



THE VOTER

Convenor's Corner

"Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education."

Franklin D. Roosevelt

The League of Women Voters can be proud of their work to help democracy succeed. We educate and we advocate. As we enter this election year cycle, the League is a sane voice of reason and is desperately needed.

It took a great deal of prayer and reflection before I was able to volunteer to be the convener for this unit. I was filled with self-doubt, did I know enough of the league to lead a group? I finally took the leap, mainly because I feel so strongly in the mission of the League. I am counting on League veterans to keep me and this league pointed in the right direction.

There are a great number of league members here who have joined because we now have time for an organization that was always on the back burner of our lives. Many of us are retired, most of us are busy and just do not have time, or so we think. Can you do **ONE** little thing to advance our mission? Perhaps you can keep abreast of one of our key issues and keep the rest of us informed. Perhaps you can do internet searches or write specific questions to help put our upcoming voter's guides together. Or maybe you can help with publicity for our programs. Most of these tasks can be done on your own time and do not require another meeting!

I need your help. I am one person willing to work, but hope that others will step up and ease the load of some remarkable members (Joanne, Carolyn, Judie, I am thinking of you) who have been there at the beginning and need the rest of us

to lighten their load.

Reminder--there will be no meeting in May. Rather, we will meet on **Monday, June 27, 10:30 a.m., Community Bank & Trust, The Villages.** Our guest will be **Sumter County Supervisor of Elections, Karen Krauss**, who will not be seeking reelection in 2016. Join us as we recognize and honor Karen for her work on behalf of the voters of Sumter County.

Yours in the League,
Beth Hicks

Membership

We are very pleased to welcome the following new members to our League. They are among the ***24 new members*** we have gained this past League year:

Bonnie Field
Alan Gold
Emily Holman
Cathy Jones
Laurel Rowen
Kathy Williamson

Dues

Just a reminder that dues are payable in the anniversary month you joined the League. As your anniversary date approaches, you will receiving an email indicating your dues date. 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, cjohnson4103@gmail.com**.

2016-18 Elected Officers & Directors

Convener	Beth Hicks
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Secretary/PR	Kathy Hansen
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Co-Treasurers	Carolyn Johnson
	Karen West

Communication Director	Joanne Coen
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Approved Program for 2016-17

At the General Meeting in March, League members approved the proposed program for the coming League year. Included in that program are: monitoring government actions in the tri-county area; promote Voter's Guide for 2016; monitor impact of state funding on local school districts among others. To view the entire [approved program please click here.](#)

April General Meeting

Mary Dipboye, a member of the LWV of Orange County and founder of Central Florida Solar Advocate, was the guest speaker at the League's April meeting.

Dipboye's talk covered three main areas. She updated members on upcoming solar amendments, talked about her journey of getting solar at home and introduced a new solar advocacy group starting up in Florida.



The first solar amendment, **Solar Devices or Renewable Energy Source Devices; Exemption from Certain Taxation and Assessment**, will be on the **August Primary** ballot, and **all registered voters regardless of party affiliation are eligible to vote on this issue**. The amendment proposed by the Florida Legislature, would authorize the Legislature, by general law, to exempt from ad valorem taxation the assessed value of solar or renewable energy source devices subject to tangible personal property tax, and to authorize the Legislature, by general law, to prohibit consideration of such devices in assessing the value of real property for ad valorem taxation purposes. This amendment takes effect January 1, 2018, and expires on December 31, 2037.

The second solar amendment, **Rights of Electricity Consumers Regarding Solar Energy Choice**, which will be on the **November General Election** ballot basically enshrines what is already the law--making it difficult to allow purchase power agreements which most state have in place. This amendment, sponsored by Consumers for Smart Solar, establishes a right under Florida's constitution for consumers to own or lease solar equipment installed on their property to generate electricity for their own use. State and local governments shall retain their abilities to protect consumer rights and public health, safety and welfare, and to ensure that consumers who do not choose to install solar are not required to subsidize the costs of backup power and electric grid access to those who do.

Mary recounted how she first heard about co-ops and her journey to have one established in her Winter Park neighborhood with the help of **Community Power Network**, <http://communitypowernetwork.com>. In addition to the co-op in Winter Park, there is one in Winter Garden.

There were many questions posed and League member, **Anne Grewe** shared her experience, having installed solar panels on her home in The Villages in 2009. In addition, two guests as the meeting spoke enthusiastically about their experiences.



For further information about solar panels, you can go to **Florida Solar Power Consultants**, <http://solarenergymgmt.com/>.

Natural Resources

Just a reminder that you may express your concerns, opposition, and ask questions regarding the water withdrawal request that was submitted by Azure Bottling LLC, to members of the Advisory Board of the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD).

To contact them, call **Ralph Kerr, Senior Professional Geologist, SWFWMD**, at **813-985-7481**. Following a discussion with Ralph Kerr, **ASK** him to place you and your email address into the electronic notification system as updated information becomes available as to the water withdrawal permit request being approved or denied. This is the system that has been set up by SWFWMD for two-way communication exchanges with their constituents.

LET THEM HEAR FROM YOU. You and your opinions **MATTER**.

Further research is available by visiting SWFWMD website: www.swfwmd.gov. Their news section is available at www.swfwmd.gov/news.

In addition to being a League member, Mary Hampton is a member of and represents the Villages Environmental Discussions group at the Florida Springs Council. Mary has advised us that the Florida Springs Council, along with Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida, Florida Springs Institute, Save the Manatee Club, Sea to Shore Alliance, and Normandeau Associates, is holding a **Springs Restoration Summit**. The event is scheduled for **Sept. 30 to Oct. 2**, to be held at the **College of Central Florida in Ocala**.

The 3-day event is open to the public and will report on the status of the health of

the springs and develop a roadmap for springs restoration and protection.

Please visit the website: www.springrestorationsummit.org. The website offers information regarding the guest speakers, tours to springs, opportunities for valuable networking and brainstorming on issues that deeply affect ALL OF US. The website will be updated as more information becomes available.

So mark your calendars and spread the word!

Speakers' Bureau

Our speaking engagement calendar is starting to fill up and we can use some more people to help us out. There are two League members at each engagement; one is the speaker and the other, operates the laptop. You are never on your own. Please contact either **Beth Hicks, ethicks71@gmail.com**, or **Carolyn Van Noy, denny.carol@gmail.com**. This is another way you can use your talents to help the League.

Voters Service

The Voters Services Committee is working on the Primary Election Voters Guide. **The Primary Election is August 30.** Look for the Voters Guide, on our website, www.lwvtri.org, in mid-July.



The August ballot will include candidates for US Senator, US Representative, Florida State Senate and House, Marion, Lake and Sumter County Commissions, School Boards, Sheriffs, Supervisors of Election, and several Judicial and local positions.

In addition, a Florida Constitutional Amendment will appear, regarding tax exemptions for solar power generating devices. We will also post, on our website, a General Election Voters Guide, in mid-September, for the **November 8 General Election**.

If you belong to a group that would like to have a League speaker present information about the August Primary or the November General Election, please contact **Carol Van Noy at 352 633-5353** or denny.carol@gmail.com.

We will also distribute the State's printed General Election Voters' Guide, in mid-September. This Guide will cover the candidates for President and U.S. Senate,

as well as the four Constitutional Amendments that will be on the General Election Ballot. If you know of a facility or group that would like to have copies of the State's printed General Election Voters Guide, please contact **Carol Van Noy** at **352 633-5353** or denny.carol@gmail.com.

*The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization.
It neither supports or opposes political parties or candidates.*

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