall

17 Tuesday 3:00 p.m.

Leon County Commission
County Courthouse 5th floor

17 Tuesday 6:30 p.m.

LWVT Board Meeting
LWVF Office, Beverly Court

18 Wednesday 11:30 a.m.

Hot Topics Luncheon
Ramada Inn Conference Center
2900 N. Monroe Street

24 Wednesday 4:00 p.m.

Tallahassee City Commission
City Hall

3 December Thursday 3:00 p.m.

Health Care Committee Meeting
Theresa Chase 2302 Trescott Drive

HOT TOPICS LUNCHEON

NOVEMBER 18, 2009

**MEDICARE FOR ALL? A PUBLIC
OPTION? CO-OPS? SINGLE PAYER?**



Are you suffering from too much information and not enough explanation about health care?

If you are, then don't miss the November Hot Topics. We have a cure for your ills. Dr. Bill Weissert, Professor Political Science at FSU will answer all your questions. Dr. Weissert studies the role of political institutions, including interest groups, in shaping health policy, and the effectiveness and costs of health policy. He is the Director of the Masters of Public Health Degree Program. Dr. Weissert is also a member of the Tallahassee League of Women Voters.

- Time:** 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
- Place:** Ramada Inn and Conference Center
- Lunch:** Sherried Chicken Breast, vegetable, dessert, coffee, tea
- Cost:** \$17.00 payable at the door

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

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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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Congratulations to all League members who have been helping with the FairDistrictsFlorida petition drive. We are currently at 98%---almost there. After the 2010 census, Florida legislators will draw new district lines. If 60% of the voters cast votes for the redistricting amendments, gerrymandering should be a thing of the past.

We should no longer have districts like Senate District 27 that start on one coast, cross the state of Florida, and end on the opposite coast. Obviously, some voters receive very little attention in this type of district. In the 2008 election, 27 of the 40 Senate seats were unopposed, and the House also had a number of uncontested seats. This is not a healthy situation.

We have the opportunity to change the way district lines are drawn, but there is still more to do. Fair Districts is charged ten cents for each petition checked, and they all have to be checked until we get 678,000 valid ones for each amendment. Our next hurdle is to raise enough money to pay for this process. Each dollar donated to the cause will pay for the checking of ten petitions. You can donate online at FairDistrictsFlorida.org or you can mail a contribution to FairDistrictsFlorida.org, P.O. Box 350188, Ft Lauderdale, Florida 33335.

First Call to Convention 2010

From LWVUS President Mary G. Wilson

WHAT: The LWVUS 49th National Convention

WHEN: June 11-15, 2010

Friday, June 11

Saturday, June 12

Sunday, June 13

Monday, June 14

Tuesday, June 15

Pre-Convention Training 2-5 pm

Briefings 10 am-Noon

Call to order Convention starts

1 p. m.

All Day

All Day

Adjourn Noon

WHERE: Atlanta Marriott Marquis

265 Peachtree Center Ave, Atlanta Georgia

Better Know a League

Rebecca Sager

On Tuesday evening, October 27, 2009, an intimate and gregarious group of nine Leaguers met at Theresa and Bryant Chase's very comfortable home for the first installment of "Better Know a League." Hostesses Theresa Chase, Rebecca Sager, Marilynn Wills, and Kathy Winn provided tasty comestibles—homemade organic chicken salad, fruit, tossed salad, sourdough bread, beverages, and desert. Rebecca gave a short presentation on League "Program"—our membership's tool for setting League priorities—then she led small group discussions on questions such as: what do you admire most about the League? what do you wish the League would do (or do better)? and, in the coming year, what could the League do that would have the most impact on an issue of local importance? The result was unexpectedly exciting: new relationships were forged between new and long time members while at the same time conversations yielded three really good ideas we'll take to the board for action.

"I learned a lot during the evening and want to thank everyone who came. What a pleasure it is to belong to a group whose membership can discuss the most complex and controversial civic issues with such intelligence and passion and humility. I especially appreciate how ready Leaguers are to act on issues so as to decisively improve our civic life. "

Keep your eyes open for the next "Better Know a League" evening event. We welcome all suggestions for making future events better and easier to attend.



