



Nationally Recognized! Locally Active!

December 2019 & January 2020

Volume 13 Issue 8



Co-Presidents' Corner

The holiday season is rapidly approaching. As we have grown, we found a need for a new venue for our annual holiday luncheon. **Please note the date is December 9th to avoid conflict with holiday travel.** Our venue is Colony Cottage Recreation Center (Hearth Room). The buffet luncheon should offer enough choices to please our members. At this meeting, we also have a fund raiser. We ask each attendee to bring a new item (unwrapped) worth approximately \$20-25. These will be displayed on a table for all to see. Tickets will be sold so you can take a chance (or chances) on winning the item of your choice. If you are new to this event and have questions, please contact Beth Hicks or me at lwvtriprez@gmail.com. Our speaker, B.E. Thompson, will tell us about The Open Door which offers services to the homeless in Lake County. In the spirit of giving, the League's board has approved a gift of \$50 to the charity.

After the holiday season, our regular meeting schedule resumes. January 27th is the date of our annual program planning meeting. All members will have the opportunity to have a voice in the local issues our League will act upon. More information about our current program will be made available before the meeting.

The Florida Legislature will begin its 2020 session on January 14th. I had the opportunity to visit Tallahassee November 12—13 as a member of the Women United delegation from Lake & Sumter counties. Affiliated with the United Way, this organization assisted us by granting \$5,000 for our social media campaign to motivate young women to vote in the upcoming elections. It was interesting to hear their lobbyists from RSA Consulting discuss their observations on the upcoming session. Legislators have already met for several weeks in committee in advance of the session, however many committee meetings have been canceled and not many bills have yet been filed. Some of their lobbyists' key observations and predictions are as follows: 1) The leaders of both chambers have the power to set the agenda. If a leader doesn't prioritize a bill it's not likely to see the light of day. Over 3,000 bills were filed in 2019, but only 197 were passed. 2) The trend to merge individual bills into "train" bills is likely to continue even though this forces legislators to vote on things they don't support in order to get other key pieces of the train bill passed. 3) Although the voters approved a constitutional amendment limiting the legislature's ability to authorize new casino gambling without a vote of the citizens, the need for additional revenue is likely to prompt some type of expansion of gambling through a compact with the Seminole tribe (which isn't controlled by the state constitution. 4) There may be movement in the areas of criminal justice reform because there is increasing awareness of the unnecessary cost of housing so many prisoners for level offenses.

We had the opportunity to visit with Senator Dennis Baxley and Representative Brett Hage, and they both took an interest in our issues of early childhood education, affordable housing, and assistance with tax preparation for lower income individuals. I took the opportunity to share our League's study on Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten, and I learned the anticipated bill to reform early childhood education is still being formulated by key members of the Education Committee.

I encourage others to take the opportunity to learn more about League issues and share the League's views with legislators during the LWVFL Lobby Days scheduled for February 4-5. Please let me know if you are interested in attending as a member of our League's delegation.

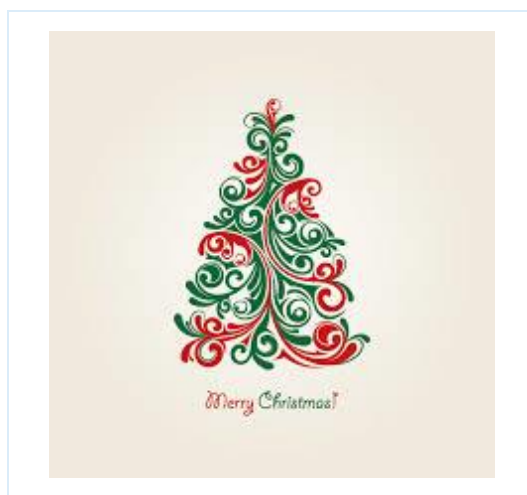
Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

Yours in League,

Gail

Gail Formanack

Co-President



*****2019 Holiday Luncheon*****

**When: Monday, December 9, 2019
11 a.m. - 1 p.m.**

**Where: Colony Cottage Recreation Center
Hearth Room
510 Colony Boulevard, The Villages, Florida**

**Guest Speaker: B. E. Thompson
The Open Door**



The League is Non-Partisan

With 2020 being a major election year, it's important to remember that the League's Non-Partisan principle sets us apart from most other organizations. Simply stated: the League never supports or opposes a candidate or political party. We are admired for taking this stance, and being trusted as a non-partisan organization is vital to the work we do.

At a time when impeachment inquiries are in the news, emotions are running high, and the country is so divided, it is more important than ever that we scrupulously remain non-partisan, so please take a moment to review these guidelines.

