



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 18–NUMBER 8

OCTOBER 2010

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

04 Monday 7:00 p.m.

Bandwagon
WFSU-TV Station
Red Barber Drive

07 Thursday 6:00 p.m.

Big Bend Environmental Forum
Candidate Forum
City Hall 2nd Floor

12 Tuesday 3:00 p.m.

Leon County Commission
Leon Court Courthouse, 5th floor

12 Tuesday 6:00 p.m.

City-County Comprehensive Plan
Adoption Public Hearing
Leon County Courthouse, 5th floor

13 Wednesday 4:00 p.m.

Tallahassee City Commission
City Hall, 2nd floor

13 Wednesday 6:00 p.m.

Leroy Collins Public Library
200 W. Park Avenue

18 Monday 6:30 p.m.

LWVT Board Meeting
LWVF Office, Beverly Court

19 Tuesday 3:00 p.m.

Leon County Commission
Leon Court Courthouse, 5th floor

20 Wednesday 11:30 a.m.

Hot Topics Luncheon
Holiday Inn & Suites
2725 Graves Road

27 Wednesday 4:00 p.m.

Tallahassee City Commission
City Hall, 2nd floor

28 Thursday 3:00 p.m.

Health Care Committee Meeting
Theresa Chase 2299 Trescott Drive

HOT TOPICS LUNCHEON

Wednesday, October 20, 2010

DOES THIS REALLY BELONG IN THE STATE CONSTITUTION?????

Do you find yourself asking that question when in the voting booth? Do the ballot summaries really tell you what the amendment will do? Why is this amendment necessary? How will it benefit the citizens of Florida? Why should I care if this amendment passes? Who sponsored it? How much will it cost?

Hopefully, many of your questions about the six amendments on the November ballot will be answered at our October Hot Topics. Tallahassee League members Ben Wilcox, Marilyn Wills, Ruth O'Donnell, and Barbara Sterling will explain the amendments, and give you the pros and cons for each. Be prepared when you walk into that voting booth on November 2. Call in your reservation today.



Time: 11:30 a. m. – 1:00 p. m.

Place: Holiday Inn and Suites
2725 Graves Road
(Just north of I-10 on N. Monroe)

Lunch: Lemon-Rosemary Chicken Breast, Mushroom-Tarragon Ragout, Red Bliss Mashed Potatoes, House Salad, Rolls, Butter, Dessert, Iced Tea & Coffee

Cost: \$20.00 payable at the door

Reservations: Please call the LWVT Voice Mail (309-3005) by Friday, October 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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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We have had a busy month getting ready for the November election; our September Hot Topics speaker was Supervisor of Elections Ion Sancho who enlightened us on the history of redistricting in Florida. There was a good turnout of members and guests; we also welcomed several new members who joined that day. Our only regret is that we did not tape the presentation; it was outstanding.



At the October meeting, we will address the ballot amendments that will appear on the November ballot. We began with nine amendments; three were struck from the ballot by the Supreme Court, and Amendment 8 is on the Supreme Court calendar. Ben Wilcox and I will tackle Amendments 1, 2, 5, 6, and 8; Ruth O'Donnell and Barbara Sterling have a power point presentation on Amendment 4. We will also have information on the County Charter Review Amendments that will be on the ballot.

Election season is a hectic time for League members; our mission is to inform voters and encourage them to vote. That means we are out there explaining the amendments, registering voters, and providing citizens with the answers to their voting questions. Every member can help with this; we realize that people with full time, paid employment don't have a good deal of spare time. You can do your part by volunteering at the Downtown Market for a few hours on a Saturday morning or helping out with Bandwagon on October 4; the latter is an evening activity.

On Friday, October 22, the League of Women Voters of Tallahassee will be answering phones at the WFSU-FM fundraiser. We have two hour shifts. If you have some time available that day, email marilynnwills@msn.com and sign up. The station is a great asset to our community and merits our support.



HEALTH CARE COMMITTEE

AN INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE:

Wednesday, October 13 , 2010, 6:00 pm:

Open book discussion of *The Healing of America*: by T.R. Reid (Penguin Press, 2009) to be held at the Leon County Public Library, 200 West Park Avenue, Tallahassee. You are encouraged to read the book and participate in the discussion of this interesting first-person description of the world's health care systems, or just come to listen. This event is sponsored by the Capital City Chapter - PNHP, Tallahassee League of Women Voters and Center for Inquiry of Tallahassee.