Smiling and chatting are left to right: John Lorenz, Marilynn Wills, and Rick Minor. The two shy ladies on each side are Charlotte Hueler on the left and Janet Findling on the right.



Good time and good food were enjoyed by all

Summary of September Hot Topic

Our newest city commissioner, Mr. Gil Ziffer, spoke to us at our October Hot Topics. Commissioner Ziffer has lived in Tallahassee since 1983 and is very involved in the community. At this time, he chairs the board of the Challenger Learning Center and is the fundraising chair for Cascades Park; he has won many awards for his volunteerism.

He and his wife own a public relations and advertising firm.

Commissioner Ziffer was appointed to his seat when Allan Katz resigned; he arrived just in time for hearings on the budget. You can be sure that the information overload was huge. He is very interested in the arts and culture and thinks that volunteering is the best way to meet and get to know people in the community. Also, he thinks that commissioners should be involved in the community, and that they can learn more by going out into the community than by just relying on staff for information.

When his Southwood neighbors brought their concerns about cutting the bus service from that community to downtown Tallahassee, he started riding the bus. One concern in that area is crossing Capital Circle to get to a bus stop; the traffic on Capital Circle is quite heavy and is not a pedestrian friendly thoroughfare. One of the questions referred to the city not being innovative, but, instead, just reacting to problems rather than preventing them. At this point, Commissioner Ziffer addressed urban sprawl and the need for infill within the urban service area; he also stressed the need for public transportation. He said, "We can't just keep building roads. Try riding the bus."

Many of the organizations Commissioner Ziffer has worked with deal with young people. He feels that we need to provide more opportunities for young people or Florida will not thrive. He also sees a disparity in opportunities between the south and north sides of Tallahassee.

He discussed the plans for Cascades Park. Everything will be free. There will be a water park, and an amphitheater that houses three to four thousand people. The amphitheater can be reversed and address an audience of 300-400 people. Work on the park is to begin within 30 to 60 days.

Commissioner Ziffer is enthusiastic about his new job, and we wish him well.

United States
Census
2010



League Urges Support for Public Option As Legislative Efforts Continue

The US Senate and House announced significant health reform legislation during the month of October. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi unveiled details of the Affordable Health Care for America Act (H.R. 3962). Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid included an option for a government-run plan with a state opt-out provision to be added to America's Health Future Act of 2009 (S. 1796). Votes on the bills are anticipated in November and then continue to conference where a final bill is expected to come before the full House by the end of the year. Details and overviews of the bills can be found in several sources listed at the end of this article.(1) Debate will continue and the daily review of your trusted sources of information will be necessary to monitor the final bill's development, especially regarding the public option.

Several AP and other media sources report that a government-run public option in the legislation draws strong opposition from the GOP, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the insurance industry. Some libertarian and conservative groups find the most troubling aspect of the pending healthcare reform bills to be a federal requirement of Americans to buy insurance, while supporters liken it to the mandate to buy car insurance.(2)

Many progressive groups continue to support a single-payer system, and/or reform with a strong public option. Concern of supporters includes how the bills' effectiveness could be greatly compromised. For example, Health Care-Now reported to supporters that the two single-payer amendments to the House healthcare bill, one introduced by Rep. Dennis Kucinich allowing states to implement single-payer systems on the state level and the other by Rep. Anthony Weiner to have a vote on national single-payer legislation, are in jeopardy.(3)

While national polls over the last few months have shown varying degrees of public support of a government plan competing with the private insurance, the October Kaiser Health Tracking Poll finds public support for health reform remains in the majority.(4) Ironically, a Kaiser analysis indicates the public option will play only a minor role in the overhaul of health care. "Of the 30 million Americans likely to purchase insurance through exchanges created by the legislation, only six million -- or one fifth -- would enroll in a public insurance plan, according to a Congressional Budget Office analysis of the House bill. Viewing it another way, the six million using the public option would amount to only two percent of the 282 million Americans under the age of 65 who are projected to have health insurance by 2019, when the legislation is fully implemented. And that number could shrink because states may decide to opt out of a public insurance plan, an escape clause that's likely to be included in the Senate plan." (5)

The LWV supports the passage of comprehensive healthcare legislation with a public insurance option. Please continue to contact our legislators in this great effort (HR3200).

