

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

LWV

OF ALACHUA COUNTY/GAINESVILLE

THE VOTER - September 2007 Official Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Alachua County/Gainesville

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

My League journey began in 1974 in Syracuse, New York, when America was just emerging from a tumultuous decade. The civil rights movement, Watergate, and the Vietnam War had held up a mirror to our country, and many of us did not like what we saw. Each of us handled this disillusionment and cynicism in our own way - my lifeline was the League of Women Voters and the extraordinary members who were undaunted by the dark politics of the day.

After moving to Gainesville in 1980, I discovered another group of Leaguers conversant in the issues of the day, organized, and not shy about making sure the "powers that be" heard what they had to say!

Now in 2007, my journey includes the presidency of LWVAC. I again see many people who have become cynical and feel powerless. The threats to the election process and civil liberties, and a rising distrust in the government give many a sense of déjà vu. However, just as we persevered 30 years ago, we must do so again. League members must continue to play a vital role.

If you, too, are a long time member, you are still needed - to write to legislators, attend meetings, contribute money, and bring in new members. We need new faces, too - to organize candidate forums, serve on committees, question politicians, contribute money, and bring friends to our events.

Although the world may seem a more fearful place than in the past, Leaguers understand history, and we know that now is when we must work the hardest to protect the integrity of the ballot, the principles of the Constitution, and the issues to which the League is committed.

The League journey continues, and we are stronger for going on it together.

Yours in League,
Rosalie Bandyopadhyay, President
LWV Alachua County/ Gainesville

UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS:

Save the Dates

Tuesday, September 18 - Fall Luncheon! 11:30 AM, Sweetwater Branch Inn, 625 E. University Avenue.

Tuesday, September 25 - Voter Services Committee Meeting, 6:00 - 7:30 PM, Book Lovers, Inc., 515 NW 13th Street. For more info, contact Chair Crystal Goodison, cgoodison@gmail.com.

For more information about committees and their meeting schedules, please contact the chairpersons directly.

www.lwv-alachua.org

LWVAC WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

LWVAC is pleased to welcome its newest members! **Mickie Edwardson** and **Erika Henderson** recently joined the local League, and they are already getting involved in League projects.

Mickie taught broadcasting in the Communications Department at the University of Florida for 38 years and was the first woman to receive the Distinguished Professor Service Award. Mickie is currently busy researching and writing about the life and work of James Lawrence Fly, former chairman of the Federal Communications Commission. She is also very active in the Gainesville community, including work for the local United Nations Association and

the Alzheimer's Association. Mickie is interested in participating with the Voter Services Committee and the newly formed Action Committee.

Erika is a Gainesville native who currently works with the development team at the University of Florida Foundation and in her family's local produce and nursery business. She also serves on several community boards, including the Gainesville Chamber Orchestra and the Diabetes Camp. A vegetarian who enjoys cycling in her free time, Erika is interested in participating with the Voter Services Committee and the newly formed Action Committee.

PRINCIPLES OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

Amid the routine of daily work, we sometimes forget why the League is a vital part of our lives. The core values of the League of Women Voters guide the organization's committees, positions, programs, and presence in our local, state, and federal government systems. Take a moment to remember why the League is important to you. **The League of Women Voters believes:**

- In representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States.
- That democratic government depends upon the informed and active participation of its citizens and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizens' right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making public records accessible.
- That every citizen should be protected in the right to vote; that every person should have access to free public education that provides equal opportunity for all; and that no person or group should suffer legal, economic, or administrative discrimination.
- That efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing, and coordination among the different agencies and levels of government.
- That responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people; that government should maintain an equitable and flexible system of taxation, promote the conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest, share in the solution of economic and social problems that affect the general welfare, promote a sound economy, and adopt domestic policies that facilitate the solution of international problems.
- That cooperation with other nations is essential in the search for solutions to world problems, and that the development of international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.

Congratulations

with appreciation
for a job well done to

**Crystal, Whitney
and the entire
League of Women Voters**

From Ed and Doris Dietrich
of Big Bear Pen Mnt., Highlands, NC
and Deerfield Beach, FL



Creating solutions, changing lives.

Linda A. Frey, R.N.
Program Director

**Easter Seals Florida, Inc.
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Altrusa House of Gainesville**

2002 NW 36th Ave.
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352.377.7708 Phone
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lfrey@fl.easterseals.com

Thank you to Ed and Doris Dietrich of Deerfield Beach, FL, and Highlands, NC., parents of Chris Flagg, and to Polly and Paul Doughty, long time LWV members, for their contributions to the production of the LWV local newsletter.

