

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

LWV

OF ALACHUA COUNTY/GAINESVILLE

THE VOTER—September 2006 Official Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Alachua County/Gainesville

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Greetings Leaguers!

We are now in the thick of the fall election season. This is where the League thrives, as providers of voter information. With the lengthy list of candidates and races on the primary and general election ballots, we have certainly been busy organizing our candidates' forums.

Our primary election candidates' forum was held on Saturday, August 19 at the Doyle Conner Building. It was a long day, but I was pleased with the forum and especially with how many Leaguers came together to lend a hand.

If you've noticed this election season, the League has not been busy with voter registration. On January 1, a burdensome law passed by the legislature went into effect, imposing heavy fines on voter registration groups. The law could have bankrupted the League for a few mistakes. LWV of Florida did not take this lightly. First, they put a moratorium on all voter registration activities. Next, they went to bat, filing a law suit to prevent enforcement of this law.

On Monday, August 28, justice was served and a federal court in Miami blocked enforcement of the law. This is an incredible victory for voters and I applaud LWV of Florida for taking on this challenge.

Our Fall Luncheon is just around the corner – Tuesday, September 26. Our speaker, Jeanne Zokovitch, LWV of Florida Lobbyist, will be discussing the 2006 legislative session. In her talk, Jeanne will emphasize election reform issues, but will also cover other League issues that arose in the session.

LWV lobbying and legislative activities are some of the most exciting work that the League engages in. This is the League in action: appealing to our legislators, voicing community concerns, taking part in the political process, holding our politicians accountable. Please come out to the luncheon and see the fruits of League advocacy.

Crystal Goodison
President, LWV Alachua County/ Gainesville

UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS:

Save the Dates

Tuesday, September 26 – Fall Luncheon, 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM, Sweetwater Branch Inn, 625 E. University Ave. Speaker: LWV of Florida Lobbyist Jeanne Zokovitch. Topic: Summary and Implications of 2006 Legislative Session.

Wednesday, September 27 – Local Government Committee, 11:30 AM, Books Inc.

Saturday, October 21 – General Election Candidates Forum, 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM, Savannah Grande Reception Hall, 301 N. Main St.

Tuesday, November 5 – General Election. Get out and VOTE!

www.lwv-alachua.org

WHAT IS INSTANT-RUNOFF VOTING?

Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) has been emerging on both the local and the state horizons. At the local level, the City's Charter Review Committee (CRC) has recommended that the Gainesville City Commission consider IRV as a way to consolidate its general and runoff elections into a single day. The CRC was formed in February 2005 to consider the length of terms of City commissioners; term limits of commissioners; and election dates and cycles.

At the state level, the League of Women Voters of Florida (LWVF) has been engaged in a study of Alternative Voting Processes. IRV is one of the alternative voting methods covered in the study.

Electoral systems, voting methods, voter education, and really all things voting related, are at the heart of League work. Hence, our local League should educate itself on Instant Runoff Voting. – CG

The following Instant Runoff Voting (IRV): A Ranked Voting System article excerpts from Alternative Voting Processes Study, Facts and Issues, Part II and was prepared for the League of Women Voters of Florida by the League of Women Voters of the St. Petersburg Area.

In the United States, the terms Instant Runoff Voting and Single Transferable Vote (STV) are often used interchangeably, but STV also is used in elections that produce more than one winner. This study examines Single Transferable Vote as it is used in contests with a single winner among multiple candidates and uses the term Instant Runoff Voting for this process.¹⁵

In Instant Runoff Voting, voters rank the candidates on the ballot, marking

their first, second, and third choices, depending on how many candidates are in the race; however, a voter does not have to vote for more than one candidate. In round one, the first choice votes are counted. If a candidate gets 50% + 1 of the votes, he or she is declared the winner. If no one has a majority, the counting goes to round two. The candidate with the lowest number of votes is eliminated. The votes cast for the eliminated candidate are then transferred (or moved) to the second choice listed on each ballot. If someone gets a majority the election is over. If no one receives a majority, the counting goes to round three and continues until someone has 50 percent + 1 of the total votes. There is no need for a separate runoff election, thus explaining the term Instant Runoff Voting, and the winner always has a majority of the votes.¹⁶

A simple example illustrates how IRV works. One hundred citizens are voting for the most architecturally unique county courthouse in Minnesota. The candidates are Stearns County, Freeborn County, and St. Louis County (Duluth).