Sources:

- (1) <http://www.speaker.gov/newsroom/legislation?id=0327>
<http://finance.senate.gov/sitepages/legislation.htm>
<http://democrats.senate.gov/>
<http://republican.senate.gov/>
<http://www.kaiserhealthnews.org/Daily-Reports/2009>
<http://www.nytimes.com/edhealthcare2009>
- (2) <http://www.latimes.com/features/health/la-na-mandate1-2009nov01,0,4895768.story>
- (3) <http://www.healthcare-now.org/>
- (4) <http://healthreform.kff.org/>
- (5) <http://www.kaiserhealthnews.org/Stories/2009/October/31/health-insurance-public-option-negligible.aspx>

prepared by Theresa Chase

Good health is essential to
happiness, and happiness is
essential to good citizenship.

Charles Mayo, physician





From National

A Short History of Major Changes in the U.S. Health Care System since 1994: Costs, Coverage and Quality

The healthcare system in the United States has undergone major changes since 1994 after the defeat of President Clinton's effort to create a national system. "Over the last few decades, American health care has radically changed. A system that was largely not-for-profit has become a field where the profit motive and market forces affect every decision."

The defeat of comprehensive health reform shifted the effort of cost control to the private sector. One major change, called "managed care," promised to control costs, provide good coverage, provide quality health care and eventually cover everyone. Have these promises been kept?

Has Managed Care Controlled Costs?

For about five years, the total national expenditure for health care declined (1993 – 13.7 percent of gross domestic product [GDP]; 1998 – 13.5 percent of GDP). There is disagreement among analysts about the major cause for this decline. Some say it is due to managed care's effectiveness in using cost control methods or marketing strategies that led insurers to underprice their products in order to expand market share. Others say that it was due to the one-time major shift from fee-for-service plans, which cannot be repeated.

In 2004, the National Coalition on Health Care (NCHC) reported that since 1998 not only premiums but also the rate of increase in premiums had escalated. "What makes recent increases in premiums especially striking is that we have been in a period of low inflation."

Total spending in 2007 was \$2.4 trillion – 17 percent of GDP. "...the United States has \$480 billion in excess spending each year in comparison to Western European nations that have universal health coverage. The costs are mainly associated with excess administrative costs and poorer quality of care."

Have Managed Care Plans Provided Good Coverage?

Most people would define "good coverage" to include preventive, primary care, hospitalization, mental health, dental and vision as well as prescription drugs – without deductibles and little or no co-pays. Rising costs for health services have led health insurance companies to market new products to younger and healthier enrollees where risks are low and profits high. Some of these plans have moderate deductibles but limited benefits, e.g., \$10,000 maximum benefit cap. Other plans may have more comprehensive coverage but with high deductibles, e.g., \$5,000 for an individual; \$10,000 for families in-network (double if

out-of-network). Thousands of plans now exist that lower premiums by reducing benefits and raising deductibles and co-pays.

Has the Quality of Care Improved?

The 2004 NCHC reported on "an epidemic of sub-standard care."

The dominant finding of our review is that for most care that has been studied, there are large gaps between the care that people should receive and the care they do receive. This is true for all three types of care [preventive, acute, and chronic]. It is true whether one looks at overuse or under-use. It is true in different types of care facilities and for different types of health insurance. It is true for all age groups, from children to the elderly.

Are We Moving Toward Coverage for Everyone?

- * In 1994 there were 39 million uninsured people.
- * In 2002 there were 43.6 million uninsured people.
- * In 2003 there were 45.0 million uninsured people.
- * In 2004 there were 45.8 million uninsured people.
- * In 2006 there were 46 million uninsured people.
- * In 2007 there were 45.7 million uninsured people.
- * In 2009 it is estimated that there will be from 48 to

50 million uninsured people.

