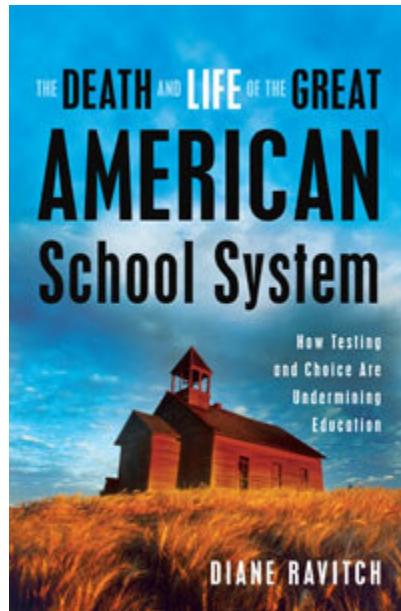




THE VOTER

LWV of the Villages/Tri-County Area ◇ May & June 2011 ◇ Vol. 6 Issue 2
www.lwvtri.org
Nationally recognized! Locally active!



**MAY 23, 2011
BREAKFAST MEETING
PANERA'S, SPANISH SPRINGS SQUARE, THE VILLAGES
9:30 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.**

Join us as the Education Committee, in preparation for the LWVUS National Study on the Role of the Federal Government in Education, presents a book report on "The Death and Life of the Great American School System" by Diane Ravitch.

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization.
We do not endorse political parties or candidates.

We encourage informed and active participation in government and work to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influence public policy through education and advocacy.

Our May 23 meeting will be the last one until September so I hope you will make it a point to attend as we kick off our participation in the LWVUS Education Study with a book report. The Education Committee has been meeting regularly to discuss the Ravitch book and there is no doubt that a lively conversation will take place at Panera's. With the end of the 2011 legislative session, there are many questions about the state of public education in Florida. Bring a friend!

For the League this has been a very disappointing session in Tallahassee. While it was expected that there were going to be cuts in education, growth management and health care, we were really taken by surprise by the draconian changes to the election law. For whatever reason, the legislators seem to be under the mistaken impression that groups like the League, Boy Scouts, church groups, college groups, etc. have perpetrated a great fraud on the voters in Florida. Of course, no one could point to anything concrete. Other changes affect amendments proposed by the legislature. The legislators, in their infinite wisdom, also saw fit to make it more difficult for voters to make changes in their registration at the polls, as well as shortening the early voting time. Across the state, supervisors of elections question the need for all these changes. They did not ask for them. This is an anti-voter piece of legislation. **At this point, all that remains is for all of us to contact Governor Rick Scott and request that he veto HB1355.** Please ask your friends and neighbors to contact the governor. ***This is not just a League issue!***

If the governor signs the Legislation, local League will discontinue registering voters in Florida. The groups registering procedure, as well as the financial penalties, are too onerous for local Leagues. Voter registration and education have been at the core of the League for 91 years. It is sad that it has to stop. Please see the press release from the state League on page 4 in this newsletter.

For those League members who will be leaving us, have a safe summer. We look forward to your return in the fall. For those League members who will be staying in the tri-county area, you are invited to join us for coffee and conversation that will begin in June. We will be studying, researching and discussing the seven amendments sponsored by the Florida Legislature that will be on the November 2012 ballot. It is never too early to start. See page 3 for more information.

This will be our last newsletter until August. Enjoy your summer.

In League,

Joanne

MAY 23 GENERAL MEETING

Please join League members for Breakfast at Panera's in Spanish Springs. After eating and socializing, we plan on getting a head start (no pun intended) on the LWVUS Education Study and report on the Diane Ravitch book featured on the first page. We will discuss how a national study is done, including timeline, resources, consensus questions and how to locate the LWVUS white papers prepared by the national study committee. These papers cover the history of the role of the Federal Government in education, core standards and assessments, early childhood education equity and funding as well as legislation and funding for children who are disadvantaged. The Education Committee has been meeting since January, so you won't want to miss this very important meeting. Bring a friend!

For more information, contact **Carolyn Johnson**.

Under the auspices of this committee, the League will hold a series of **Community Conversations** beginning, **Monday, June 6, 9:30 a.m., Panera's, Spanish Springs, The Villages.**

The purpose is to research and discuss the seven proposed amendments from the Legislature that will be on the November 2012 ballot. This is in preparation for speaking engagements prior to the 2012 elections. The public will be invited to join us for a cup of coffee and conversation. Don't forget to invite a friend!

Following are the proposed amendments as well as a brief summary of each one:

Abortion (HJR 1179) To include in the Florida Constitution the federal ban on use of all public funds for abortion. It would also overturn all court decisions that rely on privacy rights in the Florida Constitution to reject abortion restrictions.