Please tune in your favorite local Florida Public Broadcasting station at 8 pm on Thursday, October 14 for the "FL Senate and Governor Candidates in Unprecedented Debate on Health Care." Senior Correspondents of PBS's *The News-Hour*, Gwen Ifill and Judy Woodruff, will moderate. The debate is produced by Florida Public Broadcasting stations, with WEDU Tampa as the producing station, and the League of Women Voters of Florida, and sponsored by Florida Hospitals Foundation.



EDUCATION COMMITTEE

WHO IS THIS MAN, ARNE DUNCAN?

In the August 2010 (Issue 40) of the *Christian Science Monitor* Arne Duncan is heralded as Education's "Mr. Accountability." In the October 2010 issue of *The Economist* article, "Ready, Set, Go" he is described as "trying to incite dramatic reform that will last. Who is this man, Arne Duncan?"

Arne Duncan grew up in Chicago. In his youth he helped out at Sue Duncan's Children's Center, which she founded on the city's South Side. He went on to study sociology at Harvard and spent a year working at the Children's Center doing research for his senior thesis on the opportunities, or lack thereof, for the urban underclass. It was then that he decided he wanted to pursue a career in education, but not before taking some time to play professional basketball in Australia.

John Rogers, a Chicago investment manager and philanthropist, was responsible for bringing him back to Chicago where Mayor Richard Daley appointed him superintendent of Chicago's schools. He became known for closing Chicago's worst

schools and opening new schools, many of them charter schools. It was because of his success as superintendent that President Obama tapped him for Secretary of the Department of Education.

One of Duncan's jobs as Education Secretary has been to distribute \$100 billion that was to be invested in reforms to turn around failing schools, awarding money to those schools with innovative ideas. "Race to the Top (RTTT) rewards states that reform by tying teacher evaluation to individual student's yearly improvement on standardized test scores, through merit pay, by lengthening the school day and/or year, and after school tutoring to bring failing students up to grade level. Proponents believe that Secretary Duncan can help narrow the achievement gap and return the United States to the highest international standards. In his favor, Secretary Duncan does a lot of listening and states that he is not a politician and that every policy decision is made on the basis of, "What's in the best interest of kids?"

But, whoever he is, he has people talking and thinking about education.

The Secretary has his critics, among them, Diane Ravitch, who was Assistant Secretary of Education under George H. W. Bush. Ravitch states in her book, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*, that RTTT is an intrusion of federal power. Ravitch readily admits that "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) did not do what it was intended to do. According to Ravitch, it was too dependent on testing to prove school and state improvements in reading and math. "It assumed that higher test scores on standardized tests of basic skills were synonymous with good education... Testing is not a substitute for good curriculum and instruction... Good education cannot be achieved by a strategy of testing children, shaming educators and closing schools." She feels Duncan's reforms are no better. Ravitch explains in depth what she believes makes good educational reform in her chapter, "Lessons Learned."

Florida has just been awarded \$700 million in a federal RTTT grant. Governor Crist has appointed a 20-member board to make recommendations by December 2010.

The Education Committee is reading the strategic plan for RTTT. If you would like to read it the URL is <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>



The documentary film "Waiting for Superman" is much in the news. Check it out at: www.waitingforsuperman.com.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

I am very pleased to introduce four new LWVT members who joined in September.

Please contact anyone you know or anyone who lives near you, add your welcome and perhaps arrange to bring them to the next LWVT event.

It is always exciting to have new people with fresh ideas join us! I look forward to working with you.

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If you are interesting in building membership, please join the Membership Committee!

Peggy Ramsey, Chair

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

The Local Government Committee met on September 8 to discuss several ongoing items and review proposed 2010-11 budgets for the City of Tallahassee and Leon County. While reviewing the City budget, the group discussed recent concerns expressed by political candidates regarding the City's utilities business. After a lively discussion, consensus was that the Committee should examine the question of whether or not there should be a separate, independent from the City Commission, citizens' board for utilities services. We will begin to pursue this question by meeting with utilities

department staff in October in lieu of a Committee meeting.

As a follow-up to previous discussion, Committee members were made aware of a 2007 publication of research into city/county consolidations which was conducted by the Pennsylvania Economy League and which can be found at <http://www.alleghenyconference.org/PEL/PDFs/CityCountyConsolidationsComparativeAnalysis.pdf>.

Committee members also discussed storm water management standards. A proposed change to the County Charter (which will be voted on in November along with other proposed changes) will mean that county standards will prevail over city standards. Co-Chair Barbara Sterling reported on long-standing discussions about storm water management held by City of Tallahassee and Leon County staffers and that state standards are in process of development and may override local standards. The group sees this area of government responsibility as possibility for future functional consolidation.