Round One

County Courthouses	First Choice	Second Choice
Stearns	41	6 for Freeborn 35 for St. Louis
Freeborn	40	10 for St. Louis 30 for Stearns
St. Louis Co. (Duluth)	19	15 for Stearns 4 for Freeborn

No courthouse has a majority, so the election goes to the next round. The lowest vote-getter, St. Louis, is eliminated, and the 19 votes are redistributed 15 for Stearns and 4 for Freeborn.

Round Two

County Courthouses	First Choice	Second Choice
Stearns	41+15	6 for Freeborn 35 for St. Louis
Freeborn	40+ 4	10 for St. Louis 30 for Stearns
St. Louis Co. (Duluth)	19	15 for Stearns 4 for Freeborn

Now Stearns has 41+15 votes or 56. And Freeborn has 40 + 4 or 44. The Stearns County courthouse wins with the majority of the votes.

A national advocate of IRV is the Center for Voting and Democracy, and its Minnesota affiliate is FairVote Minnesota. These organizations sponsor extensive Web sites, which provide information about IRV and other voting systems.¹⁷

Instant Runoff Voting is not a new concept: "The key to development of Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) was the invention of the single transferable vote (SW) in the 1860s by Thomas Hare in England and Carl Andrae in Denmark. Instant Runoff Voting, using a preference ballot, was invented by W.R. Ware, a professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, around 1870."¹⁸

Four states — Florida, Indiana, Maryland, and Minnesota — used variations of Instant Runoff Voting in primary elections as early as 1912. Ireland and Australia currently use IRV in national elections,¹⁹ and London uses it to elect its mayor.²⁰ San Francisco is implementing IRV for its November 2004 elections as well.²¹ In 2003, at least 19 states, including Minnesota, introduced legislation to enact IRV, but the bills failed or were carried over in every instance.²²

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Other organizations also use Instant Runoff Voting. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences uses it to determine the finalists and the American Political Science Association uses it to elect its president.²³

For more information on the CRC, and its reports to the City Commission, please contact Crystal Goodison, at cgoodison@gmail.com.

NOTES

15. Andrew Reynolds and Ben Reilly. The International IDEA Handbook of Electoral System Design, (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 1997), 37-38.
16. "A Simple Guide to Instant Runoff Voting." What Is IRV? <http://www.lwvpasadenaarea.org/irv.html>

17. "The Center for Voting and Democracy is a non-partisan and non-profit corporation incorporated in the District of Columbia for educational purposes. The Center researches and distributes information on electoral systems that promote full voter participation and fair representation, particularly alternatives that will enable more voters to elect candidates of their choice than in plurality or in traditional at-large elections." 6930 Carroll Ave., Suite 610, Takoma Park, Maryland. <http://www.fairvote.org/>; www.fairvote.org/vra/Amicus198.htm; FairVote Minnesota: <http://www.fairvotemn.org>
18. "The History of Instant Runoff Voting," Center for Voting and Democracy, <http://www.fairvote.org/irv/vtlite/historv.htm>

19. Ibid
20. Hugh Muir, "Narrow Victory for Mayor Who Returned to the Fold," The Guardian, June 12, 2004, <http://www.fairvote.org/pr/global/countr/londonmayor.htm>
21. "California's Voting Systems Panel Approves IRV Compatible Equipment for Use in San Francisco," April 9, 2004, <http://www.fairvote.org/irv/testing.htm>
22. "Election Reform Legislation," National Conference of State Legislatures. <http://www.ncsi.org/programs/legman/elect/electionssearch.cfm>
23. "The History of Instant Runoff Voting."

LWVF SETS 2007 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Every year, the LWV of Florida (LWVF) board, along with help from the local Leagues, sets the priorities for the upcoming legislative session. These priorities make up the LWVF platform during the legislative session. The 2007 Legislative Priorities are listed below, along with a summary statement of the state League's position on each priority:

- **Government in Florida:** Promote an open government that is responsive to the people of the state.
- **Florida Constitution:** Support basic law that ensures a government that is responsive and accountable to the people of the state.
- **Election Law:** Support measures to protect, extend, and encourage the use of voter

enfranchisement and to advocate fair methods of financing political campaigns.

