



LWV of The Villages/Tri-County Area

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The League of Women Voters does not endorse or oppose political parties or candidates.

The League of Women Voters encourages engagement and participation in the political process.

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It is hard to believe that 2016 Legislative Session will begin on January 12, 2016. If you haven't been paying attention, here are some proposed bills that are making their way through the committee process. These are just some of the issues that the League will be following during the session:

Education

SB 830: The bill appears to be similar to other states' takeover of public schools measures. The relevant section of the bill is "High Impact Charter School Network". It targets 'D' or 'F' public schools.

- a. It eliminates provisions for districts to modify charter contracts for charters with grades of 'C' or below.
- b. It allows the State Board of Education to grant charters directly for the new network and bypass the local school board authorization process. Districts would

not have oversight and could not collect current administrative oversight fees.

SB 808: The bill would redefine school districts and local school boards. Cities could form their own school districts or combine with contiguous areas and create their own partisan school boards. The new districts could use their own city or county commissions as school boards. This could be a means for northern Pinellas to separate from southern Pinellas where the notorious 'Failing Factories' are located. The status of this bill is uncertain.

SB 434: The bill is called the Principal's Autonomy Pilot Program Initiative. It would require participating public schools to participate in the University of Virginia School Turn Around Program. This bill needs further scrutiny.

HUR 759: The bill would allow the Department of Education to establish a statewide system for approving charter schools. Currently, school districts authorize charter schools and the State Board of Education can over-rule school board decisions.

PCB-CIS 1601: This is a rework of prior bills to create the Florida Charter School Institute which is designed to reduce local district charter authorizing authority. In addition, it creates a high impact charter district and changes charter board requirements. This is a bill that revives state vs. district control concern over charter school authorization.

Fracturing aka Fracking

HB 191: Among other things this bill preempts to the state the ability to regulate any activity related to oil and gas exploration, development, production, processing, storage and transportation. In addition, it voids any county, municipality or other political subdivision's ordinance or regulation (except for zoning ordinances passed before January 1, 2015), related to oil and gas exploration, development, production, processing, storage, and transportation.

SB 166: This bill and its companion in the House, **HB19**, would define the terms "hydraulic fracturing" and "well stimulation treatment" and prohibit a person from engaging in hydraulic fracturing or performing well stimulation treatments in Florida or the waters adjacent to Florida. It would also prohibit a person from disposing of related materials and byproducts of hydraulic fracturing or well stimulation treatments, etc. These bills have not been heard in any committees.

Guns

HB 4001: Campus Carry. Passed all of the House committees. It's now poised to go to the floor when session begins in January. **SB 68:** Its companion in the Senate is now in the Judiciary Committee but not yet on calendar to be heard.

HB 163: Open Carry. Has passed two House committees. Now in Judiciary. Not yet on calendar for a hearing in that committee. **SB 300:** Companion bill in Senate has passed one committee. Next up: Judiciary and Rules though date of those hearings

has not yet been determined.

For our newer members, during the session which runs 60 days, the League's lobbyist provides a weekly update, usually on Friday, recapping what has transpired during the week with updates on the state League's priority issues. One way in which you can help, is to respond to "Action Alerts" which are issued by the state League. The Alerts ask member to contact their legislators and request either their support or non-support of an issue. Please respond when you receive an Alert!

Lauren Ritchie's **President's Letter**

I hope you are getting ready for the League's Annual Holiday Luncheon & Gift Auction on December 11 at Red Sauce in Lake Sumter Landing, The Villages. In addition to a lovely lunch, we are looking forward to hearing from our guest speaker, Beverly Steele, from the Community of Royal in Wildwood.

Rather than putting the President's Letter first, I have taken the liberty of highlighting various piece of legislation which are important to the League. There is something you can do right now--contact your state Senator and Representative, and ask them to push for committee hearings for **SB166 &HB19** which are proposed anti-fracturing bills. They are simple and direct. It is important that these bills get a fair hearing. To find the contact information for your Senator and Representative, go to the League's website, www.lwvtri.org, and click on **Elected Officials** on the left side of the home page. This is something you can do right now before the session starts on January 12, 2016. Thank you to League member, **Annie Grewe**, for representing the League at the recent Lake County Delegation meeting at Lake-Sumter State College and reiterating our League's opposition to this process.

If you read [Lauren Ritchie's](#) column in the *Lake* section of the December 6 *Orlando Sentinel*, you will see that a request has been made to pump millions of gallons of water from 10 acres south of CR470 and east of US301 in Sumterville. According to the article, this request is for more water than the controversial Niagara Bottling plant pumped when it first opened in Groveland. As Lauren points out, residents are restricted when it comes to watering their lawns, but when it comes to a profit making operation, it is okay. It is our understanding that this project does not need the approval of the Board of County Commissioners of Sumter County. For our Lake County members doesn't this sound familiar? Between proposed fracturing/fracking

and water withdrawal, what will happen to Florida's water resources? Do we really want to find out? We have contacted the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) and they indicate that at this time, there is no permit, and they have requested additional information. Our League will be keeping track of the issue.

