



THE VOTER

LWV of the Villages/Tri-County Area ♦ February 2011 ♦ Vol. 5 Issue 7
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HOW WILL THE 2011 LEGISLATIVE SESSION AFFECT COUNTIES, MUNICIPALITIES AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS? *FIND OUT ON*

When: Monday, February 28, 2011, 10:a.m.

Where: Community Bank & Trust Co., CR 466, The Villages

Who: Bob McKee, Tax Collector, Lake County

Prior to his election as Tax Collector in 1996, Mr. McKee served as the Town Manager of Lady Lake and had been a public administrator in Lake County for over 20 years. Reelected in 2000, he ran unopposed in 2004 and 2008. He holds a Masters Degree in Public Administration and serves on the boards of directors of several community based organizations.

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 CORNER

Thank you to **Barbara Cope** for arranging our first meeting of 2011. Both of our speakers concentrated on "Nature Deficit Disorder" and the cures for this common ailment. It is all around us in the parks and recreation facilities in the tri-county area. Both Lake and Marion County are endeavoring to expand park and recreation facilities, and for those of us who live in The Villages, there is another world out there! Barbara did a great job, and gifted each of our speakers with oranges from her grove.

Our guest speaker for our February meeting will be **Bob McKee, Tax Collector, Lake County**. He is in a good position to give us an overview as to what we might expect from the Florida legislature which begins the 2011 session in March. Our new governor has his ideas about how to balance the budget, and many of them seem aimed at our education and health care systems.

In addition, this is the year when the redistricting process begins, and the maneuvering has begun in the courts and Tallahassee.

League members will be called on during the session by our Action Chair in Tallahassee. When you receive an Action Alert, please respond. In addition, once the session begins, you will be receiving weekly updates called "Capitol Reports." We may be three hours away from Tallahassee, but we can make our voices heard!

See you on February 28, and don't forget to bring a friend!

Joanne

MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to our newest members:

Pat & Al Wichman
13625 Sand Bluff Lane
Grand Island, FL 32735
357-6885, nanabumpaw@aol.com

Clark Schlosser, husband of Carol Dodd.
Contact info as Carol's.

For an up-to-date membership list, contact either **Carolyn Johnson** or **Frances Spedding**.

Dues for February - **Joanne & Richard Coen, Betsy Brody, Peggy & Owen Pope;** dues for March - **Beverly Epstein, Luth Tenorio & Linda Thomas.**

Checks, including the \$10 contribution, can be sent to **Carolyn Johnson, 2615 Caribe Dr., The Villages, FL 32162**, and are payable to **LWVTRI**.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

FEBRUARY

Mon., Feb. 14, 10 a.m., Home of Joanne M.
Board Meeting Coen, The Villages.

Fri., Feb. 25, 3 p.m., Panera Bread
Education Committee Company, Spanish
Springs Square, The
Villages.

Mon., Feb. 28, 10 a.m., Community Bank &
General Meeting Trust, CR466, The
Villages. Guest
Speaker: Bob McKee

MARCH

Mon., Mar. 14, 10 a.m., Home of Joanne M.
Board Meeting Coen, The Villages.

Wed., Mar. 16, 5 p.m. Lake-Sumter
Celebrate Women's Community College,
History Month CR 441, Leesburg

Wed. Mar. 23, to Sat., Doubletree Hotel,
Mar. 26, Legislative Tallahassee.
Seminar & Convention

Mon., Mar. 28, 10 a.m., Community Bank &
General Meeting Trust, CR466, The
Villages.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee has been meeting and discussing Diane Ravitch's book. Thank you to **Bernice Cozewith** for her leadership on this committee and for the excellent discussions we have been having. Committee members have been doing research and reporting back on their findings. Our next meeting will be **Friday, February 25, 2011, 3 p.m., Panera's, Spanish Springs**. If you would like to find out more

about what the committee is doing, contact Bernice at berncoz@yahoo.com.

As you know, Leagues all across the country will be embarking on a national study of the role of the federal government in education. Study materials should be available in March/April; study of the proposed consensus questions should occur between May-November 2011. We are ahead of the curve with our research.