- **Natural Resources in Florida:** Promote an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest.
- **Growth Management:** Promote the management of natural resources as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems.
- **Water Resources:** Support public policies that promote conservation of freshwater and its availability for environmental, public supply, agricultural, industrial, and mining uses on a priority basis, with the environment and public supply first priorities.

HELP REDUCE VOTER PRINTING COSTS: ADVERTISE WITH US!

We are now selling advertising space in our newsletter. To start, all ads will be business card size, 2" high by 3.5" wide. The rates are as follows:

- \$65/mo. for 6 month contract
- \$85/mo. for 3 month contract
- \$95/mo. for one time ad

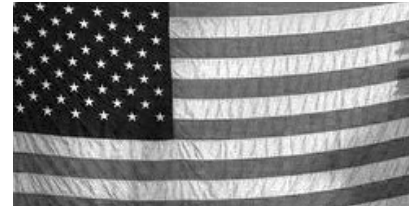
Please contact Chris Flagg at chris_flagg@yahoo.com or 376-3634, if you are interested.

LWVFL VISITS GAINESVILLE

On Friday, July 14, past and current board members of LWVAC had the pleasure of dining with current LWV of Florida board members at Leonardo's 706 in Gainesville. Since Dianne Wheatley-Giliotti became LWVF President in 2005, she and the state board have been "making the rounds" across the state for their monthly board meetings. This is a great way for local Leagues to connect and communicate with the state board members.



LWVAC members in attendance at the dinner included: Crystal Goodison, Jennifer & Emory Springfield, Chris Flagg, Sue Dudley, Rosalie Bandyopadhyay, Marcia Davidoff, Elizabeth Mann, Deanye Overman, Jerry Kidder, and Liz Reyes.



www.lwv-alachua.org

2006 - 2007 Board of Directors
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CALLING FOR CONSENSUS! LWVF STUDY ON ALTERNATIVE VOTING PROCESSES

At the 2005 Biennial League of Women Voters of Florida Convention, the delegates approved a study of Alternative Voting Processes. The LWVF board appointed the LWV of St. Petersburg Area (LWVSPA) to prepare background material and consensus questions to be used by Leagues statewide for the Alternative Voting Systems portion of the study.

The LWVSPA Study Committee determined that the LWV of Minnesota already had done an in-depth study and was given permission by LWVMN to use their comprehensive report as the foundation for Florida's study. Because Florida's election laws and procedures are different than Minnesota's, LWVSPA also researched various sources to find out about voting issues related to the possible implementation of alternative voting systems in Florida. In addition, LWVSPA gathered information about some recent implementations of alternative voting systems in other states.

The information gathered by LWVSPA is available for your review on LWVF website:
<http://www.lwvfla.org/AVSstudypage.html>

Sometime in October or early November, LWVAC will be meeting to discuss the Consensus Questions and provide input to

LWVF. If you are interested in taking part in this process, you should read the Alternative Voting Study background materials available on the LWVF website and come prepared to discuss at the meeting.

CONSENSUS QUESTIONS:

Below are the consensus questions in which LWVF is asking for input. The deadline for input is December 15, 2006.

Is the current method of plurality voting adequate under all circumstances, or should alternate options be recommended? The methods under consideration are the following.

1. Plurality Voting – Current voting system in Florida:

the candidate with the most votes wins, regardless of whether or not he or she received a majority of the votes cast.

Support ___ Oppose ___

No consensus ___

Why or why not?:

2. Approval Voting: Voters cast votes for all the candidates they approve. The candidate with the most votes wins.

Support ___ Oppose ___

No consensus ___

Why or why not?:

3. Borda Count: Voters rank the candidates, and a pre-determined number of points are assigned to each ranked choice, with a first choice receiving the highest number of points, a second choice less, and so on. The candidate with the most points wins.

Support ___ Oppose ___

No consensus ___

Why or why not?:

4. Condorcet: Voters rank the candidates, and the winning candidate is the person who can top each of the others in a "pair-wise comparison."