Confirming justices (HJR 7111) The Senate would confirm new justices to the Florida Supreme Court. The Legislature, by simple majority vote, could void court rules. Investigations of judicial misconduct - now confidential - would be available to the House in advance of impeachment proceedings.

Capping state revenue (SJR 958) Imposes a limit on state revenues based on a formula that includes changes in population and inflation.

Veteran's property taxes (SJR 592) Expands discount on property taxes to all veterans disabled as a result of combat, not just those who are Florida residents.

Property taxes (HJR 381) Gives a series of property tax breaks to first-time homebuyers, commercial property and those with second homes in Florida. First-time homebuyers would receive a homestead exemption worth up to \$200,000 to be phased out over five years. It lowers the cap on the amount a property assessor can raise the assessed value of a commercial property and non-homestead second homes from 10 percent to 5 percent each year.

Health insurance mandates (SJR 2) No law can "compel, directly or indirectly," anyone to carry health insurance, setting up a legal feud

Joanne M. Coen.

between Florida and the federal government over requirements of the federal health care law championed by President Barack Obama.

Religious funding (SJR 1218) Repeals current prohibition of state funding, directly or indirectly, for religious institutions. This provision has prevented school voucher opponents from enacting law to provide state vouchers directly to private schools.

For those amendments proposed by the Senate (SJR), go to <http://www.flsenate.gov/> and type in the bill number; for those proposed by the House (HJR), go to <http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/> and click on Bill Finder and type in the number. At both sites, you will be able to access the Legislative Staff Analysis which gives you the history and background information as well as amendments for each of these amendments.

If you are planning on attending, please contact **Betsy Brody, Voters Service Chair.**

With regard to reapportionment, the Legislature will begin statewide meetings in June in Tallahassee. In our area, the committee will be at **Colony College, June 13, 8 a.m. to 12 noon. Richard Coen** is working on this issue along with **Frances Spedding**.

Betsy and **Richard** can use your help. Please contact them. They cannot do this alone.

HELP IS STILL NEEDED!!!!

Joanne Coen would love to pass off the monthly newsletter to somebody who likes to do computer work. In addition, she would be very happy to show someone how to make changes and update the website. Believe me, if she can learn how to do it, so can you. Please contact her to find out more about either one of these opportunities.

The Board needs to appoint a Nominating Committee for the coming year. The committee is composed of two members from the general membership plus one board member. The committee will work to fill positions that are up for election in 2012. This is a great way to get to know other League members. Please contact Joanne and offer to help.

PRESS RELEASE FROM LWV FLORIDA
MAY 8, 2011

It is with great regret that the League of Women Voters of Florida announces that if the newly passed state election law goes into effect (HB 1355), the Florida League will immediately cease our voter registration efforts in this state. The League calls upon the Governor to VETO this Elections Bill, and for the Department of Justice to carefully review the impact this law will have on voting rights in Florida.

Despite the fact that the League of Women Voters is one of the nation's most respected civic organizations, with a 91-year history of registering and educating voters, we will be unable to comply with the egregious provisions contained in HB 1355.

Not only does the bill make it more difficult for voters to participate in our democracy via a decrease in early voting and new policies regarding address changes at the polls, it also imposes an undue burden on groups such as ours that work to register voters.

Under the false pretext of reducing "fraud," Florida's legislative leaders have instituted a law that will shut down the efforts of groups such as the League, the Boy Scouts, student groups, civic organizations and others who undergo the important task of helping citizens get registered to vote.

While the League remains committed to empowering an active and informed citizenry, we cannot and will not place our thousands of volunteers at risk, subjecting them to a process in which one late form could result in their facing financial and civil penalties.

By passing HB 1355, the legislature has declared war on voters. Effective immediately, the League will begin to explore legal remedies. In the meantime, the League urges Governor Rick Scott to stand up for democracy and veto HB 1355.

###



MEMORIAL DAY – MAY 30, 2011



Villages/Tri-County Area
Be a Voice for Citizens! Be a Force for Change!
Be Involved in the Process!
www.lwvtri.org

Become a member of the LWV of The Villages/Tri-County Area MAL Unit.

Name _____

Phone No. _____

Address _____

Email _____

Zip Code _____

Village, if applicable _____

Community, if applicable _____

Former League Member: Yes _____ No _____ Where: _____

Interested in:

Government in Florida _____

Education in Florida _____

Justice in Florida _____

Social Policy in Florida _____

Natural Resources _____

Growth Management _____

Dues are paid annually:

Susan B. Anthony	\$100.00	_____
Individual	\$ 50.00	_____
Household	\$ 75.00	_____
Local Dues	\$ 10.00	_____
Student	\$ 25.00	_____

Checks should be made payable to LWV of Florida and mailed to Carolyn Johnson, 2615 Caribe Drive, The Villages, FL 32162.

Your dues include membership in the LWVUS and LWVF as well as a subscription to the *Florida Voter*.