



Nationally Recognized! Locally Active!

March 2020
Volume 13 Issue 10



Co-President's Corner

The Annual Meeting of the League of Women Voters of The Villages/Tri-County will be held March 23rd at the Leesburg Resource Center. This is the opportunity for all League members to have a voice in three important areas: the selection of future leaders, the annual budget, and the program of action. The work on revising/refining the program began at the January meeting when all members were asked for input on the direction we will take in the coming year. The League is a grassroots organization, and the local program provides focus for issues on which we commit to study or take action. An example is our recent local study on the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) program. The inclusion of VPK in our program provided the impetus to gather data and evidence leading to drafting a statement for consensus. Our League then moved the statement through the process at the state level which resulted in getting a statement on VPK in the state program. As a result of the state League's approval, all League members may now advocate on this issue. No advocacy on an issue can occur in the name of the League without following this process.

If our League chooses to include an issue in our program, it must have already been studied at the state level or we must be willing to commit the resources locally to do the research and study

needed before a consensus can be reached. LWVFL has published its program and resource document for 2019-2021. It contains a complete description of the process and discusses how the program guides its legislative priorities.

A description of the Florida League's (LWVF) program can be found in ***Study & Action 2019-2021***, <https://www.lwvfl.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Study-and-Action-2019.2021.pdf>.

The national League (LWVUS) has a similar document available listing the background and resources of all its program issues. The document ***Impact on Issues***, <https://www.lwv.org/impact-issues>, details how the League's public policy positions were derived.

The League principles and program at the local, state, and national levels guide all policy and action. Our League's four representatives at the state's Lobby Days event in Tallahassee early in February learned much about the priority bills being monitored by our staff, volunteers, and lobbying firm. You can read more details about the event elsewhere in this newsletter.

The Annual Meeting will feature a presentation by recently retired Orlando Sentinel columnist Lauren Ritchie who bravely pointed out some of the weaknesses of local legislators. Following the business portion of the meeting, members will have a luncheon buffet of sandwiches, salads, dessert, and beverage. We hope you will make a reservation and join us.

Yours in League,
Gail Formanack
Co-President

P.S. Invite a friend to join you at the Annual Meeting!

LWVTRI Annual Meeting

**When: Monday, March 23, 2020
11 a.m. - 1 p.m.**

**Where: Leesburg Resource Center*
1041 CR468, Leesburg, FL**

Cost: \$25 per person

Reservations can be made by contacting Karen West, lwvtrimembers@gmail.com or by calling **352-460-2145**. Your check in the amount of **\$25 payable to LWVTRI** can be sent to **Karen West, 204 Clusterwood Drive, Yalaha, FL 34797**. The deadline for reservations is **Tuesday, March 17th**. ***There will be no refunds for cancellations received after that date.***

The menu will be a sandwich buffet including croissants with meat and non-meat options, pasta salad, bean salad, dessert and beverage.

***The Leesburg Resource Center is located at 1041 County Road 468. From The Villages, 466A east to CR 468/Rose Avenue. Turn right (south) and follow the road about 3 miles until you cross Griffin Road (44C) where there is a light. Continue without turning and you will see the Leesburg Resource Center on the right side of the road.**

If coming from the south on 441, turn left (west) on Griffin Road (44C). Continue to 468 (traffic light) and turn south. You will see the Leesburg Resource Center on the right side of the road.



LWVTRI Annual Meeting

**Guest Speaker:
Lauren Ritchie, Retired Columnist
*Orlando Sentinel***



Stephanie Dukes
Virginia Gutman & Donna Chmielewski
Phillip (Phil) & Diane Grayber
Geraldine (Gerri) Ness

Just a reminder that dues are payable on the **anniversary month** of your joining the League. You will receive an email reminder from **Karen West** (LWVTRImembers@gmail.com) prior to your anniversary date. When you do, please make your check payable to **LWVTRI** and mail it to our **Treasurer, Bernadette Aley, 1106 Monterey Lane, The Villages, Florida 32159**. If you are not sure of your anniversary month, you can contact **Karen West, LWVTRImembers@gmail.com**. Please add Karen's address to your email contact list.

League Name Badges

League name badges are now available to all members for **\$5.50** Choose either a magnetic or pin backing. Name badges can be ordered at the general meetings.

