



Nationally Recognized! Locally Active!

***September 2019
Volume 13 Issue 4***

Co-Presidents' Corner

Our League kicked off our centennial recognition in grand fashion with the Equalitea at Fish Hawk Recreation Center held on August 16th. Co-sponsored by AAUW, this event was attended by almost 100 people who enjoyed refreshments and heard about the struggles of suffragette Alice Paul from our speaker Carolyn Ingham. Thanks to the excellent news media coverage prior to the event, our attendance doubled from last year leading us to start thinking about booking a bigger venue for our 2020 celebration. The sponsoring organizations will split a small profit thanks to the generosity of our board members who donated the majority of the food. Many thanks to those who attended and especially those who volunteered.

2010 will prove to be a busy year for our League. In addition to other centennial events, it is, of course, a presidential election year. One of our key goals is to increase voter participation. I fear it will be a tough sell for people who have become disengaged from the political process due to the highly partisan nature of our political climate. This apathy and disengagement seem

to be prevalent in many areas of our society. I am a 30-plus-year member of a large professional organization (American Library Association), and I just read that 40,000 of the 48,000 members failed to vote in the last election of officers. There were two very qualified candidates for president with varying backgrounds and views, and an electronic voting process which made it simple for members to read about the candidates and make their choices with very little effort. One candidate summed up the election by saying, “There is great passion, depth of feeling, generosity, and vitality in our Association, and our profession. There is also great apathy, scorn, anger, disconnectedness, even despair, and most perniciously, indifference.” And this is in an organization of highly educated professionals.

Our challenge in the League will be to reach all eligible voters and get them committed to making their voices heard at the polls. Research shows that consistently under-represented groups in voting are minorities, young people, people living in poverty, and unmarried women. By now, you may have heard our League was awarded \$5,000 after being asked to present a project to a new giving circle in Leesburg called “Women United.” Our vision for this grant is to engage more young women in the election process by providing information about the upcoming election cycle via social media. Our goal will be to motivate them to exercise their voices and their power by directing them to information sources on the registration and voting process as well as impartial candidate information from sources such as VOTE411. We have engaged Red Apples Media of Leesburg (co-owned by a League member) to produce the video messages. We will be looking for additional assistance in developing a distribution plan via social media. However, we also hope to engage all of our members by asking you to have conversations with the young women you encounter at the grocery store checkout line, your favorite restaurants, or other business establishments. Encourage them to vote and point them to our posts on Facebook, Instagram, Snap Chat, and YouTube. Our

target demographic is young women in Sumter, Lake, and Marion counties. More information will be forthcoming.

Just a a reminder that new members of the League should have received their email invitation to be special guests at a wine and cheese event on **September 10th** at the home of co-president **Gail Formanack**. The event is at **5 p.m.** at **1096 Alcove Loop (Village of Hemingway), The Villages**. An orientation packet will be provided, and questions will be answered informally. The event is not limited to new members as we know this will be good opportunity for both seasoned and new members to socialize and get to know one another on a more informal basis.

Please RSVP by Friday, September 6th to formanag@gmail.com.

Yours in League,

Gail

Gail Formanack

Co-President

P.S. Don't forget to invite a friend to our September General Meeting.

September General Meeting

When: Monday, September 23, 2019

10:30 a.m. - 12 noon

Where: Manatee Recreation Center

1512 Hillsborough Trail, The Villages

Guest Speaker:



Rep. Brett B. Hage (R-33)

Rep. Hage was elected in 2018 and represents all of Sumter County as well as portions of Lake and Marion. Among the committees he serves on are the Subcommittee on PreK-12 and Subcommittee on PreK-12 Quality.

September League Happenings!

New Members

Wine & Cheese

**September 10, 5 p.m.
at the home of
co-president Gail Formanack.**

Advocacy Training

**September 13, 1-3 p.m.
Community Bank & Trust Co.,
CR466 & Parr Drive,
The Villages.**

Mark Your 2020 Calendars

The board voted recently to contribute \$500 to Beacon College to co-sponsor their January, 2020 Salon Speaker.

On January 22, 2020, at 7:00 pm, Kimberly Wilmot Voss, journalism professor

at the University of Central Florida will speak on **"Politicking Politely: Well-Behaved Women Making a Difference in the 1960s and 1970s."**

Our League will have a table and be allowed to distribute membership materials as well as have designated seating. Online registration is required in advance. **Make sure you identify League of Women Voters when answering "How did you hear about this event?"** This will allow you to sit with the group.

Beacon College's Salon Speaker series events are free of charge, and hors d'oeuvres are served. The location is yet to be determined. Learn more about these events and register by visiting [**Beaconcollege.edu/salon**](http://Beaconcollege.edu/salon).