To place an ad, please contact Chris Flagg at chris_flagg@yahoo.com or 376-3634.

ELECTION REFORM WOUNDS OF THE 2007 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The 2007 legislative session yielded disturbing cuts to the Initiative Petition Process, which gives citizens the right to amend Florida's constitution. The most damaging election reform bills include:

Senate Bill 1920 & House Bill 559 - Private Property Rights

This legislation weakens citizen ballot initiatives by authorizing private property owners to regulate ballot initiative activity on their property. This bill could prohibit people from gathering signatures in stores, shopping malls, and strip centers if the property owners disagree with the petition.

Senate Bill 900 - Initiative Petition Requirements

The most severe provision of this bill would have required that signed petitions be turned in to the Supervisor of Elections offices within 30 days of signing, which could have

ended volunteer-run petition drives.

LWVF and over 20 other citizen groups banded together against SB 900, which Governor Crist ultimately vetoed.

House Bill 537 - Presidential Primary & Voter Verified Paper Ballots

This bill moved the Presidential Primary to January 29, 2008, solidified Governor Crist's plan for voter-verifiable paper ballots, and included a laundry list of election reforms. The big wins for Florida voters include the paper ballot system and the recount and audit requirements, which came at the expense of numerous cuts to the Initiative Petition Process.

One provision, which implements a signature revocation process, could result in the harassment of voters who have signed a ballot petition. Since the petitions will be public information,

citizens may be singled out and lobbied to revoke their original signatures. The League believes citizens can already "revoke" their signature - by voting against the initiative if it makes it onto the ballot.

This bill also imposes a series of fines for 3rd party voter registration groups. LWVF is challenging the constitutionality of a similar state law passed in 2005, on the basis of its unequal treatment of non-partisan groups and political parties, which are not subject to fines.

LWVF remains strong in our support of Governor Crist's paper ballot plan, but the League is deeply troubled by the many anti-voter provisions in HB 537. LWVF is urging Governor Crist to convene a blue ribbon citizens' panel to review Florida's election laws, enforcement mechanisms, and anti-voter provisions, and to recommend changes for consideration by the legislature in 2008.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING OUR LEAGUE LOBBYIST

At last year's Fall luncheon, LWVAC members had the exciting opportunity to hear the League Tallahassee Lobbyist Jeanne Zokovich speak on legislative issues. The delegates to the LWVF state convention in May heard her stimulating wrap-up of the legislative session and the role that the League played in the process. We all do not have the skills and ability to meet legislators, present our information and positions, and testify at committee meetings. Jeanne has admirably represented LWVF because she is as passionate about our issues as we are!

Unlike other entities with seemingly inexhaustible funds, LWVF depends on the contributions of its members to keep Jeanne going. At the state convention, a spontaneous "passing of the hat" raised over two thousand dollars in five minutes to enable Jeanne to represent the League during the legislature's special session. Our local League likewise "passed the basket" at the May Annual Meeting and raised \$335 in five minutes.

Knowing how important it is to maintain our presence in Tallahassee during the session, LWVAC will continue to support the LWVF Lobby Fund. A fundraising basket will be at every League event this year - consider what you might spend on a bottle of water or a large double mocha cappuccino, and put it in the basket instead. Let's see how much we can raise in support of the Lobby Fund next year!

From the League of Women Voters of Florida — July 9, 2007

On behalf of the League of Women Voters of Florida, I am privileged to recognize the recent \$335 donation to the Lobby Fund from members of the LWV of Alachua County/Gainesville. You have our gratitude for understanding that the League voice in Tallahassee is directly linked to our financial capabilities. I look forward to seeing you and many of your members at future statewide LWV events.

With sincere appreciation,
Dianne Wheatley Giliotti
President, LWVFL

LOCAL LEAGUE MEMBER APPOINTED TO STATE COMMITTEE

Sue Dudley has been appointed to LWVF's new Climate Change Committee. Sue has been active in LWVAC for many years, most recently chairing the Local Government Committee and developing the highly-praised "Follow the Money" presentation.

Sue graduated from UF with a BA in Environmental Science and attended the Second North American Conference on Preparing for Climate Change in Washington D.C. and the Global Warming 2000 Conference in St. Petersburg. Sue will bring much enthusiasm and knowledge of this subject to this state committee, and LWVAC looks forward to reports and updates on this vital topic.

Congratulations, Sue!



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