



LWV of The Villages/Tri-County Area

www.lwvtri.org

Nationally Recognized! Locally Active!

The League of Women Voters does not endorse or oppose political parties or candidates.

The League of Women Voters encourages engagement and participation in the political process.

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June-August 2015

The calendar says that summer will begin on June 21! However, from the temperatures we have been experiencing in north central Florida, I think we can all agree, it has started already.

Our last general meeting with Wesley Wilcox, SOE Marion County was very informative about online registration. This was an issue supported by the League during the 2015 Regular Legislative Session, and we are glad that governor signed the bill. There is a recap of this meeting by Kathy Hansen in the Voters Service section of the newsletter.

The Special Session will be getting underway during which budget negotiations will take place. League members are being asked to call our Representative and urge them to do their job, and find a way to take the \$50 billion and extend healthcare coverage to our lowest wage workers. A unique Florida solution is needed, and your phone call is vital.

Find the contact information for your Representative by going to www.lwvtri.org, and clicking on Elected Officials.

Our Representatives have to know that:

- Florida must fund our health care challenges on the FRONT END by finding a way to return Florida's \$51 billion in federal taxes to Florida to extend healthcare coverage to 800,000 low-income working Floridians
- Doing so will support a healthy workforce with PREVENTIVE health insurance, thus helping people get healthy, and stay healthy...A hand up, not a handout, as our Senators have said.
- Governor Scott has diverted attention to Low Income Pool (LIP), which is merely a band-aid. It is healthcare for catastrophic needs delivered in the emergency room. The Senate Plan tries to be proactive and help our 800,000 uncovered low wage earners get healthy AND get protected at the front end. This is less expensive, and much better for Florida

families while fostering a competitive and profitable work environment.

- LIP is NOT health care coverage.

This newsletter covers June, July & August, and our next issue will be out at the beginning of September in time for the September General Meeting on Monday, September 28, and while that is a few months away, Leaguers will still be meeting in committees over the summer.

The Pre-K Research Committee met recently, and I am happy to report that three members of AAUW are part of the committee. The committee hopes to have information ready for distribution to the membership by late fall, and is planning on sponsoring a general meeting in 2016. The Voters Service Committee will be meeting over the summer in preparation for the 2016 election cycle. Preparation and publication of a Voter's Guide will be the subject of discussion. Natural Resources is working on sponsoring the September meeting and will be gathering information about Water Management Districts in preparation for that meeting. In addition, our Summer Book Club kicks off the summer with its first meeting on Monday, June 15. As you can see, there is something for everyone, so please think about becoming involved.

Have a safe, healthy and happy summer, and we look forward to seeing you at our September General Meeting.

In League,
Joanne M. Coen

UPCOMING EVENTS

Here are some upcoming meetings you might be interested in. For information about the specific books, please contact Carolyn Johnson.:

Monday, June 15, 10:30 a.m.

Summer Book Club

Capital Dames -

*The Civil War and the Women of
Washington*

by Cokie Roberts
Carolyn Johnson

cgljohnson@comcast.net

Monday, July 20, 10:30 a.m.

Summer Book Club

*Our Kids, the American Dream
in Crisis*

by Robert Putnam
Carolyn Johnson

cgljohnson@comcast.net

Friday, August 21, 1:00 p.m.

LWVTRI Board Meeting

Joanne M. Coen
joanne.m.coen@gmail.com

Monday, June 22, 1:00 p.m.

Pre-K Committee

Joanne M. Coen
joanne.m.coen@gmail.com

Monday, August 17, 10:30 a.m.

Summer Book Club

Liar, Temptress, Soldier, Spy
by Karen Abbott
Carolyn Johnson
cgljohnson@comcast.net

MEMBERSHIP

We would like to welcome to new members: **Carol Del Monte, John Eisner and Heather Rabinowitz**. We look forward to their active participation in our League.

Just a reminder that dues are payable in the anniversary month you joined the League. You will receive an email reminder from **Beth Hicks, Membership Chair**, as your anniversary date approaches. Individual dues are **\$60** and household dues are **\$85**. Checks are payable to **LWVTRI** and mailed to **Carolyn Johnson, 2615 Caribe Drive, The Villages, FL 32162**. All members should have received a copy of the latest Membership Directory. If not, please contact **Carolyn Johnson, cgljohnson@comcast.net**.

