

THE VOTER

LWV of the Villages/Tri-County Area ♦ February 2010 ♦ Vol. 4 Issue 7

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Nationally recognized! Locally active!



3RD ANNUAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH LUNCHEON

&

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS 90TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

Siam Orchard Restaurant, 27/441, The Villages

Monday, March 15, 2010, 11:00 a.m.

COST: \$15.00 per person

HONOREE:

Karla Grimsley, Regional Director

5th Judicial Circuit, Guardian ad Litem Program

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.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Once again, "civil discourse" was on display at a League meeting. When it seems as if discussions have to turn into shouting matches, the League comes through with a meeting that respects opinions even though they may be different. Our February meeting concerned growth management and Amendment 4 (Hometown Democracy). Com. Barbara Fitos, and Scott Ales, presented us with their view points and while they did not agree, the discussion was polite and respectful. Both agreed that the last several years have seen many amendments to comprehensive plans and both agreed that the process is not working well. Where they disagreed was on the solution. What is the answer? Is it asking for a super majority vote on amendments to the comprehensive plans? Is it eliminating the number of exceptions to the plan? Is it Amendment 4? No one was really sure. What do you think? Read the article on the Florida Constitution beginning on page 5.

As our legislators are preparing for the start of the session on March 2, this is just a reminder that during the session, you will be receiving "Capitol Reports" which is prepared by the League's lobbyist. This publication updates members on the progress of legislation either supported or opposed by the League. In addition, you will be receiving Action Alerts during the session so I ask you to respond.

We are looking forward to our combined **Third Annual Women's History Month Luncheon and 90th Birthday Celebration of the League on Monday, March 15**. I hope you have made your reservation and that you will be joining us as we honor **Karla Grimsley, Director, Guardian ad Litem Program, 5th Judicial Circuit**. In addition, we will also be recognizing our long time League members. Make your reservation now.

In League,

Joanne

MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to the following new members:

Phyllis Novak,
9163 SE 118th Loop
Summerfield, 34491 (Del Webb)
304-9068, phyllisnovak@aol.com

Peggy Pope
17254 S. E 85th Willowick Circle
The Villages, 32162 (Village of Briar Wood)
259-2897, opope5@comcast.net

MARK YOU CALENDARS

Monday, March 8,
10:00 a.m., Board
Meeting

Home of
Joanne M.
Coen

Monday, March 15,
11:00 a.m.,
Women's History
Month Luncheon

Siam Orchid,
CR27/441, The
Villages

Monday, April 12,
11:00 a.m., Annual
Meeting

Jitterz Café,
27/441,
Bellevue

Officers & Directors

President:	Joanne M. Coen
Vice Presidents:	Barbara Cope
	Richard L. Coen
Treasurer:	Carolyn Johnson
Secretary:	Judie Brown
Directors:	Betsy Brody
	Bernice Cozewith
	Helen Gozdanovic
	Frances Spedding
	Linda Thomas



90TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

WHERE: Siam Orchard Restaurant, 27/441, The Villages

WHEN: Monday, March 15, 2010, 11:00 a.m.

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HONOREE:

Karla Grimsley, Regional Director

5th Judicial Circuit, Guardian ad Litem Program



Name:_____ **Phone No.**_____

Guest Name:_____ **Phone No.**_____

Amount Enclosed_____

Reservations can be made by sending a check in the amount of \$15 payable to the **LWV The Villages/Tri-County Area** by **Friday, March 8, 2010**, to **Joanne M. Coen, 1960 Ardmore Way, The Villages, Florida 32162**, joannejon@aol.com. For more information, call **Joanne M. Coen, 352 750-1366**.

No refunds for cancellations received after March 8, 2010.

OUR GOLD LEAGUE MEMBERS

Gladys Corbin first joined the League in Dearborn, Michigan in 1952. Those were the days of Units in the League. Some of the Unit studies Gladys was involved in were the Juvenile and Family Court System in Wayne County (where Dearborn is located), and a state study of the Michigan Constitution. This was in preparation for the upcoming mandated Constitutional Convention to determine if and how Michigan's constitution should be changed. After a brief hiatus, while teaching, Gladys rejoined the League in Rochester, Michigan where she immediately became active. She served a term as League president, and also a term on the state board. As a result of these activities, as well as many others, Gladys was twice elected to the Avon Township Charter Commission, as the community was looking at becoming a city. She was later elected to serve as Avon Township Trustee for a four year term and also served on the Planning Commission. It was only a few years later that cityhood was adopted and the community is now Rochester Hills. Though the Rochester League was merged into the Oakland County League, "old members" still get together twice a year for lunch. Here, in The Villages, Gladys was instrumental in getting the League off the ground and has served on the board.