Membership

Welcome to our newest members:

Jacob McEwen
Sharon Statucki
Lekhanh Tran

Just a reminder that dues are due on the **anniversary month** of your joining the League. You will receive an email reminder from **Karen West** ([**LWVTRImembers@gmail.com**](mailto: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**](mailto: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:

Gun Safety-Cindy Vinarski
Juvenile Justice-Linda Bishop
Natural Resources-Bonnie Field

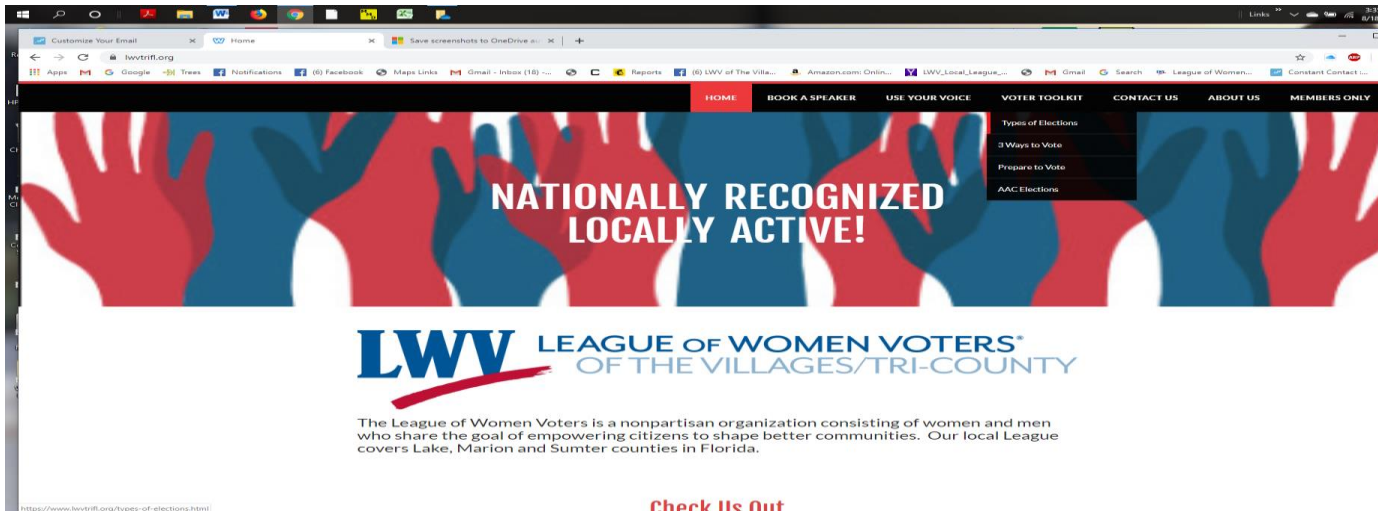
If you would like to participate in the conference calls with the liaison, please contact **Beth Hicks**, lwvtriprez@gmail.com.

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, please note 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**, lvvtriprez@gmail.com for the password for the Member link on the state League website.



League Website

Our website, LWVTRIFL.org, has a **Members Only** section (see screenshot above with **Members Only** highlighted in **red**) 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@lwgtrifl.org.

Legislative Education & Action Committee

In order to to prepare ourselves for effective interactions with our local Florida legislators, our League is forming a new group. We are hoping **you will join us** – especially those of you who may already be involved in any of these activities. If you would only like to do one or two - that is fine. Our activities will include:

- Educating and familiarizing ourselves with the LWV Florida's priorities and actions
- Observing our local elected officials at various public meetings
- Visiting our local elected officials
- Gathering answers to our questionnaire supplied by LWVFL
- Reporting our findings to LWVFL
- Informing our members of our findings
- Lobbying our elected officials in accordance with League priorities.

As much of this work will be done on the computer, our meeting times will be flexible. If you are interested in finding out more information or say you're on board, please contact **Bonnie Field**, bfield222@gmail.com, 352 435-0079.

Please mark your calendar for the Training & Advocacy session to be conducted by **Nicolette Springer**, on **Friday, September 13, 1 p.m.** at the **Community Bank & Trust Co., CR466 & Parr Drive, The Villages**. A sign-up sheet will be

available at the training session.

Your Help is Needed!

Census 2020

2020 is rapidly approaching whether we are ready or not. In addition to being an election year, it is also a census year! This once a decade counting of your fellow residents establishes a data base used in so many ways.

The State League has set up a committee to keep the local leagues up to date. We are looking for a local contact. No meetings, no travel, no speaking to groups! Each local league will have a point of contact. You would be on an email list and share the information you receive to the local board and report on any of our activities.

This is a perfect task for someone who is looking at how to put their toe in the water of involvement without a huge commitment. Please contact **Beth** and **Gail** at lwvtriprez@gmail.com if this is the job for you!

LWVTRI Communications

If you like to work on the computer, here's another opportunity for you to be involved with our League. Eight times a year, our newsletter goes out to members and the community at large. In addition, as you have seen over the course of your membership, we send emails to the membership concerning events, legislative action alerts, etc. To do this we use an email marketing program called Constant Contact. **Joanne Coen** is looking for another League member to lend a hand. It isn't hard to learn and templates are provided. If you have had experience with email marketing programs, that would be great. However, it is not necessary. Joanne learned on the job and would really like to

share this responsibility with another member. For further information, contact Joanne at joanne.m.coen@gmail.com.