Florida, like many other states, is grappling with budget issues, and education seems to be one of the areas most talked about for cuts. LWV Florida has very strong positions on public education, and it is up to each of us to pay attention to what is happening in Tallahassee.

REDISTRICTING PROCESS

Okay, Amendments 5 and 6 have passed. What is the timeline for the redistricting process? Here it is:

January 1, 2011 — President reports to Congress the apportionment of 435 US House seats amongst the States.

April 1, 2011 — US Census Bureau must provide Florida with its finalized 2010 Census data.

July through October, 2011 — House and Senate will hold public meetings around Florida to take citizen testimony.

January 10, 2012 — The 2012 Regular Session will begin early. The 60-day Session would end March 9, 2012.

March through June, 2012 — FL Supreme Court and US Department of Justice will review Florida's redistricting plans for compliance.

June 18-22, 2012 — Qualifying Week for State and Federal elections in Florida. During a Reapportionment Election year, the usually distinct qualifying weeks are held concurrently.

Where are we now? Amendment 6 is being contested in the courts, and as of today, Gov. Scott has not sent the requisite preclearance notice to the U.S. Dept. of Justice. Under the Voting Rights of 1965, any change in Florida's statewide voting procedures, including the amendments, is subject to legal challenge if it weakens the voting power of racial minorities. Preclearance is an advance opinion by the Justice

Department that the changes conform to the Voting Rights Act.

January 27, 2011 Press Release from LWVF President Macnab:

Have Florida Leaders Lost Sight of Who They Serve?

TALLAHASSEE, FL - Not two months ago, in the November election, with a broad turnout of roughly 50% of Florida's electorate, the people in overwhelming numbers called for setting rules for how political districts are drawn.

This week newly elected Governor Scott instructed his Secretary of State to halt, and actually recall the first steps to put the voter's mandate into action.

Voters should be angry. Very angry.

"Governor Scott sent a clear message to voters in Florida with this action - that he knows better than voters, and is in no rush to heed their mandate," says state League president Deirdre Macnab, adding: "The League calls on Florida leadership to follow the will of the voters and not their own self interest in protecting their reelection."

A clear pattern by leaders is suggesting they are putting their own interests in getting reelected before the vote of the electorate. Take a look at the pattern.

Secretary Kurt Browning, the spokesman for the opposition efforts, which fought passage of amendments 5 and 6, is now in charge of its implementation. This week he sent a letter to the Department of Justice recalling the start of the formal review process.

House Speaker Dean Cannon has resisted appointing members to the House Redistricting Committee, and earlier this month opted to join the lawsuit contesting the amendment that deals with Congressional Redistricting.

The irony of these actions in contrast to Senator Don Gaetz's (chair of Senate Reapportionment Committee) quote "The people have spoken," shows the truth of the phrase: "actions speak louder than words."

The League notes that this combination of events presents a clear movement by leadership to shut down the majority voice of the people in their call for clear rules in our Constitution

The Florida League along with our 30 local League of Women Voters chapters across the state will continue to monitor closely the process over the next several months as we continue our call for timely and open progress on implementing the people's voice.

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TABOR AKA TAX PAYER BILL OF RIGHTS

For the past several years, LWVF has lobbied against the passage of TABOR (taxpayers bill of rights) in the Florida legislature. Colorado is the only state in the nation to adopt TABOR; it has been defeated in every other state where it was proposed. The following information comes from Colorado after the passage of TABOR.

During the twelve years since TABOR was adopted in Colorado, K-12 funding declined from 35th to 49th in the nation, and higher education funding dropped by 31 percent. In addition, the share of low-income children lacking health insurance doubled at a time that it was dropping nationally, and Colorado fell to near last in the nation in providing on-time full vaccinations to the state's children.

These problems and others led business leaders and Chambers of Commerce across the state to push for the suspension of TABOR's population-growth-plus-inflation formula for five years in order to allow the state to restore a portion of its fundamental public services. In November 2005, Colorado voters approved this suspension. To date, Colorado is the only state to have adopted a TABOR, as well as the only state to have voted to suspend it.