Support ___ Oppose ___

No consensus ___

Why or why not?:

5. Instant Runoff Voting: Voters rank the candidates. If no candidate receives a majority of the votes, the candidate with the lowest number of votes is eliminated, and the votes cast for the eliminated candidate are transferred (or moved) to the next choice listed on each ballot. This process of elimination continues until a majority winner is declared.

Support ___ Oppose ___

No consensus ___

Why or why not?:

The logo for the League of Women Voters of Florida, featuring the letters 'LWV' in a bold, serif font. The letters are white and set against a dark purple square background. A white, curved line sweeps across the bottom of the square, starting from the left side and ending near the top right corner.

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Please Join Us!

**The League of Women Voters of Alachua County/ Gainesville
Invite you to attend the 2006 Fall Luncheon**

“SUMMARY & IMPLICATIONS OF THE 2006 LEGISLATIVE SESSION”

Date: Tuesday, September 26, 2006

Speaker: Jeanne Zokovitch, Legislative Coordinator/ Lobbyist for LWV of Florida

Time: 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM (Lunch starts at 11:30, Program begins at 12:00)

Location: Sweetwater Branch Inn, 625 East University Ave., Gainesville, (352) 373-6760

Cost: \$25 per person. (Hot buffet lunch, vegetarian options provided.)

Reservations Required by Wednesday, September 20.

About Jeanne Zokovitch

Jeanne is a Staff Attorney with WildLaw in their Florida Office. WildLaw provides a variety of legal and professional services to communities and grassroots organizations working on environmental issues in the public interest. In the 2006 Legislative session, Jeanne represented the LWV of Florida on election reform issues, and wrote and published Capitol Report, a LWVF publication released throughout the legislative session.

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RESERVATION FORM – 2006 LWVAC FALL LUNCHEON

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Please make _____ lunch reservation(s). (Vegetarian options provided).

Enclosed is a check for \$ _____ (@ \$25 per lunch)

Mail this completed form, along with check to:

LWVAC c/o Billie Staff
5526 NW 25 Terrace
Gainesville, FL 32653

FEDERAL JUDGE PROTECTS THE RIGHT TO VOTE IN FLORIDA COURT BLOCKS LAW CREATING NEW OBSTACLES TO VOTER REGISTRATION

A federal court in Miami blocked enforcement of a Florida state law enacted earlier this year that would have imposed crippling fines on voter registration groups. The plaintiffs, civic organizations and voting rights groups that have been working in Florida through many election cycles without government interference, say that the law had shut down their efforts to help eligible voters get on the rolls.

“This is a win for democracy and will send a signal to officials in Florida and other states that you cannot erect unreasonable barriers to voter registration,” stated Wendy Weiser, deputy director of the Democracy Program at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law and co-counsel to the plaintiffs. “This decision could help head off comparable voter-suppression statutes in other states, such as Ohio, Georgia, New Mexico and Colorado,” continued Weiser.

At issue in the case, *League of Women Voters v. Cobb* (case no. 06-21265), was a punishing and tiered regime of deadlines and fines for groups engaged in non-partisan voter registration in the State of Florida. Under the law, (Fla. Laws 2005-277, Secs. 2 and 7), which went into effect on January 1, the government would have imposed a mandatory fine of \$250 for each and every voter registration form submitted more than ten days after the form was collected

from a prospective voter, \$500 for each registration form submitted after the passing of a registration deadline, and \$5000 for each registration form not submitted, for any reason.

Most chilling to plaintiffs’ activities was the law’s adoption of a “strict liability” legal standard, meaning that no extenuating circumstance — not even destruction of an office by a hurricane — would have excused the failure to submit a registration form within the law’s deadlines.

Plaintiffs told the court that the multiple fines would devastate the budgets of many non-partisan voter registration groups. For example, the entire annual budget for the Florida League of Women Voters is \$70,000, or the equivalent of just 14 lost registration forms. At the same time, virtually everyone associated with an organization — from a volunteer canvasser to the organization’s Board chair — can be held personally responsible for paying the fines.

“This is a win for Florida voters and a reaffirmation of the critical role civic groups play in helping tens of thousands of unregistered citizens come into the process and become voters every year,” said Dianne Wheatley-Giliotti, president of the League of Women Voters of Florida. The Florida League, a plaintiff in the suit, is a nonpartisan, largely volunteer organization that has been helping to register Florida voters since 1939. By

a unanimous vote of its Board, the Florida League for the first time has suspended all voter registration operations with its 27 local Leagues across Florida.