OPTICS MATTER! As League members, we must be careful of the events we attend and how we live our lives. Members may campaign for candidates, but never while wearing a League button or other articles that would imply we are working on behalf of the League. The President and our Voter Services Chair cannot campaign. And all Board members should be aware of sending a message of partisan bias. Be careful about what is shared on social media. Do not place campaign signs in your windows or yard. Understand that having your photo at a political event plastered all over social media is even worse than a physical campaign sign because it will be seen by even more people.

Being non-partisan does not preclude the League from taking positions on issues after study and consensus. Our positions have been consistent over the years. However, consistency is not always the case with the political parties. Support for our positions has migrated between parties. For instance, we have worked on fair districting since 1933 no matter which party controls the legislature. Generally, the party in power does not support our position. If questions of partisanship arise because of our stance, we must clarify that our position reflects a voting issue, not a party issue.

One last item that may appear to be partisan, but is not. You may see the League attend a press conference along with a political party. We will do this as long as the party's position on an issue aligns with ours. The League has a new lobbying firm that has been around for 25 years and has built relationships with both parties. That means we have a professional firm which is opening doors that were not open before. As a result, joint press conferences are even more likely than they have been in the past. If someone suggests this means we are acting in a partisan manner, please explain that we are not supporting the party but rather both organizations support the same issue.

Thank you!

Beth & Gail

MARK YOUR
CALENDAR!

January 2020 League Dates



MLK Annual Breakfast

The League is proud to be sponsoring a table at the **Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast** to be held on **Saturday, January 11, 9 a.m.** at the **Savannah Center in The Villages.**

MLK Leesburg Parade

For the first time, our League will be participating in the **MLK Parade in Leesburg** on **Saturday, January 11**. You are invited to come and join us as we make our presence known in Leesburg.

Our League is honored to be a part of this event which recognizes the accomplishments of Dr. Martin Luther King. The parade will begin at 9:30 a.m. and should be finished by 11:30 a.m. We will have a table with information about the League as well as 2020 Census information handouts. Please call, **352 435-0079**, or email, [**bfield222@gmail.com**](mailto:bfield222@gmail.com), **Bonnie Field** if you are interested in marching with the League or if you can help hand out League and census information at our table. We hope our Lake and Leesburg members will participate and come out to support us.

League Dine & Discuss

Our second quarterly evening meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, January 14th at 5:30 p.m.** at **La Palma Mexican Grill** located at **1690 Citrus Boulevard in Leesburg** (across from Rural King). Attendees may order from the menu and then hear from our own member, **Kim Fowler**. Kim relocated to The Villages from Illinois where she was employed as an attorney working for several governors. She proudly proclaims no governor went to jail under her watch. She will share some of her experiences and answer questions.

Please **RSVP** to **Gail Formanack** at [**formanag@gmail.com**](mailto:formanag@gmail.com) or **402 630-8791** by **January 10th**.



Hope you have **January 22, 2020, 7 p.m. on your calendar.** **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."** This will take place at the new **Venetian Center, 1 Dozier Court in Leesburg.**

Our League will be one of the sponsors of this event and we will have a table and 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. Learn more about these events and register by visiting [Beaconcollege.edu/salon](https://beaconcollege.edu/salon).

January 2020 General Meeting

When: Monday, January 27, 2020

10:30 a.m. - 12 noon

**Where: Manatee Recreation Center
1512 Hillsborough Trail, The Villages**

Topic: Local League Program Planning

What is Program Planning?

How Does it Affect Our Local League?

What is the League's definition of "program?" In the League, "program" is the process of study and advocacy of issues and is the core component of the League's mission. Our "program" positions consist of all prior issues selected by our members at our Annual Meeting which is held in March. This is true at all levels of the League, local, state and national.

Because the League is a "grassroots" organization, prior to the January meeting, members will receive a copy of the 2019-20 program which was adopted at the 2019 Annual Meeting. You will be asked to review the program and if necessary, make recommendations for changes, additions or deletions. We urge your participation in this important aspect of League membership.



The November meeting featured Karen Kagalis, an outreach employee working for the U.S. Government on the upcoming 2020 census. She shared that Florida is part of the Atlanta region which serves seven states. She emphasized the importance of participation as \$675 billion of federal funding is spent yearly based upon the numbers generated by the census. These dollars follow the numbers, not the need, and fund vital programs such as block grants, vocational rehabilitation, free & reduced lunch for school students, and Medicaid. The numbers are also used to help local leaders prepare shelters for people who will need shelter during a hurricane. Another key use of the numbers will be in reapportioning government representation. Florida was the only state to gain two seats in the U.S. Congress following the 2010 census.

Different from the past, the primary method of responding to the census will be online. Every residence will receive a mailing with a unique code associated with it. If response by computer is unavailable, people can call a toll-free number to request a traditional print document. If no response is received, there will be follow up by census workers who will visit personally to assist with the census.