Frances Spedding joined the LWV-Grand Traverse Area in 1968. The minutes of the Annual Meetings show that she presented the budget for the years 1969, 1970, and 1971. From 1971 to 1973 she served on the Board as chair of the Finance Committee. In 1973 and 1974 she served on the Nominating Committee. From 1974 through 1977 she served on the Board as chair of Publications. In 1974 and 1975 she served as the chair of the Local Government Study Committee. In 1975, 1976 and 1977 she audited the books of the League. For several years, Frances was on the Library Committee which worked many hours to pass a millage to build a new community library. She was active on committees involved in local and county government studies. Always willing to help with forums, especially with candidate forums, she frequently helped screen the questions. Frances has been active in our League since day one, and currently serves on our board.

LEAGUE SALUTES MEMBERS

With March being Women's History Month, join with the League in recognizing and honoring the long time membership of the following members:

50+ years	Gladys Corbin and Frances Spedding
40+ years	Betsy Brody
30+ years	Carol Balbes, Judie Brown and Carolyn Johnson
25+ years	Nancy Bell, Betty Keller and Charlene Walker

Thank you for your dedication and service to the League. You have held positions of leadership and volunteered many hours in the interest of your communities.

We are indebted to you!

AMENDING THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION

At our February meeting, Com. Barbara Fitos, District 4 Marion County Commission, and Scott Ales, former Mayor of Eustis, spoke to us about growth management and 2010 Amendment Number 4 to the Florida State Constitution, Entitled "Referenda Required for Adoption and Amendment of Local Government Comprehensive Land Use Plans", and more commonly known as "Hometown Democracy".

The proposed amendment to be voted on at the November 2, 2010, General Election "Establishes that before a local government may adopt a new comprehensive land use plan, or amend a comprehensive land use plan, the proposed plan or amendment shall be subject to vote of the electors of the local government by referendum, following preparation by the local planning agency, consideration by the governing body and notice.", and must be approved by sixty percent (60%) of voters on Election Day in order to become effective.

A lively debate occurred between our speakers regarding the merits of the proposed amendment with Com. Fitos and Mr. Ales having differing opinions. Whether you had already taken a position on, or attended the meeting to learn more about, the proposed Amendment, both speakers educated us about the actions of local government that caused the proponents of the Amendment to begin the citizens initiative process required to amend the Constitution.

So, while a lively debate occurred between Com. Fitos and Mr. Ales over the merits of the proposed amendment, and since the League of Women Voters of Florida (LWVF) has not yet taken a position on the proposed amendment, consider whether an additional amendment to the Florida Constitution is the appropriate vehicle to accomplish the results sought by the Amendment proponents.

Adopted in 1968, Florida's current constitution is our state's sixth constitution. Florida's five previous constitutions—dated 1838, 1861, 1865, 1868 and 1885—were a reflection of the time periods in which their drafters lived. Today's constitution contains much of the work of the previous authors in such areas as the bicameral legislature.

There are five ways to amend the state constitution: Ballot Initiative Process; Constitutional Convention; Constitutional Revision Commission; Legislative Joint Resolution; and the Taxation and Budget Reform Commission.

The LWVF has established a "Yardstick for a Good State Constitution." Some of their recommendations are (1) It should be a simple, understandable and integrated statement of basic law, free from obsolete and statutory detail; a flexible instrument free from unsound limitations binding upon the Legislature with clearly defined lines of authority and responsibility; (2) It should have general provisions under which cities and counties may achieve self-government; (3) It should establish state standards for finance and taxation that meet the requirements of modern society; (4) It should provide for meeting the

increasingly extensive social and economic problems that affect the general welfare; and (5) It should include amendment processes that are in harmony with the other provisions of the Constitution.

The LWVF has taken the position that the Florida Constitution should promote an open government that is responsive to the people of the state. To effect change in Florida government the League seeks reform through the state's: (1) constitutional amendment process; (2) legislature; and (3) courts.

At the 1995 LWVF Convention, delegates adopted a study of the process and impact of citizen initiative on the state Constitution. In December 1995, the LWVF Board announced a position that reaffirmed support for the constitutional citizen petition initiative and established support for the statutory citizen petition initiative.

In ensuing years, Florida citizens, frustrated by the Legislature's unwillingness or inability to address specific concerns, have increasingly relied upon the initiative process to force the Legislature to deal with issues. Unfortunately, many of the resulting proposed amendments address matters more properly dealt with by statutory law

and are inappropriate for inclusion in a Constitution.