Education

Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program (VPK)

Our local League of Women Voters (LWV) and American Association of University Women (AAUW) have moved on from our study regarding the quality of local VPK programs to the advocacy phase. In a quick summary, our multi-year study involved two dozen members who conducted observations and interviewed teachers and directors in 23 VPK programs in our three-county area. The conclusions we drew led us to believe the program is under-funded by the state, and teachers need training specifically on how to plan and deliver more effective learning experience for the four year-olds they serve.

After LWVFL approved program language strengthening support for early childhood education programs at the convention in June, we moved forward with visits to several local legislators. **Susan Gold** and **Gail Formanack** met with **Rep. Brett Hage (Dist. 33)** in late July. After presenting our one-page summary of the issue, he spoke to a colleague on the Education Committee on which they both serve. He learned that a new comprehensive bill will be introduced, and he pledged to co-sponsor it. He predicted that something will happen next session on this issue especially since Gov. DeSantis has stated publicly his unhappiness with kindergarten readiness rates and told the Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran to “prioritize this issue.” We were encouraged by his verbal support and look forward to hearing from Rep. Hage at our September meeting.

Bonnie Field and **Gail Formanack** were scheduled to meet with **Rep. Anthony Sabatini (Dist. 32)**, however he was called away unexpectedly for National Guard training. We did have a productive conversation with his aide who

coincidentally was set to send her four year-old to VPK. She was engaged in the conversation and promised to pass along the information.

Sara Rich, Gail Formanack, and Nicollette Springer (legislative advocate for LWVFL) met with **Sen. Kelli Stargel (Dist. 22)** at her Lakeland office in early August. Sen. Stargel is on the Education Committee and chairs the Education Appropriations Committee. She also listened to our issues with interest, and we hope she will support a funding increase for VPK.

On August 27, **Gail Formanack** and **Sara Rich** met with **Rep. Jennifer Sullivan (Dist. 31)** who chairs the House Education Committee. Rep. Sullivan indicated to us that she supports additional funding for VPK as well as changes to the current assessment system.

Committee meetings for House and Senate members begin in early September, so we anticipate having more specific information as bills are filed in advance of the session which begins in January. Our advocacy work will continue.

Voter Service

Speakers Bureau

Since March 2019, the Speakers Bureau has made presentations to 21 organizations primarily on the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact but also on FL Charter Schools and the Three Branches of the U S Government.

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

- National Popular Vote Interstate Compact & the Electoral College
- US Constitution & the Balance of Power

Please contact

Jeannie Hamilton, Speakers Bureau Chair, 303 817

9988 Lwvtrisspeakersbureau@gmail.com

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

From LWV Florida

Ban Assault Weapons NOW is a bipartisan grassroots coalition of concerned Floridians of which the LWV Florida is a member.

BAWN is leading the grassroots movement to put an amendment on Florida's 2020 ballot to constitutionally ban the sale of assault weapons. Their mission is to collect nearly 800,000 signatures so Florida voters can have their voices heard. To download and sign the petition go to: [BAWN](#) and follow the directions.

Transportation

Florida legislators passed the largest statewide highway expansion plan since the 1950s last spring – a network of new toll roads stretching from South Florida to the Georgia border.

Now the state Department of Transportation is asking for the public's input (<http://floridamcores.com/>) on the controversial plan, which was called “the worst environmental bill in twenty years” by one long-time Florida conservation leader and considered a top priority of state Senate President Bill Galvano.

The new law dedicates billions to toll roads that were never called for in any state transportation plan. Legislators voted on it without having any exact routes to look at – just these general corridors:

– A “Suncoast Connector” highway to extend the Suncoast Parkway from north of Tampa up to North Florida's Jefferson County, along the Georgia border.

– A highway to link Polk County to Collier County, the “Southwest Central Florida Corridor.”

– A **“Northern Turnpike connector” to extend the Florida Turnpike northwest from I-75 in Wildwood to the Suncoast Parkway on the state’s west coast.**

The state Department of Transportation has appointed members to a series of statewide task forces which will work on planning each of the routes. The task forces include Florida environmental agencies, business representatives and local officials, and will take public testimony.

The state is promoting the massive toll road-building as a way to revitalize rural areas, but critics say highways that move traffic quickly through the landscape do little for that goal, and point to the Panhandle’s Interstate 10 as one example.

The state transportation department is calling the toll road projects “Multi-use Corridors of Regional Economic Significance,” or M-CORES. Interested citizens can go to [this website](#) to sign up for updates on the planning process.

The legislation envisions construction starting in 2022 and the roads open by 2030. The plan calls for \$45 million next year, \$90 million in the 2020-2021 fiscal year, about \$135 million the year after that and a recurring amount of \$140 million starting in the 2022-2023 fiscal year. The money would be spent on planning the massive project; billions more would be bonded to fund the toll roads.

Check us out at
www.lwvtrifl.org
and
follow us on

LWV of The Villages/Tri-County Area | [1960 Ardmore Way, The Villages, FL 32162](#)

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Sent by joanne.m.coen@gmail.com in collaboration with