



THE VOTER

LWV of the Villages/Tri-County Area ♦ April 2010 ♦ Vol. 4 Issue 8

<http://lwvtri.googlepages.com/>

Nationally recognized! Locally active!

2010 Annual Meeting

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

The Florida Legislature is half way through the 2010 Session, and we have received several Action Alerts from the state League. These alerts will be coming fast and furious as the session draws to a close so please respond when asked. Thank you for your responses so far. Just a reminder-- you can access the weekly update from the League's lobbyist by going to <http://www.lwvfla.org/> and clicking on the link to the "Capitol Report."

Charlene Walker represented our League at the 2010 Legislative Seminar in Tallahassee and penned an overview of her experience. You will note that Charlene mentions attending a committee meeting and the treatment the groups in attendance received. These groups, including the League, were there to speak in opposition to SJR 2420 (TABOR also known as the Taxpayers Bill of Rights). A copy of a letter from the state League president to Sen. Jeff Atwater, president of the Florida Senate, expressing her dismay at the lack of civility and decorum accorded to the speakers is included in this newsletter.

In further news, the state board voted to approve the transportation concurrency that local Leagues participated in. You will recall that we held our concurrency meeting in November and agreed with the Orange and Tallahassee Leagues. At the 2009 LWVF Convention, delegates to the convention approved a statewide transportation study. We can now proceed on the local level to undertake this study. On March 24, Richard Coen and I attended the Lake Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meeting at Lake Sumter Community College. Please read Richard's article on this meeting as the MPO is one agency that you will hear about as the transportation study progresses.

Remember, to get your reservations to Caroline Johnson for the upcoming Annual Meeting. Many thanks to Bernice Cozewith, Betty Keller and Luth Tenorio for their diligent work on the nominating committee. They were relentless.

In League,

Joanne

Officers & Directors

President:	Joanne M. Coen
Vice Presidents:	Barbara Cope
	Richard L. Coen
Treasurer:	Carolyn Johnson
Secretary:	Judie Brown
Directors:	Betsy Brody
	Bernice Cozewith
	Helen Gozdanovic
	Frances Spedding
	Linda Thomas

MARK YOU CALENDARS

Monday, April 5, 10:00 a.m., Board Meeting.	Home of Joanne M. Coen
Monday, April 12, 11:00 a.m., Annual Meeting.	Jitterz Café, 27/441, Bellevue
Monday, May 10, 10:00 a.m., General Meeting. Speaker to be announced.	Community Bank & Trust Co., CR466, The Villages.

Your Help Is Still Needed!!!!

Last month, I informed you that under Voter Service, we were working with the Collins Center and the Sumter County School District to implement online mock elections in November. Help will be needed with this project, and I hope you will respond.

We met with the Director of LSCC TV to discuss taping and showing candidate forums. The station will provide the equipment and training. In addition to the candidate forums, the station is interested in having the League host a show that would discuss issues important to the community. Nancy Bell and Betsy Brody attended the meeting with me, and we have some interesting ideas. We would like to have a small committee to help with this project.

These are two wonderful opportunities for our League. At a time when civil discourse seems to be a lost art, the League is still there to show that conversation can take place in a civil and respectful manner.

Please think about becoming involved. The time commitment should not interfere with your other activities; quite a bit can be accomplished through the miracle of email and the internet. We can't leave it to someone else.

For more information, contact **Joanne M. Coen**, joannejon@aol.com.

Controlling Our Destiny

On March 24, 2010, Joanne and I attended the Transportation 2035 workshop sponsored by the Lake-Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization (LSMPO) held at the Lake-Sumter Community College in Leesburg.

So What Is A Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)?

An MPO is an agency created by federal law to provide local input for urban transportation planning and allocating federal transportation funds to cities with populations of greater than 50,000. The mission of an MPO is to provide comprehensive, coordinated and continuous (3Cs) transportation planning for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods consistent with the region's overall economic, social and environmental goals. Special emphasis is placed on providing equal access to a variety of transportation choices and effective public involvement in the transportation planning process.