League Liaisons

Liaisons will participate in statewide conference calls as well as keep members updated on proposed legislation during the legislative session. Here are our League's liaisons:

Juvenile Justice-Linda Bishop
Natural Resources-Bonnie Field

If you would like to participate in the conference calls with the liaison, please contact **Beth Hicks**, lwvtriprez@gmail.com.

Voter Registration Credentials

Just a reminder to League members who are certified to register voters, as well as League members who would like to be certified to register voters, that as of **December 31, 2018**, the certification

of all voter registrars expired. League members who do voter registration for the League will need to re-certify their credentials with the State League **ASAP**. Beginning in 2017 the LWVFL instituted a 2-year cycle whereby the list of approved voter registrars would be wiped clean, requiring members to re-certify. The two-year cycle ended on 12/31/2018.

If you are interested in doing voter registration with our League, you must study the PowerPoint which is on the LWV Florida website and take the quiz, attaining a perfect score. Once you pass with 100% you will get a notification from LWVFL that you are authorized to do voter registration. To begin the certification process, please contact **Beth Hicks**, lwwtriprez@gmail.com for the password for the Member link on the state League website.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

March 1, 2:00 pm-VOTE: Women's Fierce Fight with author **Penny Colman**, Allamanda Recreation Center, 1515 St. Charles Place, The Villages. Sponsored by Sisters of Suffrage, of which our League is founding member, this event is free and open to Villagers and non-Villagers. **Penny Colman** is the author of many award-winning biographies and social histories including *Rosie the Riveter: Women Working on the Home Front in World War II*. Her primary work has been in the area of women's history, and she has been a guest on National Public Radio and C-Span2. There's so much to learn - and be inspired by these courageous Suffragists - and so much relevance for today.

March 17, 3:30 pm- St. Patrick's Day Parade in Spanish Springs (The Villages). League members in suffrage attire will march with representatives from other organizations represented in the

April 14, 5:30 pm-Dine & Discuss at La Palma in Leesburg.

Topic: Summary of the 2020 Legislative Session (what they did for us and to us).

April 21, 2:00 pm- Pre-release screening of a PBS program on the history of suffrage followed by a panel discussion at Colony Cottage Recreation Center (The Villages)

May 12, 10:00 am – Suffrage celebration event at Lake Sumter Landing.

2020 Legislative Session

League Lobby Days by Gail Formanack

Approximately 80 League members met at the State Capitol in Tallahassee on February 4-5 to hear from legislators, our state issues chairpersons, and the League's new lobbying firm. The event was held on the top floor of the Capitol building, and representing LWV The Villages/Tri-County were **Gail Formanack, Connie Treadway, and Bonnie and Bob Field**. We began with a legislative briefing from more than a dozen legislators who took time to share what they consider to be key bills in the process. From my perspective, one of the most interesting was a bill on prison reform which will allow shackles to come off for pregnant women as they are being transferred during labor before giving birth. Bills have been filed to close the gun show loophole and to ban assault weapons and high capacity magazines. Another bill would mandate that schools provide information to students to help them recognize the dangers of becoming victims of human trafficking.



Capitol Alliance Group, highlighted that less than 10% of the 3,943 bills filed will be passed. Their advice to the League has been to focus on the issues for which we are best known relating to voting, election security, and redistricting issues. From their perspective, they feel our voice and impact is greater on those issues and is at-risk of being diluted if we are but one of a dozen other groups lobbying on bills on the broad array of issues the League has on its legislative priority list.

The lobbyists explained that while the House members may only file six bills, Senate members may file an unlimited number. They must first be heard by a committee, and many won't get a committee hearing so will be dead for the term.

It was suggested when lobbying that we know who is supporting or is against the bill as it can help frame the conversation. This was the case when we met with Rep. Hage. His first question about a bill was who was “running” it. Other suggestions they made for us while meeting with legislators were to 1) start with a supportive statement such as thanks for supporting a related bill; 2) be clear and concise (no acronyms); 3) tie the conversation back to outcomes for their constituents; 4) be a good listener; 5) respond to their questions or follow up via email if unable to answer; 6) consider leaving behind a summary document – never more than one page.