Finally, *The League of Women Voters of the Villages/Tri-County Member Handbook* has been revised and sent to members who joined in the new league year (which began April 1). If you did **NOT** receive one, or joined previously and would like a new copy of this handbook, please email **Beth Hicks** at ethicks71@gmail.com. Please include your snail mail address and she will get the handbook and calendar to you.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

AN ACTION AGENDA FOR CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

Thanks to the Center for Popular Democracy and In The Public Interest, two membership based, not-for-profit organizations, we now have a national survey of voters on charter school accountability.

This gives us a tool to take to our legislators to show them that good government ideas are supported across party lines and across charter supporters and opponents.

And by showing our legislators that those specific reforms in accountability, protection of

neighborhood schools and high quality education will be popular with their constituents, we may get them to listen and take action to improve charter school legislation.

Thanks to the state League and Sue Legg for bringing us this material in a conference call. If you would like to receive concise handouts, please contact **Karen West**, west.k9@gmail.com.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

The Local Government Committee is monitoring the Fruitland Park districting process, since Fruitland Park voters passed the Charter amendment changing voting at-large to by-districts. At the Fruitland Park City Commission workshop on the subject, the Commissioners decided that it is too soon to draw the district lines, since no one yet resides in the Villages of Fruitland Park, which, by the 2016 election, may have enough residents to constitute a district. The City Commission will revisit the topic in March or April 2016, in anticipation of the 2016 election. They did, however, raise issues about the Fruitland Park Charter's election provisions, which do not place City candidates in the Primary, only the General election and then requires a runoff, if no candidate gets a majority of the votes. We will follow the progress of this discussion, as well.

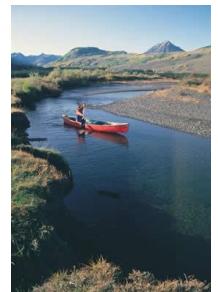


The Local Government Committee is also reviewing the statutes and regulations that affect Wildwood City development permits, to determine what consideration is given to the stewardship of Florida's water resources. We plan to talk to Wildwood City Staff, this summer.

In addition, the Committee encourages members who live in the Villages, to attend their Community Development District's (CDD) budget meetings. The CDD is your local government and it is deciding how to budget your money. The budget meeting dates can be found on by going to <http://www.districtgov.org/>. Place your cursor on Departments, on the drop down menu click on Budget, then, on the left side of the page, click on Budget Calendar and a link to the 15-16 Budget Calendar will appear. For more information, or to participate in any of these activities, please contact **Carol Van Noy**, at denny.carol@gmail.com.

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Over the summer, the Committee will be working on preparing background information about Water Management Districts (of which there are five) in Florida. This background information will play a part in the discussion that will take place at our **September General Meeting**. The speaker will be **Lisa Rinaman**, from **The St. Johns Riverkeeper** organization. Their stated mission is "...to work on behalf of the community for clean and health waters in the St. Johns River, its tributaries and its wetlands, through citizen-based advocacy."



The St. Johns River is the longest river in Florida and at 310 miles long, it winds through or borders twelve counties, among them portions of Lake and Marion which are part of the SJRWMD (St. Johns River Water Management District). The St. Johns was named one of 14 American Heritage Rivers in 1998 but was included on a list of America's Ten Most Endangered Rivers in 2008. Restoration efforts are underway for the basins around the St.

Johns as Florida continues to deal with population increases in the river's vicinity.

Recommended reading if you are interested in Florida Springs is *Silenced Springs: Moving from Tragedy to Hope* by Dr. Robert L. Knight.

"Old Timers who swam in Ichetucknee Springs in the 1920s called it "the Boil". They remember that the spring flowed at a much higher rate than today. Many of the Old Timers remember that you could see the boil was at least 3 inches higher than the water surface. The boil was so strong you could not swim across it. According to several Old Timers you could hear the water boiling out of the spring before you could see it. One said that you could hear it about 300 feet away. No one hears the Ichetucknee Head Spring boil today. While the spring still flows it has lost at least one quarter of its historic flow. It is silent now as are so many springs in Florida.

Silenced Springs is a timely assessment of the current plight of Florida's over 1,000 artesian springs, including their former glory, how they came to be impaired, and the hopeful path to their eventual restoration and protection. Dr. Knight is Florida's premier springs scientist and weaves his personal experiences with technical data that document how Florida's springs and aquifer are being depleted and polluted due to a combination of blind ignorance and willful greed. Many of the actors in this unfolding tragedy are identified and informed of their responsibility to save and restore these "bowls of liquid light." *Silenced Springs* is a wake-up call to the millions of ordinary people who enjoy the refreshing, clear water of healthy springs. All of us who love the springs must rally together if Florida's water future is to be secured and the ultimate demise of our springs is to be avoided. "

If you are interested in purchasing the book, go to FLORIDA SPRINGS INSTITUTE, <http://www.floridaspringsinstitute.org> 386-462-1003. The cost is \$26.20 which includes shipping and handling.

