



LWV of the Villages/Tri-County Area

October 2011 Vol. 6 Issue 4

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October General Meeting

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Join us on

Monday, October 24, 10 a.m.,
Community Bank & Trust Co.
CR466 & Parr Drive

The Villages

Guest Speaker:

Nancy Velez, Chief Academic Officer
Lake County School District

Topic:

The inclusion of Civics
in the curriculum of Florida students.

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 Message

We kicked off our meeting schedule with the first of two consensus meetings as we participate in the national League study on the role of the Federal Government in education. Presentations and questions centered on funding and equity, background and history, and disadvantaged students. Both League members and guests joined in a lively discussion, and we look forward to our November meeting where we wrap up our study with discussion and questions on core curriculum and assessment. Following the November meeting, the board will meet to review both meetings and determine whether or not our MAL Unit has reached consensus. This information will be relayed to LWVUS and we should know in the spring 2012 whether or not LWVUS will have a position on this issue.

Many thanks to Bernice Cozewith and Carolyn Johnson and the members of the committee for their work on these issues over the last several months. A League study is a perfect example of the how the League operates: from the bottom up!

If you missed participating in the education study, there is another opportunity to do so. At the national Convention in 2010, delegates voted to study the issue of privatizing government services. This is an important topic especially here in Florida, so I hope you will think about getting involved.

The 2012 Florida Legislative Session will begin in January instead of March because of the reapportionment process. As of now, it is anticipated that proposed maps will be up for discussion during the first week of the session. While this process is of utmost importance to the League, the Advocacy Corps will also be concentrating on LWVF legislative priorities as determined by local League members and approved by the state board.

Please plan on attending our October meeting as we learn more about the inclusion of civics in the curriculum of Florida students. Also, remember to ask a friend to attend with you.

Joanne

October

Mon., Oct. 10, 10 a.m. Board Meeting at home of Joanne Coen. Members welcome.

Mon., Oct. 24, 10 a.m. Nancy Velez, Lake County School District, Community Bank & Trust Co., The Villages.

November

Mon., Nov. 14, 10 a.m. LWVUS Education Study Consensus Meeting, Community Bank & Trust Co., The Villages. Board meeting to follow.

December

Thurs., Dec. 8, 11 a.m. Holiday Luncheon, Stonecrest Country Club, 27/441, Summerfield.

Membership

Again, welcome to our newest members, **Bill Calhoun, Nancy Hurlbert** and **Carol Paitt**. **Carolyn Johnson** had successful shoulder surgery and our thoughts continue to be with **Thelma Kuperberg** and **Frances Spedding**.

Remember that dues are payable annually on the anniversary of your joining the League, and checks, including the **\$10** Local Dues, and payable to **LWVTRI**, can be sent to **Carolyn Johnson, 2615 Caribe Dr., The Villages, FL 32162**.

Background Information for October General Meeting

According to retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, "Only one-third of Americans can name the three branches of government, but two-thirds can name a judge on American Idol." Shocked by these type statistics, four years ago U.S. Representative Lou Frey and former Florida Governor and U.S. Senator, Bob Graham initiated the Sandra Day O'Connor Civics Education Act bills (SB 1096, HB 105). Passed by the Florida Legislature and effective July 1, 2010, the legislation requires that 7th graders complete a civics course and 8th graders

must pass a civics test to be promoted to high school. Additionally, "civics" related content must be taught on all grade levels.

Nancy Velez, Chief Academic Officer, Lake County School District, will be addressing the implementation of civics into the curriculum as well as the assessment process.

If you would like to find out more about government in Florida, you can go to <http://www.lwvfla.org/pdf%20files/OFG-6web-final-4.pdf> and download the 6th Edition of "Our Florida Government" which is a publication of the LWV of Florida.

Common Core Standards and Assessments

This facet of the LWVUS Education study will be discussed at our November meeting. A synopsis and the questions pertaining to this topic will be sent to League members prior to the November meeting. In the interim, some brief comments about common core standards and assessments courtesy of the LWV of Okaloosa County. Academic curricula and student performance standards vary widely by state, because local control produced inconsistent requirements. To improve college and career readiness, several non-federal groups with state representation (AK and TX did not participate) started the Common Core Standards Initiative to bring more consistency and rigor to state curricula. CCSI's purpose is to ensure students a high quality education consistently, from school to school and state to state, and to allow schools to pool resources and share best practices for efficiency.

Arguments against adopting the Common Core Standards include the cost and difficulty of changing existing curricula and assessments; sovereignty of states in education related matters; and the possibility that standards may be too narrow or could be misused.

Design of new assessment systems aligned to the Common Core Standards is underway, and will enable cross-state test result comparisons by 2014-15. Most states have adopted the Common Core, but few teachers or administrators have been exposed to the standards, and proper test score interpretation is key to implementation. The Common Core has created an opportunity to achieve consistency and raise standards, but has also raised concerns about local say in determining curricula and setting standards. Many questions about how the new assessment scores might be used – e.g., for teacher evaluation and accountability – also remain unanswered. In the meantime, the federal government's role could be redefined in many ways.