When Did MPOs Come Into Existence?

MPOs were first required by the Federal Highway Act of 1962 to provide a 3C transportation planning process by local, state and federal officials. In November 2003, Gov. Jeb Bush designated LSMPO as an MPO after the 2000 U.S. Census determined the urbanized areas around Leesburg, Eustis and Lady Lake had exceeded a population of 50,000. The LSMPO held its first meeting on Feb. 25, 2004.

What Is An MPO's Mission?

The MPO provides an independent yet cooperative forum for regional planning and the allocation of millions of dollars in federal transportation funding annually.

In general, the MPO is responsible for the urban transportation planning process, which allows LSMPO to receive more than a \$100 million annually in federal and state transportation funding. This is accomplished primarily through three related activities - the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

The LRTP is a 25-year plan and the basic framework for all transportation planning. The TIP is a five-year list of prioritized transportation improvement projects. These projects generally fall into five categories - capacity improvement projects (adding lanes), preservation projects (road

reconstruction without adding lanes), bicycle projects, pedestrian projects and transit projects.

The Workshop

After the initial introductions, the workshop attendees were divided into three geographical county groups (i) North Lake-Sumter, (ii) East Lake, and (iii) South Lake. It was an opportunity to meet with and talk to governmental leaders and professional planners. Joanne and I participated with the North Lake-Sumter group and had the opportunity to meet government officials from Fruitland Park, and Wildwood, along with the Sumter County Planning Manager.

Interestingly, although the LSMPO is to look at all forms of transportation, from railroad to bicycle to walking, because the primary population growth in Sumter County is in The Villages and most of the geographical expansion will be around Wildwood the discussions were primarily about road construction. In addition to dealing with the need to serve the increase in population, the process is also required to consider how to reduce vehicle traffic accidents while considering the safety of residents using other forms of transportation; as well as making certain that hurricane evacuation routes are kept in place.

As you know, the widening of CR301 between CR466 and CR42 in Marion County is already underway. Bridge construction over CR301 and CR 42 in Sumter County is also underway as a result of anticipated growth in rail cargo traffic diverted to this area as a result of the creation of Sun Rail. Additional road expansion could occur on CR466A between The Villages and SR441/27. At this time only road reconstruction without adding lanes is under consideration for CR301 south of the turnpike.

The LSMPO will continue to conduct public outreach meetings with local community officials and county residents during the coming year with a final report in December 2010.

Richard Coen

"Celebrate and Advocate" **Legislative Seminar,** **March 22-24 2010** **Tallahassee, Florida**



Monday, March 22:

The magic is still there. I arrived in Tallahassee tired and ready to rest – until I walked into the Hilton Garden Inn and saw so many League members registering, talking, meeting new and greeting old friends – that I forgot all about relaxing. The electricity was still there.

After registering and moving into my room, I met more Leaguers back in the lobby. We carpooled to the Capitol and gathered for cocktails and an exquisite view of Tallahassee from the top floor. Even though I have had this experience on a number of occasions, it never ceases to amaze and thrill me. A delicious buffet followed.

We raised our glasses in a toast to the Leagues amazing 90 years of accomplishments and heard historical highlights of our organization! Secretary of State Kurt Browning gave us some encouraging words. In return, he was given the “Making Democracy Work” Award. Secretary Browning has worked with the League for many years.

Our new lobbyist, Ben Wilcox, spoke on the League’s legislative priorities and where they were in the process. This is where reality collided with the rosy glow of celebrating 90 years.