If you would like to take in a movie, the **Villages Environmental Club** will be showing "KING CORN You Are What You Eat" on **Wednesday, June 24, 6:30 p.m.** at the **Sea Breeze Rec. Center** in **The Villages**. This is a feature documentary about two friends, once acre corn and the subsidized crop that drive our fast-food nation.

Lastly, at the state League Convention in May in Delray Beach, delegates voted to back the Solar Power Initiative. The measure, upon voter approval, would provide businesses and individuals with a constitutional right to produce up to two megawatts of solar power and sell that power directly to others at the same or contiguous property. This right would be secured by limiting the government and electrical utilities' abilities to impose barriers to supplying local solar electricity. Currently, only utilities can sell electricity, no matter the source, directly to consumers. For more information and to download the petition go to Floridians for Solar Choice, <http://www.flsolarchoice.org/>. Our November General Meeting will be devoted to this initiative.

VOTER SERVICE & EDUCATION

Open Primaries

At the state League Convention in May, delegates voted to study the closed primary in Florida as compared to the open primaries in other states. The purpose of the study is to determine whether Florida's closed primary system is a hindrance to achieving the goal of increasing the percentage of people who vote. Each local League will be asked to compile information from the local County Supervisor of Elections. This information is usually found online. If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact **Richard Coen**, joannejon@aol.com.



The Committee will soon begin to gear up for the 2016 election season. Since this is a presidential election year, we anticipate making a number of presentations to interested voters as well as preparing the online Voters' Guide. Please consider joining the Committee by becoming a member of the Speakers' Bureau or working on the Voters' Guide. Contact **Richard Coen**, joannejon@aol.com.

At our May 18th general meeting, the topic was "On-line Voter Registration." Our speaker was Wesley Wilcox, the Supervisor of Elections of Marion County. Prior to his election in 2012, Mr. Wilcox was the Assistant Supervisor of Elections for 7 years. He began his career in Marion County as the Systems Administrator in 2001. Among his accomplishments, he has been chosen to be an instructor for the Florida State Association of Supervisors of Elections FCEP program.

Mr. Wilcox began by noting that Friday, May 15th, Governor Scott signed legislation that will allow on-line voter registration making Florida the 23rd state to have done so. The passage of the legislation had been supported by all 67 supervisors of elections in the State.

On the question of cyber security, he noted that in the 22 states that have implemented it so far, there is yet to be a single case of penetration. The on-line voter registration system will be integrated with the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Mr. Wilcox expressed the hope that Florida will join the states that are part of the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), a non-profit corporation made up of member-states. The purpose of ERIC is to ensure the efficiency and integrity of America's voter rolls by assisting states to improve the accuracy of their voter rolls. Go to <http://www.ericstates.org/> to see the short video about how it works.

As far as the registration implementation date of 2017, Mr. Wilcox thought that it could be done much faster, considering the legislature has appropriated \$2MM for the task. Some states have already done it for a cost of about \$200,000.

Mr. Wilcox expressed the opinion that third-party voter registration would now be so much easier because by providing a laptop or tablet at a site, people could be shown how to register on the spot.

The enthusiastic audience had many questions and some of the other things we learned were:

- When students get their motor vehicle license at age 16, they can pre-register to vote. The Supervisor of Elections will notify them during the month of their 18th birthday

that they are now eligible to vote and should update their information, if necessary.

- In Florida, it is perfectly valid and legal for college students to register at their school address.
- The Supervisor of Elections is notified of a death within two weeks by the Bureau of Vital Statistics. Updates are available through the Social Security Administration on a daily basis.

A SPECIAL THANK YOU

To League member, **Kathy Hansen**. For the last year, Kathy has chaired the Natural Resources Committee, and worked tirelessly in collecting signed petitions to place Amendment 1 on the ballot. Her leadership of the committee and her hard work have benefited our League, and for that we are very grateful. Kathy, while still interested in Natural Resources, will take her talents to the Voter Service & Education Committee. One of her first tasks was to provide the recap of the May meeting.



Kathy Hansen & Anne Grewe in Tallahassee earlier this year.

Don't forget to check out our website, www.lwvtri.org,
and
Like us on Facebook! 