The Transformation of Health Insurance Companies

Beginning in 1995, non-profit health insurance companies gradually transformed into for-profit companies, selling shares on the stock market in order to raise capital which could be used to expand market share by buying other insurance companies. In 1988, ten top insurers covered 27 percent of all insured Americans. Today, four publicly traded corporations – WellPoint, Inc.; United Health Group; Aetna, Inc.; and Cigna – dominate the market, covering 85 million people, or almost half of all Americans with private insurance.

One result of this change is that insurance companies have become responsible to shareholders to maintain profit margins.

Private Health Insurers: Managing Money, Not Health Care

"That a medical insurer would agree to keep a lid on healthcare expenditures so it could get approval to open a bank illustrates a fundamental change in the industry: Insurers are moving away from their traditional role of pooling health risks ...

excerpted from *A Short History of Major Changes in the U.S. Health Care System since 1994: Costs, Coverage and Quality*. For the full text and references go to www.lwv.org. Health Care Reform, Background Papers



From State

The Florida League on Coastal Drilling. Perspectives from the League of Women Voters of Florida

The Florida League of Women Voters believes that Floridians must take note of the environmental risks versus the potential monetary gain when considering offshore drilling.

Florida's greatest assets are its emerald waters, its sugar-white sand, its gorgeous beaches. Oil spills DO occur, such as the huge one now in the Timor Sea off Australia. Hurricanes mean our state is particularly vulnerable to this kind of catastrophe. Couple those risks with the fact that past drilling efforts have yielded NO revenue, and I believe Florida citizens need to really question the Legislature's sudden interest in selling the rights to drill for oil off our beautiful shores. Florida's tourism industry is responsible for 20 percent of the state's economy, with its tourists spending nearly \$65 billion dollars, and creating 964,000 jobs. In addition, more than \$800 million worth of commercial fish are caught annually and more than \$5.6 billion is spent in annual recreational fishing expenditures.

...[oil] spills do happen, and fairly often in fact. Right now, the very technology they are touting as safe has sprung a massive leak in Australia. As of a week ago, reports say it may take 50 days to stop an oil and gas leak off northwest Australia as marine authorities fight to prevent the slick from harming migratory whales and breeding turtles. The leak in the Timor Sea has caused a 19 mile light-oil slick off the Kimberley, one of the world's last true wilderness areas. It is the third largest leak in Australia's history. And, right here in America, during 2008, the Coast Guard National Response Center logged more than 33,000 spills.

State Executive Director



In the fall of 2006 Peg McGarity accepted appointment to the part time Position of Executive Director of the LWVF. She is a member of the LWV of Tallahassee, served three and a half years as president of the LWV of Manatee County and is a past member of the LWVF Board of Directors. In her position of Executive Director, Peg supervises the day to day operations of the State Office in Tallahassee and provides technical assistance and support to the Board of Directors and local Leagues across the state. Peg retired in June 2006 after a successful career as a business woman and manager of non profit organizations. She spent ten years at Freedom Village Retirement Center in Bradenton Florida starting as the Marketing Director of the Healthcare Centers and

Do you remember Coastal Petroleum? There are not-so-ancient-history lessons from the Coastal Petroleum dispute four years ago that should not be forgotten. For twenty-five years the company had explored for oil just off our coast and found nothing. In 2005, Gov. Jeb Bush and members of the Cabinet proclaimed victory for Florida when they agreed to pay Coastal Petroleum Co. \$12.5 million to abandon its leases for oil drilling off the Gulf of Mexico.

Rep. Dean Cannon, incoming Speaker of the Florida House, believes drilling is a good idea, and introduced a surprise bill last Spring to lift the state's decades-old drilling ban, giving the Governor and Cabinet authority to approve new drilling lease proposals. His supporters stated last Spring that bringing drilling to Florida's coasts would annually net the state \$1.6 billion in royalties and taxes.

Governor Crist now says he supports offshore drilling if the coast can be protected...

Think of this, in all the time Coastal Petroleum drilled, the state only got \$2.66 million in revenues. With the \$12.5 million buyout, the state is already close to \$10 million down. But above and beyond the merits of drilling or not, the lobbying efforts of big-spending Big Oil would take over our elections process, reduce the voice of the voter, and restrict our choices in the governance of our state. To assist citizens in following the money, we call on the Legislature to disclose the sources behind all contributions to individuals and groups.