“Florida attempted to radically raise the cost of doing business for voter registration groups,” said Craig Siegel of Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel LLP, pro bono co-counsel for plaintiffs. “In effect, the law would have imposed a tax on democracy and a tax on democratic participation that makes voter registration work prohibitively expensive for many of the state’s leading civic organizations,” said Siegel.

“More than 50 million Americans are not registered to vote,” said Gary Rosen, pro bono co-counsel and a shareholder at Ft. Lauderdale law firm Becker & Poliakoff. “This ruling sends a message to legislators in Florida and other states that they should applaud civic groups like the League of Women Voters — not penalize them — for tirelessly working to strengthen our democracy,” said Rosen.

The suit also challenged the law’s unequal treatment of political parties and non-partisan groups. The law would have exempted political parties from the fines to be assessed against non-partisan organizations. Plaintiffs argued that there is no evidence whatsoever in the legislative record to suggest that late or lost voter registration forms have been more

The logo for the League of Women Voters of Alachua County/Gainesville, featuring the letters 'LWW' in a bold, serif font. The 'L' and 'W' are connected at the top, and a white swoosh underline is positioned below the letters.

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prevalent among Florida's non-partisan groups than among Florida's political parties – in fact, they said, there is no evidence in the record of any serious problem of late or lost voter registration forms at all.

In addition to the Florida League of Women Voters, PACT, the Florida AFL-CIO, and the SEIU Florida Healthcare Union had completely suspended Florida voter registration efforts in the face of the new law. The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Council 79 (AFSCME) has substantially scaled back its voter registration activity.

“This law would have quickly erased from the state some of the most basic

sights of American democracy: the non-partisan voter registration table at the mall or bus stop; the unaffiliated registration advocate at a school or workplace; and the encouragement to participate in elections often found in churches and synagogues,” said Elizabeth S. Westfall of the Advancement Project, co-counsel for the plaintiffs.

Plaintiffs joining the suit include: League of Women Voters of Florida; People Acting for Community Together (PACT), a coalition of community organizations, churches, synagogues and schools based in Miami-Dade County; American Federation of State, County and

Municipal Employees, Council 79 (AFSCME); Service Employees International Union, Florida Healthcare Union (SEIU-FHU); Marilyn Wills, president of the Tallahassee League of Women Voters; and unnamed individuals who are eligible to and want to vote this year but will be denied that right by the challenged law.

Plaintiffs are represented by the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law and the Advancement Project, and by pro bono counsel Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel LLP, and Becker & Poliakoff, P.A.

TUNE IN: LISTEN TO CANDIDATES ONLINE!

Listen to our Primary Election Candidates Forum ANYTIME! Many thanks to WUFT-FM Classic 89 & Naturecoast 90 for posting our primary election candidates' forum on their Web site as on-demand MP3 streams. Simply go to their website anytime to hear the candidates:
<http://www.wuftfm.org/>

Listen to Statewide Candidate Online: “Public Matters”
Serve Voters

The Florida Public Interest Foundation has launched an innovative initiative called that

uses technology to inform voters. Called “Public Matters”, the new statewide service is being co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Florida and Common Cause of Florida. Beginning August 8, listen live or via instant replays at your convenience. “On demand replays” of the live events will be available by the Internet and phone, available 24/7 for maximum convenience to voters.

For details, check out www.ThePublicMatters.net or email forthepublic@earthlink.net.

THANK YOU

The League would like to thank the following volunteers who made a successful Primary Forum possible: Rosalie Bandyopadhyay, Kim Barton, Kathy Dilcher, Chris & David Flagg, Crystal Goodison, Barbara Herbtzman, Colby Lowe, Odetta MacLeish-White, Priscilla Milliman, Deanye Overman, Carolina Puente, Jennifer & Emory Springfield, Whitney Untiedt, Neha Vyas, and Kiara Winans.

Thanks to Darcy Hames, at the Doyle Conner Building, for assisting us with reserving the auditorium.

Special thanks to Bill Beckett from Classic 89, who was there from 8 AM until 4 PM recording candidates!