I attended two caucuses on the issues of Education and Elections led by the state issues chairs. The Elections team is tracking several bills. We support **SB 1372** which clears up some issues important to the Supervisors of Elections. We oppose the proposed amendment to the constitution which will effectively do away with the citizen initiative (**SB 1794** and **HB 0545**). The Education chairs focused on bills related to the siphoning of public funds for scholarships for private schools. The League opposes **SB 1220** and **SB 1400**. The League supports **SB 56** and **HB 45**.

which revises requirements for private schools receiving public funds so they can no longer discriminate based on gender identity or sexual orientation. The League opposes bills filed to put in place term limits for school board members. The bill filed to make changes in VPK was not selected for action by the League.

At the evening banquet, we heard from **Steve Bousquet** who received the League's Defender of Democracy award. He is a reporter with the *Sun Sentinel* in Ft. Lauderdale. His insights from his many years of covering the legislature were illuminating. He pointed out that aside from Texas, Florida is the largest state with the most compressed legislative session. Many bills don't get heard in committee, so this results in amendments being made during the last 72 hours that can slip provisions into bills without going through thorough debate in committee. He believes term limits have not been beneficial to the process as it led to a concentration of power at the top (committee chairs and the leadership of the House and Senate). The House has become a stepping-stone to the Senate, and entrenched incumbents have much more power. Because of the partisan nature of politics today, people get frustrated when bills go nowhere resulting in them turning to the citizen's initiative process. Florida is one of 2 to 3 states that requires a super majority of 60% of those voting for passage of an amendment to the constitution. The rules no longer allow petition gatherers to be paid by signature, so it becomes extremely expensive to get an issue on the ballot (typically over \$1 million). There are bills being discussed that will further gut the citizen initiative process.

The second day of the meeting was reserved for meetings with local legislators. We met with **Rep. Brett Hage** and **Rep. Anthony Sabatini** and spoke with them briefly due to their busy schedules. Other members of the local delegation were busy with meetings and unable to schedule the time to meet with us.

League Lobby Days- Bonnie Field

It was long anticipated and passed by all too quickly!

The LWVFL had a busy schedule planned for our time in Tallahassee. Bob and I arrived Feb. 3rd and toured the old Capitol Building and visited areas of the new capitol Building. On Tuesday we were joined by our League's Co-President, **Gail Formanack** and member **Connie Treadway**. Breakfast at 7:30 am with about 15 Representatives stopping by to speak about their Legislative experiences. This was followed by our League's Lobbying Agency, Capitol Alliance. They gave us an overview of their relationship with the League and explained how they are working for us.

A press conference was scheduled on the old Capitol steps. **Patti Brigham, LWVFL President** spoke on the importance of an accurate 2020 Census count, along with others speaking on the same topic. Lunch was on our own, and we found a lovely outdoor restaurant- fortunately before all the other Legislators arrived.

The afternoon found us back on the 22nd floor of the Capitol building for informative groups. We were provided with talking points and handouts to prepare for tomorrow's meetings with Representatives. Our Gala Dinner with speaker Steve Bousquet, an accomplished journalist and editor, was pleasant and relaxing.

Wednesday morning was spent meeting with **Reps. Anna Eskamani** (a longtime LWV Orange member), **Brett Hage**, and **Anthony Sabatini**.

We promoted League issues and built working relationships. It was an educational, informative, and empowering experience. We recommend to all to consider attending next year.



Tallahassee 2020
Rep. Brett Hage, Gail Formanack, Bonnie & Bob Field

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED!

Our organization has grown to over 100 members, and we could use your help as we manage the many tasks involved in maintaining a viable organization. We are an organization of volunteers, and some of us hesitate to commit to tasks due to upcoming travel plans, etc. As part of your New Year's Resolution, please consider helping with any of the tasks below. For more information, contact lwvtriprez@gmail.com.

Assess the liability risks of LWVTRI and make recommendations for insurance needs. As background, our local League has for many years paid a small portion of a policy obtained by the state League. However, this year the premium tripled. We are currently covered, but our needs may be quite different from other Leagues which have office space and hired staff. If you can join a small committee of board members to contribute your expert opinion, please contact lwvtriprez@gmail.com.

Work on a team to organize candidate events for the upcoming elections. Ideally, our League would sponsor an event in each of our three counties. Members of the team will obtain a facility and invite local candidates to attend. Contact lwvtriprez@gmail.com.