Excerpted from: *Small Bites, Big Issue: Coastal Drilling*

For the complete article and items for further reading go to: www.lwvfla.org and click on **Drilling**.

Editor's note: Always watch your back

While we were working hard on getting Health Care right, off shore drilling reared its ugly head in our State Legislature.

The price of freedom is eternal vigilance.

Thomas Jefferson, Founding Father

moving up the corporate ladder to the campus Community Relations Director. Her career path also included serving in the positions of Director of the Retired Senior Volunteer Program of Manatee/Sarasota Counties, Executive Director of the New Hampshire Governor's Office on Volunteerism and North East Regional Field Representative for the National March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation, and as a free lance consultant to the not for profit and for profit sectors in the specialty areas of community development, financial management and volunteer/staff training. Peg is a member of the Capital Tiger Bay Club, Tallahassee/Big Bend Region, Strategic Nonprofit Alliance Partnership (SNAP), and the Board of Directors of the Big Bend Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. Contact Peg at: lwvfl1@comcast.net



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TALLAHASSEE
SUMMARY OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES

October 14, 2009

The LWV of Tallahassee Executive Board met at the LWV of Florida state office on 10/20/09.

Health Committee members meet monthly at Theresa Chase's home and are busy keeping the phones ringing at our Congressional delegation's offices in support of universal health care . The Local Government Committee meets at the home of Ruth O'Donnell and are looking for observer corps members to help monitor the city and county commission meetings.

All members are urged to help distribute the Know Your Public Officials brochures. Let Marilyn know how many you need.

Ninety-eight % of the required redistricting petitions have been collected, but additional funds for processing are needed.

Despite a delay in starting, several members and friends have volunteered to work on the statewide Transportation Study. See Rebecca if you are interested.

Joyce Coombs has had to resign from the Board due to illness. Thank you for your dedicated service, Joyce.

Legislative Seminar will be held in Tallahassee March 22-24, so mark your calendar.

The first evening meeting of LWVT will be held on Oct. 27. Anyone may attend.

The next Board meeting will be held on Nov. 17 at the office on Beverly Court. All members are invited to attend or submit agenda items for discussion.

NOTE: Subsequent to the last meeting Ruth O'Donnell and Stuart Baker accepted appointments to the Board. We welcome our new members.

Peggy Ramsey, Secretary

CLASSIFIED ADS

We need you to join the observer corps and work at the Downtown Market. If you don't have the time to devote to serving on the Health, Local Government, or Education committees, then we have the perfect tasks for you.

Downtown Market: Three hours on a Saturday morning, registering voters, getting petitions signed, talking to Tallahassee citizens. November is your last chance.

Observer Corps: 2-3 hours at a night meeting of the City or County Commission meetings or the School Board Meeting, observing and taking notes. Your **presence** at the meeting is our goal.

LEGISLATIVE SEMINAR:

League members who would like to house a League Member from another League during the 3 day session. We would like to help members who may not be able to afford the hotel rates but would like to attend the Seminar.

In 2010 we are planning a special Voter focused on poll workers. If you have served as a poll worker and would like to tell your fellow Leaguers about it please write it up and submit it to mlbaker@fsu.edu. The write up may be long, short, sad, funny ...we want to hear all the stories.

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Mary L. Dixie
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878-5501

NEW SUSAN B. ANTHONY MEMBER

Rick Minor
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rickminor@yahoo.com

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TALLAHASSEE
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name _____

Phone (home) _____

Address _____

Phone (cell) _____

(please, print legibly)

E-mail _____

\$100 Susan B. Anthony Membership \$ _____

\$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 \$ _____

TOTAL \$ _____

(tax deductible)

Please make all checks payable to LWV of Tallahassee.

Mail to: LWVT, P.O. Box 10216, Tallahassee, FL 32302

(You may also renew/join online at www.lwvtallahassee.org. There is a \$2.00 charge for using PayPal.)



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