It is important to know that the U.S. government census will never ask for a Social Security number, donations, PIN codes or passwords. If you get a mailing asking for this information, it is likely a scam. All information entered online on the census site is encrypted and access is limited to trusted government workers. Challenges include a low response rate in some areas of Sumter County, especially in areas which have predominantly rental properties and limited computer access. Sumter, Marion, and Lake counties all have Complete Count Committees who will be working to increase awareness and encourage participation. All people need to be counted including those in transitional housing, transitory housing (RVs, etc.), and the homeless.

There is still a need for census workers. If interested in this part-time work, visit

<https://2020census.gov/en/jobs.html>

for a list of opportunities. Our League is offering a Speakers' Bureau presentation on the 2020 census. If you have a group for whom you think this topic would be of interest, contact **Jeannie Hamilton**, **jeannie@jeannierealtor.com**.

Membership

Welcome to our newest member:

Lucy Gangone

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**) 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**, **lwtvtriprez@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**, lwvtriprez@gmail.com for the password for the Member link on the state League website.

****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.

LWVTRI Board Positions: As the Annual Meeting approaches in March 2020, please give thought to serving on the board. You don't have to wait to be asked!

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. Get some for gifts to remind everyone of the importance of voting. If you need it before our Holiday party, please contact **Gail** at [**formanag@gmail.com**](mailto:formanag@gmail.com).

League Website



Need the phone number of a fellow league member? Don't forget there is a current roster in the members only section of the web site.

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.

LWVTRI Legislative Education & Action Committee

This group is growing as more of our members become curious about the work of our elected Florida state senators and representatives. Our League spans Lake, Sumter and Marion Counties and we have 4 Florida state senators and 10 Florida state representatives. If we review the Committees each is a member of....it adds up to a lot of looking!

We met briefly after our general meeting on Nov. 18th, and agreed to divide up the list of senators and representatives and just start tracking their proposed bills. At our next meeting we will match those with LWVFL legislative priorities and follow their journey (if they have “legs”) thru committees. The 2020 Florida Legislative Session begins in January, so if you are interested in finding out more about what we are doing, please call, **352 435-0079** or email **Bonnie Field** at bfield222@gmail.com.

LWVTRI Natural Resources

During a statewide conference call on December 2, we reviewed seven of the 35 natural resource bills which were pertinent to the LWVFL legislative priorities. Of the 10 state Florida representatives & four state Florida senators covering our three counties -- only one Bill was filed by one Rep. Clovis Watson District 20 which covers parts of Alachua and Marion counties, Rep. Watson filed

HB 365 which qualified the improvements to include sewage treatment & seawall improvements to be part of “Property Assessed Clean Energy Program”. Judith Hushon, chair of the LWVF Natural Resources Committee, also mentioned two signatory letters the LWVFL signed and were sent to the Governor and others. One was approving the Governor’s support of several locations receiving funding for environmental improvements. The second was a request to restore full funding for the Florida Forever program. The 2020 Legislative Session starting in January will be a busy one.

Submitted by Bonnie Field
LWV Natural Resources Liaison

From LWV Florida

Amendment Four Update from Cecile Scoon, LWVF 1st Vice President

The League is still registering voters and encouraging everyone to register to vote. If you have a returning citizen and they have completed all of their written sentence, they should register to vote. If they have any questions about the completion of their sentence, then they should research it themselves or contact FRRC for assistance. The League is providing training for attorneys and advocates to be able to assist returning citizens, and FRRC is matching up returning citizens with the trained attorneys and advocates.

In short, the League is both litigating to limit the negative impacts of SB 7066 which constricts Amendment 4, while at the same time, we are trying to educate attorneys and other volunteers about how they can help returning citizens regain their right to vote through the court system.

From LWVUS

We've been waiting nearly 100 years for equality

While next year is the 100th anniversary of women’s right to vote,

the passage of a constitutional amendment—known as the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)—that enshrines equality for all regardless of sex or gender, has faced obstacles since 1923.

The possibility of its passage has been renewed by the outcome of the Virginia Legislature elections in 2019, with many legislators declaring their intent to ratify the ERA. Virginia's ratification would make it the 38th and final state needed for this constitutional amendment to become a reality.

However, unlike many other of our other constitutional amendments, the ERA had a deadline for ratification of 1979 (and then extended by Congress to 1982). But hope is not lost—this month, the U.S. House Judiciary Committee ruled 21-11 to remove the ratification deadline and now the resolution moves to the House floor for a vote.

It's been almost 100 years we have been waiting and working for this amendment, let's not wait 100 more. By passing the ERA, we can firmly and resolutely declare that we believe in equality for all.