Committee Co-Chairs Ruth O'Donnell and Barbara Sterling will present the Committee's PowerPoint presentation on Amendment 4/Hometown Democracy at the October Hot Topics on October 20.



LWV Advocacy Brings Results: the Health Care Reform Law

Nancy Rudner Lugo, DrPH

It is sweet to look at success. League of Women Voters advocated for meaningful health care reform. Now health care reform is law and the nation benefits. The law removes financial barriers to preventive care, increases the ability for individuals and families to purchase insurance, strengthens Medicare, provides an avenue for long-term care coverage, supports community care, and builds in multiple strategies to improve health care quality.

In spite of all the fiery dialogue surrounding health care reform last summer, more than half (55%) of the people in the country say they are confused about what is actually in the bill, according to a recent poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation. It is important that the facts of the law be understood and separated from ongoing politics.

Highlights of the 2010 health care law include:

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STATE *cont'd*

Prevention

Prevention is a cornerstone of the new health care law. With the expanded coverage for preventive care and increased access to insurance coverage, we can save money and sorrow by preventing problems and by intervening early before the problems get worse (and more costly). Starting this year, insurance companies and Medicare plans have to cover preventive care services without our high deductibles and copays. These include colonoscopies, mammograms, and annual checkups.

Insurance

Among the most vexing problems in our current health care system is the challenge of getting health insurance if you do not get it through employment. Buying your own insurance can be prohibitively expensive. If you have a preexisting condition, it has been almost impossible. By 2014, the new health care law will forbid insurance companies from discriminating against anyone because of age, gender, health status, or preexisting conditions.

Starting with phased in restrictions this year, health plans cannot impose lifetime and annual coverage limits. In the past, too many people found out when they needed care that the annual limits of what their plan covered had left them with no coverage when they needed it most. Annual limits will be banned completely by 2014.

The health care law also addresses another vexing problem in the insurance market: trying to compare plans. Health insurance will be available in purchasing pools (exchanges) by 2014. Insurers will need to provide a standard package of benefits at four levels of coverage. The standard benefit level will make comparing benefits and costs much easier.

Young adults have been among the most uninsured. Starting this year, parents will be able to include unmarried children up to age 26 in a family policy.

Medicare

The new law closes the donut hole for drug coverage. The donut hole is the hole of “noncoverage” for Medicare Part D patients who have reached the initial limit of \$2830 in drug costs. Currently, Part D does not cover medications costs after that initial limit until the person’s drug bill exceeds \$ 4550. Last year, almost one in four (23%) of Florida’s Medicare beneficiaries fell into the donut hole. This year, everyone in the doughnut hole will get a rebate check for \$250 to help

cover the costs. This payment is automatic. We all need to be vigilant for scams that offer to help seniors “apply” for their check. No paperwork is needed. Next year, those reaching the donut hole will get a 50% discount on brand drugs and 7% for generics, as well as an additional \$500 in coverage. The donut hole gradually closes over the next 10 years, disappearing by 2020. This could save \$2000 next year for those with high medication costs. Starting next year, the new rules stop Medicare Advantage plans (Medicare HMOs) from charging more than the original Medicare. The law also rewards MA plans for providing high quality care and stipulates that part of the bonus payments are to be used for providing additional benefits to participants. Importantly, starting in 2014, the new law sets limits on how much of the premium you pay for Medicare insurance goes for administrative costs (such as marketing, CEO salaries) instead of health care.

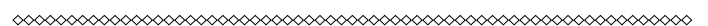
Long- Term Care

Do you have long-term care coverage? Most of us do not. Another provision of the health care reform law is voluntary national long-term care insurance. Starting in 2011, employees will have automatic payroll deductions (opting out is an option) for long term care insurance coverage which will cover not only nursing home care but also care at home.

The new health care law expands financial protection to the spouses of those on Medicaid. States will be able to allow a community spouse to retain some assets if the spouse goes into a nursing home and has Medicaid coverage. The law also promotes independent living by enhancing home services and community based care. States will have options to participate in programs that pay for care in the home.

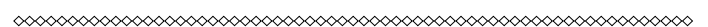
Sources for more information on health care reform:

- AARP www.AARP.org/getthefacts
- Kaiser Family Foundation www.kff.org
- US Government www.Healthcare.gov



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

-Martin Luther King, Jr.



2011 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

During the past few months, League members across the state were asked to list their priorities for the 2011 legislative session.



Government in Florida was of primary importance, and League members were especially concerned about the issues of finance and taxation. One League had concerns about ethics and making sure legislators understand the Sunshine Laws; another League wanted runoff elections; the LWVF does not support runoff elections at this time. However, there is a position supporting

Instant Runoff Voting. IRV would eliminate the need for runoff elections.