As you know, our League applied for, and received, a grant from **Women United** for our "Be A Voter" project. Please contact Iwvtriprez@gmail.com, if you have relatives or friends with expertise in social media. We could use their assistance with our "Be a Voter" campaign. This is a link to one of twelve videos that our League has produced to encourage young women to Vote:
<https://spaces.hightail.com/receive/OhI7lzziqD/fi-b44e90b8-a644-49e7-b128-512223c88740/fv-c4a95911-329e-41a9-98e2-8605af11c4c9/Here%27s%20the%20Thing%20Feb%202017.mp4>

League Liaisons: Participate in state League conference calls and update membership on the following issues especially during the legislative session: Gun Safety, Census and Medicaid

Voters' Guide & Vote411: Assist in drafting questions and contacting local candidates running for office in 2020. This is an **ad hoc** committee working before the primary and general elections.

Speakers' Bureau: We anticipate more speaking requests as we grow closer to the 2020 election. If you are interested in being trained and educated on the speaking topics, we would welcome more volunteers.



Be A Voter "Tee" Shirt

Be A Voter shirts are available at League meetings for \$10. Surprise your neighbors, friends and family with a reminder about the importance of voting. For more information, contact Gail at formanag@gmail.com.

[League Website](#)

Our website, **LWVTRIFL.org**, has a **Members Only** section containing multiple pages:

- the main **Members Only** page has our membership list, minutes from our last Board meeting, an Expense Voucher, our chapter's By-Laws as well as other information
- the **Publications** page is where you can find past newsletters as well as copies of our national and local studies
- the **Voter Guide Archive**
- a **Caught on Camera** page containing candid photos from our events and activities.

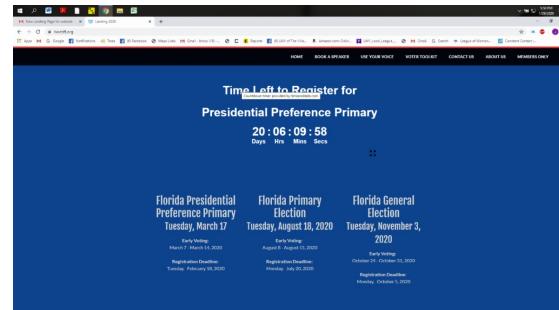
The drop down menu from the Top-Nav allows you to go directly to the page you want to access.

When you select one of these pages, you will be required to provide a password. To gain access to this restricted part of our website, contact our webmaster:

Char Griffin at webmaster@lwvtrifl.org.

Landing Page

If you haven't been to our website lately, you have missed our new Landing page, **lwvtrifl.org**, that focuses our visitors on the important information about the upcoming elections.



The page features a countdown clock showing the days, hours, minutes and seconds left to register for the next election. Registration for the Presidential Preference Primary on March 17, has ended. The clock will be updated to alert visitors about registration deadlines for the **Primary Election on August 18**, and the **General Election on November 3**. A link to **[Vote411](#)** is prominently displayed as is the "Be a Voter" video targeted to young women to encourage them to vote. The red **"Enter Site"** buttons at the top and bottom of the page take you to our Home

LWV 100th Birthday Celebration

February 24, 2020



What's a party without a birthday cake!



Co President Gail Formanack & Board Member Mary Kay Rosinski



Barbara Feldman & Louise Redding



Carolyn Johnson, Linda Carpenter & Joanne M. Coen



Karen West, Terri Rohr & Mary Kay Rosinski



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Voter Service

Speakers Bureau

Since March 2019, the Speakers Bureau has made presentations to 21 organizations and more are being scheduled.

Below are some of the topics for which our League is providing speakers:

Balance of Power: 3 Branches of US Government

The Constitution of the United States divides the federal government into three branches to ensure a central government in which no individual or group gains too much control. This presentation describes the powers of the Legislative, Executive and Judicial branches of the federal government and how they relate to one another.

Electoral College & National Popular Vote Interstate Compact (NPVIC)

This presentation explains the origin and function of the Electoral College and what some states are doing to change how we elect the President and Vice President of the United States to reflect the popular vote.

2020 US Census

The 2020 census will mark the first time people will be able to respond to the census online as well as by phone and mail. Census results help determine how the federal government will distribute billions of dollars among states, counties and local governments. The census affects legislative redistricting at all levels of government and determines how many seats in Congress each state gets. This PowerPoint explains the 2020 census and why it is important that everyone responds to help Florida compete for these benefits.

Your Voice. Your Power. Your Vote.