Bills of particular importance, and ones that would be heard in committee soon, were:

- *SUPPORT HB 105 and SB 1096 – Justice Sandra Day O’Connor Civics Education Act
- *OPPOSE HB 1207 and SB 880 – campaign financing that creates new campaign financing rules under direct control of legislative leaders (ACTION NEEDED – ask Gov. Crist to veto it)
- *SUPPORT Student Voter Education Program,
- *SUPPORT measures that would close tax loopholes and scrutinize tax exemptions in order to improve Florida’s fiscal policy
- *SUPPORT Reapportionment reform – Amendments 5 & 6 on the ballot;

*OPPOSE SJR 2420 – State & Local Government Revenue Limitations (TABOR)

Delegates were encouraged to attend committee meetings where bills would be considered and talk with our legislators. Of special interest and concern was the 1 PM Senate Community Affairs meeting on TABOR (Taxpayer's Bill of Rights) Tuesday.

A workshop on the redistricting plan of action followed on this jam packed evening of activities. Caroline Emmons-Schramm will be presenting that program in The Villages toward the end of April. Don't miss it.

Tuesday, March 23:

7:30a.m. Breakfast with Legislators- Delegates to Seminar enjoyed a hearty and elegant breakfast in the historic **Governors Club**. We heard from seven legislators, all of whom spoke well of the League and gave their views of the state of the legislature. This was one of the many outstanding events during Seminar.

Senator Dockery talked of two bills that she introduced. One would protect Trust Funds and another would make it easier to access public records. Both seemed to be positive bills. Dr. Wayne Blanton, Executive Director of the Florida School Board Association and John Hall, ED FL Center for Fiscal & Economic Policy spoke about legislative responsibility in their areas. This is where timing got tricky.

9:30 a.m. - Claim to Fame! The Cabinet Room at the Capitol where the League received a Proclamation from Governor Crist and the Cabinet highlighting our historical achievements and announcing a week in August as National Voter Awareness Week in our name!

10:00 a.m. - Only a few people made it to the Cabinet Room, partly because the breakfast ran late, while the rest went to the House in Session where the League's 90th Anniversary was recognized (after a fashion). The Speaker of the House and some members made light of the recognitions by introducing spouses and then asking if there was anyone at all that he hadn't recognized – and he proceeded to recognize everyone else.

Noon-5 p.m. I attended the Senate Community Affairs meeting on TABOR. The bad news is that the bill was passed out of committee. The worse news is that the chairman of the committee, Sen. Bennett, was the rudest and most arrogant legislator I have ever encountered. Four or five group representatives rose to speak against the bill including LWVF, AARP, AFL/CIO and a tax group – no one spoke in favor. The chairman belittled the speakers, cut them off and in every way made it clear that he did not want to hear what they had to say. This was the low point of Seminar and the lowest point that I have ever seen/heard by a legislator,

It did not deter us. All Day- Couldn't Miss Us! There was a LWVF table in the rotunda of the Capitol handing out literature, Commemorative Journals and selling rhinestone VOTE pins.

I met with Rep. O'Toole who, as always, listened, commented and promised to study our positions. She restored my faith – to a degree – in the legislature.

5 p.m., location- The Paradigm in Tallahassee- Hot Topics Debate Dinner Topic: "Amendment 4" ... Growth Management or Voter Mismanagement pro/con speakers offered opposing views on this controversial amendment. The presentation and dinner were hosted by the Tallahassee League. They did an outstanding job as always. However, even after hearing arguments on both sides, I cannot decide which way to vote.

Wednesday, March 24:

Exhausted and exhilarated...we head back home to continue our work after a breakfast with many League members from all over the state. We rehashed

Thursday, March 25:

Comments by the LWVF Board: Read all about it! Press release across the State highlighting our visit to Tallahassee, our Proclamation and issues we are working on!