Many Leagues are concerned about Education, including the provision of adequate funding to insure quality education.

Natural Resources was a strong choice; a permanent ban on offshore drilling and the preservation of freshwater resources were mentioned.

Quite a few Leagues are concerned with Sustainability and climate change, renewable energy and energy efficiency. Several Leagues are working on transportation on the local level, and one League expressed the need for reauthorization of the Department of Community Affairs. The 2010 Legislature did not reauthorize DCA and did not provide any funding for it. Unless it is reauthorized, DCA will sunset.

If you have questions you would like our legislative delegation to answer, send them to me at marilynwillis@msn.com. We will compile the questions and use them in our legislative interviews. If you would like to be on a team that interviews our local delegation, just send me your information. The Tallahassee League also has a Lobby Corps; if you would like to join us during the legislative session, let me know.

VOTE 411 LEON.ORG
ELECTION INFORMATION YOU NEED
• LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS •

VOTER SERVICES—YARD SIGNS

We have more to distribute and would love some volunteers willing to put a sign in their yard. You may have several to put in friends' yards!

If you are willing to do this, please call me at 386-7589 and I will bring you as many signs as you want!

Thanks for your assistance in helping to educate voters!

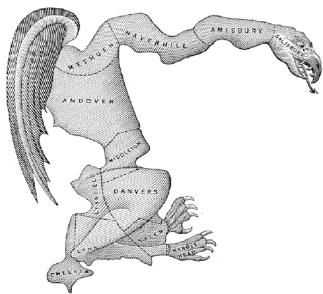
SEPTEMBER HOT TOPICS REPORT

Leon County Supervisor of Elections gave us some great historical background on redistricting in Florida. Prior to 1972, the “Pork Chop Gang” ruled the state. Although not quite 20% of the population of Florida lived in the Panhandle, the Gang controlled both the House and the Senate.

In 1972, their redistricting attempts were struck down by the Federal Court, and the court drew a map. Almost 50% of incumbents were defeated. The years 1972-1978 were deemed the “Golden Period” in Florida. There was increased funding of education, the Department of Health and Human Services was created, and Water Management was addressed by the newly created Department of Environmental Resources. However, by 1982, the “Pork Chop Gang” reasserted itself, and there was, again, much gerrymandering of districts.

Today, voters can be profiled, and incumbents can pick and choose the voters who will vote for them. According to Mr. Sancho, Leon County has not been allowed to be a single jurisdiction since a local citizen almost beat an incumbent state Senator in 1976. He also reminded us that these legislative seats belong to the people and that both parties share in the rigging of districts. The districts are designed to protect the incumbents of both parties. In open elections, incumbents don't get re-elected at a rate of 99%. Supervisor Sancho recognized the efforts of the League of Women Voters, when in 1998 the Constitutional Revision Committee met and put forth a redistricting plan, and the fact that the League is back in the fight in 2010. He left us with a quote from Benjamin Franklin – “Let not ideology triumph over reason.”

THE GERRYMANDER



Few things are as immutable as the addiction of political groups to the ideas that have once won them office.

John Kenneth Galbraith

BE SOMBODY-HELP STILL WANTED

- MEMBERS FOR EDUCATION COMMITTEE
- DOWNTOWN MARKET
- WATCHERS FOR PUBLIC MEETINGS OF INTEREST TO THE LEAGUE

To volunteer, contact

Marilynn Wills, President: marilynnwills@msn.com

Rebecca Sager, Vice President: rsager@music.org

Peggy Ramsey, Secretary/Treasurer: ramsey020@comcast.net

DOWNTOWN MARKET

Many thanks to the volunteers who spent their Saturday mornings in September at the Downtown Marketplace. Marilynn Wills, Ruth O'Donnell, Anita Davis and Jane Clarkson came out to help register voters, advertise Vote411Leon, and hand out literature on Amendments 5 and 6.

October 4 is the deadline for new voters to register and still be able to vote in the election on November 2 (29 days prior to the election date). Address changes may be made past that date.

October Saturdays should have beautiful weather, so choose a date and come on down!

October 2

October 9

October 16

October 23

October 30

Please call me at 386-7589 or email me at ramsey020@comcast.net and I will put you on the schedule.

Thanks so much.

Peggy Ramsey





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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TALLAHASSEE
 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name _____ Phone (home) _____
 Address _____ Phone (cell) _____
 _____ E-mail _____
 (please, print legibly)

\$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	\$ _____	(tax deductible)
TOTAL	\$ _____	

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.)