In anticipation of January's general meeting, I would like to thank Margy Barrett, Linda Carpenter and Susan Gold for all their hard work on the VPK Committee. We all know how important it is for a child to have a good foundation when they start school. The governor is telling us how well funded education will be in his proposed budget. In the course of looking at VPK which helps to lay that foundation, the committee found out how far below the national average funding is for this most important program which is free and provided for in the Florida Constitution. Put the January meeting on your calendar to find out more about this very important program. An information page about VPK will be made available to all League members prior to the January General Meeting.

Please take a moment to also read the Nominating Committee article and respond to Carolyn Johnson's request. I have enjoyed my time as president and watching our League grow. However, it is now time to turn this over to others, and I hope you will give careful consideration as to how you can contribute to the success of our League. As an aside, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Karen West for her extra pair of eyes. Karen patiently edits the newsletter and makes sure dates, spelling and grammar are what they should be. Her help is invaluable!

I hope to see you at the Holiday Luncheon, and if not, on behalf of the board, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your families a Happy Hannukah, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

In League,
Joanne M. Coen

P.S. Don't forget to invite a friend to the general meetings!

JANUARY GENERAL MEETING

When: Monday, January 25, 2016
Time: 10:30 a.m.

**Where: Community Bank & Trust Company
CR466 & Parr Drive
The Villages, Florida**

Topic: Florida Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) is a free program, overwhelmingly approved by voters in 2002, aimed to prepare four-year-old children for kindergarten and build the foundation for their educational success. VPK is available to all four-year-olds born on or before September 1 who reside in Florida, regardless of family income.

Guest Speakers

Lesha Buchbinder, Exec. Dir.
Early Learning Coalition Lake County
Roseann Fricks, Exec. Dir.
Early Learning Coalition Marion County

MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to new members:

Charlene Allmen
Diana & Jack Bishop, Jr.

As you begin to fill up your 2016 calendars, below are the the meeting dates for the coming year. Unless otherwise noted, all meetings will take place at the Community Bank & Trust Company, CR466 & Parr Drive, The Villages:

Monday, January 25, 2016
Monday, February 22, 2016
Monday, March 21, 2016 Annual Meeting
Monday, April 25, 2016
Monday, May 23, 2016
Monday, September 26, 2016
Monday, October 24, 2016
Monday, November 14, 2016

December will be the Annual Holiday Party.

We are looking forward to welcoming **Pamela Goodman, LWV Florida president**, as our guest speaker at the **Annual Meeting on March 21**. The meeting and luncheon will be held at the **Continental County Club, CR44, Wildwood**.

The League will once again be joining with other organizations to celebrate **Women's History Month on Wednesday, March 16**, at **Lake-Sumter Community State College**. There will be a guest speaker from the **Florida Commission on the Status of Women**.

Just a reminder that dues are payable in the anniversary month you joined the League. You will receive an email reminder from **Beth Hicks, Membership Chair**, as your anniversary date approaches. 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, cgljohnson@comcast.net**.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The time to select new officers and Board members for our League is fast approaching. I have agreed to be the convener and Board member serving on the Nominating Committee. Two members, not serving on the Board are required for the committee to function. Please email me, cgljohnson@comcast.net, or tap me on the shoulder if you would be willing to help select our next leaders.

The current board has discussed alternatives to our current Board configuration and have agreed to try the following offices which would constitute the Board: Co-Presidents; Voter Service Chair; Treasurer; Secretary; Publicity Chair; and Program Development and finally an at-large Board member. The duties of the Co-Presidents would be divided as their talents dictate.

Vacancies to be filled for the 2016-17 election would be Co-Presidents, Voter Service Chair, Secretary, and Program Development. We could also consider "Co" positions for Voter Service and Program Development if two would volunteer to serve in such offices. The goal is to make serving on the Board something you would want to do and not a sacrifice.

We have been so fortunate since our beginning to have Joanne Coen's leadership and devotion to duty. She wants and deserves a break but graciously agree to continue to write The Voter and be our webmaster—two vital time-consuming jobs that the President often ends up doing.

We are entering an election year. Over the past ten years we have established the League as an important information source on matters of election. It is important that we are a vibrant and well-functioning organization Step up, and do your part in making the League the respected group it deserves to be.

Carolyn Johnson

EDUCATION

In preparation for the January general meeting, the VPK committee would like to recap their work. A committee composed of two members of the League as well as two members from the AAUW Lake & Sumter began by interviewing Early Childhood Learning Coalitions (ELC) in Lake, Marion and Sumter counties. Committee members are Margy Barrett, Linda Carpenter, PhD, Joanne Coen, and Susan Gold, PhD.

ELCs were established in 1989 by the School Readiness Act to oversee the state's school readiness program. When VPK was mandated in 2002, this program was included in the responsibilities of the ELCs. Currently 30 ELCs manage an integrated system of early learning services in the state, including VPK. Each ELC is required to serve at least 2,000 children. While some counties serve that many children, others are under the minimum and have merged into multi-county ELCs. Lake and Marion counties are structured similarly as stand-alone ELCs, but Sumter County is part of a multi-county coalition, The Nature Coast Coalition. We surveyed only Sumter County in the Nature Coast group.