Charlene Walker



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF FLORIDA

March 25, 2010

President Atwater
Florida Senate

Subject: **Civility and Decorum**

Dear Mr. President;

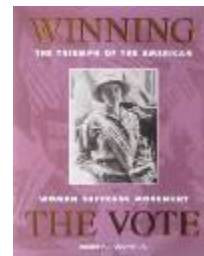
As you know, the League of Women Voters of Florida has been coming to Tallahassee during session as well as during interim committee work sessions for over 50 years. The League prides itself on its pledge to study issues in depth, to take a position after lengthy consensus and to build on existing voter trust. Our motto is: "A voice for citizens: a force for change". Sometimes our positions run counter to legislation at hand. This is nothing new! But we believe our voice should be heard with respect, with civility and, above all, with fairness. I am sorry to report that the Senate has reached new lows with the decorum that accompanied the hearing that was held on Tuesday, March 23rd, Community Affairs Committee hearing on SJR 2420, State and Local Government Revenues in Room 412, Knott Building.

The hearing slated for 1:00 p.m., started half an hour late at 1:30 pm to end at 3pm. After half an hour of consideration for other senator's bills, public comment on SJR 2420 began at 2:35 pm. It was announced at that time that public comment would be cut off at 2:55 pm. Only five individuals were recognized for comment at two minutes a piece. This is not acceptable. While the League representative was recognized for comment by the chair, the ensuing comments directed not only at our representative but other speakers were only marginally civil, cavalier and simply arrogant. **We are requesting that the leadership reexamine the democratic baseline of inviting comment from the public at large and honoring the**

longstanding tradition of setting aside appropriate time for that comment to be expressed. That is why we elect our representatives to the Legislature: to hear our voices. That is a pledge that every elected official makes as he takes office. Can we count on that pledge?

Sincerely,

Deirdre McNab
President, LWV Florida



Women's Equality Day Celebration

In conjunction with the Lake Sumter AAUW, the League is in the planning stages of a "Pink Tea" to celebrate the passage of the 19th Amendment on August 26, 1920. We are hoping to have the Tea at the Lady Lake Community Center (next to the Lady Lake Library). The exact date has not yet been finalized, and I realize that we have snow birds and vacations planned. We will be meeting with AAUW next week to finalize the details, and I am hoping that two or three League members will step forward and work on this project. If you can lend a hand, contact Joanne at joannejon@aol.com. The Tea will be open to the community so I hope you will tell your friends. More to come next month....

Women's History Month Luncheon Honorees



All Our Honorees

(Front row: **Judie Brown, Carol Balbes, Frances Spedding, Betty Keller & Nancy Bell**)
(Back row: **Joanne Coen, Charlene Walker & Betsy Brody**)

Our speaker at the Women's History Month Luncheon was Karla Grimsley who has served as the Circuit Director of the 5th Judicial Circuit Guardian as Litem Program since 2002. She also serves as the Regional Director for the North Central Florida Region, encompassing 16 counties.

The GAL program utilizes volunteers to serve as advocates for abused and neglected children in the courts. As a Circuit Director, she is primarily responsible for the representation of approximately 2000 children in Lake, Citrus, Sumter, Hernando and Marion Counties. The children in this area are currently represented by 700 dedicated volunteers and 38 program staff. She also serves on her local Adoption Review Committee and the District 13 Child Death Review Team. She is a native Floridian with a Bachelors degree from the Univ. of South Florida and has a background in education and administration. She lives in Ocala with her 3 children.

Anyone interested in doing some volunteer work for GAL should contact League member and GAL volunteer, Betsy Brody, who will connect you with the proper training program and/or give additional information about the program.

Betsy Brody



JOIN THE LEAGUE



**Be a Voice for Citizens! Be a Force for Change!
Be Involved in the Process!**

Become a member of the LWV of The Villages/Tri-County Area MAL Unit.

Name _____

Phone No. _____

Address _____

Email _____

Zip Code _____

Village, if applicable _____

Community, if applicable _____

Former League Member: Yes____ **No**____ **Where:** _____

Interested in:
Government in Florida _____

Education in Florida _____

Justice in Florida _____

Social Policy in Florida _____

Natural Resources _____

Growth Management _____

Dues are paid annually:

Individual **\$50.00** _____

Household **\$75.00** _____

Contribution to
MAL Unit **\$10.00**
 or more _____

**Checks should be made payable to
LWV of Florida
and 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***