In 1776 only 10% of Americans had the right to vote. Learn the history of expanding voting rights and the important benefits to those who turn out and vote. This presentation describes the ways voters can register and vote which includes registering online, Vote by Mail, early voting and more.

The Fight for Women's Suffrage

The year 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution giving women the right to vote. This PowerPoint describes the sacrifices of activists whose tireless efforts from 1848 to 1920 culminated in women's suffrage.

This PowerPoint describes the history of Florida government, the responsibilities and powers of Florida government officers and how laws are created.

Please contact

Jeannie Hamilton, Speakers Bureau Chair,

303-817-9988 Lwvtrispeakersbureau@gmail.com

if you know a group that would be interested in one of our presentations.

LWVTRI Legislative Education & Action Committee

We met on January 29th, and jumped into our ongoing, informal learning group. After reviewing the bills which were filed by our tri-county area representatives, we explored the types of Legislative Committees in both the House and Senate, reviewed how a Bill moves thru the Legislative process and agreed to pursue our individual " special interest topics" in our next review of moving bills. The Legislative session ends on March 14th, and since there are more than 2,500 bill filed by Florida's 120 Representatives and 40 Senators - with only about 260 passing into law - they are moving rapidly (or not at all and are withdrawn).

Our next meeting will be during the last week of February, and if anyone is interested in joining us, please contact **Bonnie Field**, [**bfield222@gmail.com**](mailto:bfield222@gmail.com). Handouts will be available from our previous meetings.

LWVTRI Natural Resources

The statewide LWVF Natural Resources conference call on Feb. 10th with Judith Hushon provided some good news! Several of the League's priority issues are moving thru the legislative process, and those listed here are expected to pass.

The Governor has stated he has a vision to protect Florida's Natural Resources and is advocating for the legislation and dollars to start accomplishing this. He is supporting the Department of Environmental Protection's recommendations. This is good news!

SB 0712 (HB 1343) Clean Waterways Act - a large bill with many water quality improvements included.

SB 7018 (HB 0943) Electric Vehicle charging stations.

SB 0178 (HB 0579) Public financing of construction project - involves DEP developing standards and rules related to sea level rise and its impact - before Public financing of construction projects.

These bills and many others are moving in the right direction, albeit very slowly in the race against time. But they are small steps in acknowledging and stopping pollution. Preventing it and sustainability are the next steps. If you are interested in Natural Resources, (please see state League website, lwvfl.org, for information on the topic). Contact **Bonnie Field**, bfield222@gmail.com, for more information.

Equal Rights Amendment Still Alive After Virginia Becomes 38th State to Ratify

What is the ERA?

- The Equal Rights Amendment ensures equal rights for all, regardless of sex.
- The amendment was introduced by suffragist Alice Paul in 1923. It was passed by Congress in 1972 and crossed the 38-state threshold for ratification in January of 2020.
- The text of the ERA is as follows: "Section 1. Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex. Sec. 2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article. Sec. 3. This amendment shall

take effect two years after the date of ratification."

Why do we need the ERA?

- It's undeniable that women have made significant progress toward equality over the years. However, women continue to battle systematic discrimination in the form of unequal pay, workplace harassment, and domestic violence, and more.
- Tackling these issues will take more than just reactionary solutions. We must address the root cause of inequality by amending our constitution.
- The ERA will pave the way for further legislative progress towards gender equality and will allow the courts to closely scrutinize sex-based discrimination.

What happens to the ERA now?

- Once an amendment has been ratified by the necessary 38 states, the National Archivist can proceed with final certification of the amendment.
- However, when it passed the ERA in 1972, Congress attached a deadline for ratification to the amendment. Because that deadline has passed, ambiguity exists about whether the amendment can now be certified as normal.
- Congress can vote to remove the deadline and eliminate any ambiguity so that the ERA can be certified as an official amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

LWV support of the ERA

- LWV seeks to secure equal rights and equal opportunity for all. We promote social and economic justice and the health and safety of all Americans.
- LWV supports the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and efforts to bring laws into compliance with the goals of the ERA.
- LWV supports equal rights for all under state and federal law regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or disability.
- LWV has fought hard for passage and ratification of the ERA since the 1970s.

What people can do to support the ERA?

- People can support ERA certification by contacting their representatives and asking them to vote YES to remove the

deadline on the ERA.