As a result, over the years many diverse, and sometimes controversial amendments, have been proposed to the Florida Constitution. Amendments have included (1) modifications to the amendment process itself; (2) parental notification of a minor's intent to terminate a pregnancy; (3) minimum wage increases; and (4) limiting cruel and inhumane confinement of pigs during pregnancy. The voters also approved a citizens initiative referendum to amend the Florida Constitution to require the construction of a statewide high speed rail system connecting all of the state's major cities, which amendment was removed from the Constitution via a subsequent ballot referendum.

So whether amending the Florida Constitution to incorporate proposed Amendment Number 4 is the proper vehicle, when government is unwilling to heed the call of its citizens then the citizens are forced to use the only vehicle available to them. Continue to educate yourself about the amendments by going to <http://www.lwvfla.org/>.

Richard L. Coen
V.P.



2010 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Ben Wilcox has been hired by The League to be its professional lobbyist for the 2010 Legislative Session. He will also coordinate with the volunteer LWV of Tallahassee Lobbying Corps, the State Board and Off-Board Point Persons on priority issues. Ben was formerly with Common Cause Florida and is a veteran Tallahassee watcher.

Once the session starts on March 2, you will be receiving a copy of the "Capitol Report" prepared by the League's lobbyist. In addition, from time to time you will be receiving Action Alerts asking you to contact legislators regarding specific issues. Please respond when you receive these Alerts. During the upcoming Legislative Session, the League will be concentrating on the following three priorities:

Government: Promote an open government that is responsive to the people of the state.*

Equitable Taxation

The League supports tax legislation which does not jeopardize local service, addresses infrastructure deficits and removes unfair tax exemptions which affect governments' ability to serve citizens. Several bills have been filed, but so far little action has been taken. Although the bill has yet to be filed, it is expected the League will once again be in opposition to the Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR). Other legislation has been filed which the League is monitoring including a review of sales tax exemptions, applying the sales tax to Internet sales and requiring multi-state corporations to pay corporate income tax on profits made in Florida. Governor Crist has also proposed reducing the corporate income tax.

Redistricting Reform

The League supports single-member election districts that are equal in population, that provide access for minorities, are compact and, when possible, take local characteristics such as political and geographical boundaries into consideration. Committees in both Houses have been meeting to discuss the

2012 cycle of redistricting and the possible effect amendments 5 and 6 would have on the process. FairDistrictsFlorida has made their presentation to the committees.

Citizen Initiatives

For the past four sessions, the League has fought against passage of new restrictions on the citizen's initiative process. As bills addressing citizen initiatives arise, the League will oppose bills that increase the moneyed interests' strangle-hold on the initiative process and the legislative process and, where appropriate, advance the idea of a citizen statutory initiative.

Elections

The League supports legislation that promotes stricter election audits and would give the Supervisors of Elections more flexibility in selecting early voting sites. Several bills have already been filed regarding the early voting issue including SB 828, SB256 and HB57. Secretary of State Kurt Browning has told the League he is not supporting an expansion of early voting this year. Elections bills in the Senate will go through the Committee on Ethics and Elections and five "shell" bills have been filed expressing "legislative intent" to revise elections or ethics laws. These bills will be the vehicle for amendments once the Chair decides what he wants to do. In the House, elections bills will go through the Governmental Affairs Policy Committee and the Economic Development and Community Affairs Policy Council.

Education: Priorities are Funding, Accountability and Civic Education.

The League is supporting HB 105 and Senate Bill 1096 which would create the "Justice Sandra Day O'Connor Civics Education Act." It would require an end-of-the year test on civic education at the middle school level.

Social Policy: Priority is Health Care.

Health Care Reform

The League will continue to work with a coalition of organizations including the Florida Public Interest Research group to promote a health care system that provides access to a basic level of quality care for all Florida residents and controls health care costs.

****Capitol Report, January 31, 2010***

VOTERS SERVICE COMMITTEE

Before we know it, Election Day will be here and there is work for League members to do. As in the past, we will be preparing for candidate and issues forums. A speaking date has already been scheduled.



In addition to candidate and issues forums, we are working with the Collins Center and the Sumter County School District to implement online mock elections in November. While most of the work is being done by the Collins Center, the League will need some help. In addition, we are with LSCC TV (Lake Sumter Community College Television) to possibly air the forums. Again, help will be needed.

Please think about becoming involved. The time commitment should not interfere with your other activities; quite a bit can be accomplished through the miracle of email and the internet. We can't leave it to someone else.

For more information, contact **Joanne M. Coen**, joannejon@aol.com.



Don't forget to set you clocks one hour ahead on March 14th!



JOIN THE LEAGUE



**Be a Voice for Citizens! Be a Force for Change!
Be Involved in the Process!**

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:

Individual **\$50.00** _____

Household **\$75.00** _____

Contribution to
MAL Unit **\$10.00**
 or more _____

**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***