SCOPE OF THE LWVUS PRIVATIZATION STUDY

The purpose of this study is to identify those parameters and policy issues to be considered in connection with proposals to transfer federal, state or local government services, assets and/or functions to the private sector. It will review the stated goals and the community impact of such transfers, and identify strategies to ensure transparency, accountability, and preservation of the common good. The national study committee will provide information to local and state Leagues later this month. From November of this year until May 2012, Leagues are encouraged to participate in the study on Privatization of Government services, assets and functions, and the impact on local communities by scheduling meetings to educate members and communities about the issue and come to consensus.

The committee will provide a history and background of privatization, a glossary of terms, legal issues to be considered when privatizing at different levels of government, current state regulations on privatizing and case studies on successful and unsuccessful privatizing efforts. Finally, the committee will provide suggested policies and parameters to be considered when privatizing. Here in Florida, a court ruled against the Florida Legislature for inserting a proviso for privatizing Florida prisons into the budget. To quote Sen. Mike Fasano (Rep. New Port Richey), "An issue as important as prison privatization, should have been given the chance for thoughtful debate in the substantive committees that oversee this issue." Locally, Sumter County is talking about privatizing some functions. If you are interested in finding out more about this proposed study, please contact **Joanne M.**

Coen. This topic is of great importance to Floridians so think about participating.

LWV 2012 Legislative Priorities

Recently, League members across Florida were asked for their top three issues for the upcoming 2012 Legislative Session which will begin in January.

The top three are:

Government in Florida is the top choice with several Leagues emphasizing reapportionment and finance and taxation as main priorities.

Education was next; here the emphasis is on funding and extending testing to private schools receiving state funds.

Social Policy with an emphasis on Health Care and Immigration is the third top choice.

Based on these choices, questions will be developed for use in Legislative Interviews which are conducted by League members prior to the start of the session. If you have any suggestions for questions based on the above, please send them to **Richard Coen**.



Voting Law Changes

We all know that this last legislative session in Tallahassee produced HB1355. This bill has introduced many changes into Florida's voting and election laws. One portion of the bill that affects LWVF is the restrictions on third party voter registration groups. Because of this bill, the League is no longer registering voters in Florida. Not only has Florida enacted restrictive laws, but many states across the country have also done so. The Brennan Center has released a report about this issue and you can find it by going to http://www.brennancenter.org/content/resource/voting_law_changes_in_2012.

Below is a press release from LWVF concerning a motion filed on behalf of the League and Democracia USA concerning portions of HB1355.

September 9, 2011

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS TAKES LEGAL ACTION ON NEW ELECTIONS LAW

Files Motion to Intervene in Federal Preclearance Case

Tallahassee, FL -- Today, the League of Women Voters of Florida and Democracia USA, represented by the Brennan Center for Justice, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and pro bono attorneys from the law firm of Bryan Cave, filed a motion to intervene in the State of Florida's lawsuit against the Department of Justice over the state's new elections law. Since the state withdrew the four most contentious sections of the law from DOJ review last month, a federal court must now decide whether or not to "preclear" the law under the National Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The League has advocated against preclearance, arguing that Florida's new law will reduce opportunities for voting and unlawfully restrict voter registration, disproportionately affecting Florida's minority population.

According to League President Deirdre Macnab, "when the state of Florida decided to submit sections of HB 1355 to a federal court in Washington, D.C. for review, we were determined to have the League's concerns heard. We want to ensure that the court hears evidence that this law, if precleared, will have a very real and harmful impact on Florida's voters and, in particular, its minority voters."

LWVF Executive Director Jessica Lowe-Minor elaborates, "the sections of this law that we believe will suppress voter participation are the ones the state now wants a court to approve. We believe the court will agree with us that this law is unfair to voters, serves no legitimate purpose, and disproportionately impacts minorities. The state's decision to pull these provisions from the Department of Justice and instead pursue a lengthy, expensive lawsuit shows just how problematic these provisions are. Although we feel confident that the law will eventually be overturned, this lawsuit creates unnecessary delays for voters and unnecessary costs for Florida taxpayers."



LWV of The Villages/Tri-County Area
Be a Voice for Citizens! Be a Force for Change!
Be Involved in the Process!

www.lwvtri.org

Name _____

Phone No. _____

Address _____

Email _____

Zip Code _____

Village, if applicable _____

Community, if applicable _____

Former League Member: Yes _____ No _____ Where: _____

Your active participation is needed. Are you interested in:

Government in Florida
 Justice in Florida
 Natural Resources

Education in Florida
 Social Policy in Florida
 Growth Management

Could you help with:

Newsletter (Electronic) Membership Public Relations Fundraising

Dues are paid annually on the anniversary of joining:

Individual	\$ 50.00 + Local Dues of \$10	_____
Household	\$ 75.00 + Local Dues of \$10 per person	_____
Student	\$ 25.00	_____
Susan B. Anthony	\$100.00 Membership Dues +Donation	_____

A check should be made payable to **LWV of Florida** for the applicable amount. In addition, the check for **Local Dues** should be made payable to **LWVTRI**. Both checks should be 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*.

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