The committee's original purpose was to assess the effectiveness of pre-kindergarten learning; however, we found the research to be much more complicated than we anticipated. A report on the committee's progress thus far will be available on the League's website, and prior to the January general meeting an overview will be provided to all League members so that they will have a basic understanding of how ELCs administer the VPK programs in the tri-county area.

Many thanks to the committee members for their hard work on this issue and also

many thanks to our January guest speakers for making themselves and their employees available to us.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Recycling in Lake, Marion and Sumter Counties

The state of Florida has a goal to recycle 75% by the year 2020. That goal's date is getting very close!

Many League members participate in recycling. They follow what is going on in their county of residence. Three LWVTRI members, Annie Grewe, Claire Rahn, and Mary Hampton, co-founded a community discussion group, called Preserve Our Environment (POE). In the spring, 2015, POE hosted a program, which was co-sponsored by LWVTRI, called "Recycling in Lake, Marion, and Sumter Counties, Florida." In a panel discussion format, Lake County employees, Johnny Taylor and David Salinas, and Marion County employees, Larry Starkey and Bob Middleton, discussed current recycling efforts in their counties. Audience questions were invited and answered by the panelists.

In July 2015, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) released data collected in 2014 that showed: Lake County @ 16% traditional recycling rate (overall recycling rate @33% including renewable energy credits); Marion County @44% traditional recycling rate (overall recycling rate @53% including renewable energy credits); and Sumter County @ 23% traditional recycling rate (overall recycling rate @ 25% including renewable energy credits). If you have any questions about Florida's recycling program, you can contact **Ms. Shannan Reynolds, Environmental Consultant, FDEP, 850-245-8716.**

Below is the contact information for each of the tri-county Recycling Coordinators. Your personal contact seems to inspire them to become more responsive to the concerns of Florida's citizens!

Lake County Recycling Coordinator

Mr. Johnny Taylor, 352-343-3776.

Marion County Recycling Coordinator

Ms. Lacey Laramore, 352-671-8473.

Sumter County Recycling Coordinator

Mr. Jackey Jackson, 352-569-6711.

You may contact your County's Recycling Coordinator and/or the FDEP Environmental Consultant, at any time. It seems to inspire them to become more responsive to the concerns of Florida's citizens!

Mary Hampton

VOTER SERVICE & EDUCATION

Just a reminder that the **Presidential Preference Primary** will be held on **Tuesday, March 15, 2016**. If you need to make any changes or corrections to your voter registration information, the last day you can do that is **February 16, 2016**. If you wish to vote by mail, you must request your ballot no later than **January 30, 2016**. The early voting period will be **March 5-12, 2016**. For further information, you can contact your county Supervisor of Elections by going to the League's website, www.lwvtri.org., and clicking on the appropriate link.



Once again, the League will be preparing an online voter guide for the August Primary and November General Elections. If you like to work on the computer, you might think about helping out with this project.

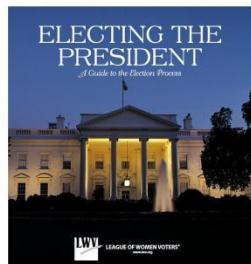
Locally, as we move into the election season and with the possibility of multiple amendments being proposed to Florida's Constitution, our League already has speaking engagements scheduled.

If you are not already a member of the Speakers Bureau and have an interest in joining and finding out more information, please contact **Richard Coen**, joannejon@aol.com.

FROM LWVUS

Electing the President: Everything You Need to Know

With the battle for the White House already underway and



presidential primaries looming soon, the League has answers to voters' most frequently asked questions. We have once again teamed up with the Newspaper in Education Institute to produce *Electing the President*, a handy guide outlining all you need to know about the presidential election process. The guide will appear in newspapers nationwide as well as be shared with schools, community organizations and voters who need a helping hand as they navigate the election process. From helping you navigate the complex nomination process to providing succinct tips for making sense of the daily barrage of campaign coverage and advertising, *Electing the President* will serve as your go-to resource all the way up to Election Day. Check out our guide here--then tell us what you're paying attention to this election season! The League is working hard to distribute this and other educational materials to voters across the country, but we need your help. Download the [guide](#) here, and share it with your family, friends, and any potential new voters in your life!

FROM LWVF

Meet LWVF President Pamela Goodman, LWVF State Board Members, Legislative Advocate Debbie Harrison-Rumberger in Tallahassee as well as networking with other League members from across the state on **February 16–18**, for the League's **2016 Legislative Summit**!



The LWVF's annual Legislative Summit brings members from across the state to Tallahassee to meet with and advocate before state legislators. The League works hard to ensure that our strong and unique voice is heard. This two-day conference takes place during the Legislative Session and includes an orientation program, seminars on League positions, face-to-face meetings with legislators, a tour of the Capitol, and other engaging and informative activities.

For further details go to the [LWV Florida Website](#).





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and

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