The following is an excerpt from a letter sent to the Florida Tax and Budget Reform Commission by the Robert K. Scott, former president of the Economic Developers Council of Colorado:

- TABOR caused major disinvestments in important public services such as higher education, transportation, and health care in CO and did nothing to help our economy. Businesses can not prosper without efficient infrastructure and effective workforce development;
- TABOR does not allow the public sector to be an effective partner with the private sector in creating and maintaining a strong economic

climate, instead it becomes an anchor that hinders businesses' ability to be competitive;

- While TABOR-like programs can force some new efficiencies in the public sector, using TABOR for that purpose is like performing heart surgery with a meat cleaver. The long term health of the patient should matter;
- TABOR does not guarantee that state legislators will set the right priorities or be more accountable to the electorate, rather it takes judgment and reasoned deliberation out of the picture; and
- TABOR creates a hidden tax on Colorado businesses because of the need to subsidize services no longer provided by the public sector and finance the inevitable election campaigns to undo its severe unintended consequences.

Proponents of TABOR in Florida may try to claim that their proposal has been designed to avoid the problems TABOR brought to Colorado. However, the differences do not address the underlying problems of the inflation-based formula and the difficult override processes. TABOR is a proven failure in Colorado. Florida can expect many of the same problems if TABOR passes.

Florida already ranks near the bottom among the states on a number of key public services and can't afford any further declines in the public services upon which Floridians depend, such as health care, education and public safety. But as the Colorado experience has shown, this is likely to happen if the proposed revenue limit is adopted.

(Reprinted with permission from LWV of Tallahassee, December 2010 newsletter.)

MORE BUDGET CUTS WILL HURT FLORIDA WHILE SOME MUST PAY MORE FOR LESS

"Florida's new governor and legislative leaders have indicated that they will rely solely on spending cuts to balance the state budget this year.

A cuts-only approach to closing the state's budget gap -- on top of previous budget reductions -- will hurt Floridians who rely on state-funded services. Those services exist because the state has long-standing responsibilities to the people of Florida under the state constitution and state and federal laws. The

responsibilities of state government include public education, health care, public safety, transportation, protection of children, mental health services and other services necessary for a well-ordered society.

To pay for services, elected officials create a tax structure that ideally is fair, balanced, and adequate to provide the services expected by Floridians.

But the state's tax system fails to meet those goals and has become worse over the last decade. Billions of dollars from revenue available to meet state needs has been given up through cuts to taxes paid primarily by the wealthy. Meanwhile, the legislature has imposed \$2 billion annually in additional taxes and fees paid disproportionately by middle- and low-income taxpayers.

The consequence is that many Floridians are **being asked to pay a heavier tax burden for a reduced level of public services.**

Without a change in direction, the next state budget will again be built on an inadequate, unfair, antiquated tax system recognized as seriously flawed for decades.

To see a 2 minute video, go to <http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=2482>

To read the full report, go to <http://www.fcfe.org/attachments/20110104--Paying%20More%20for%20Less.pdf>."

From the Florida Center for Fiscal and Economic Policy

LEGISLATIVE SEMINAR AND CONVENTION 2011

Legislative Seminar and Convention will take place in **Tallahassee** from **Wednesday, March 23, 2011**, to **Saturday, March 26, 2011**. Registration will close **Monday, March 21, 2011**.

The **Doubletree Hotel** will serve as the central location for these two events at a special room rate of \$105/night. FREE parking, FREE breakfast, and walking distance to all activities! Rooms can be shared! Registration has begun.

With all the issues that are confronting Florida, it is important that League members be heard. Legislative Seminar provides that opportunity for all League

members to meet with their elected representatives and advocate for the League's positions.

If you are interested in attending either or both, please contact Joanne, joanneion@aol.com.

THE LEAGUE AND NONPARTISANSHIP

It is not uncommon for outsiders, and even some members, to question how the League can be nonpartisan yet advocate on positions that, in the slice of time that is now, appear to be partisan.

In the highly partisan climate that has developed in recent years, the League is one of the very few political organizations that is not in either the liberal/Democratic camp or the conservative/Republican camp. And we have members of all political persuasions and encourage them to get involved in politics. So members may be partisan but the organization is not. All this is hard for many to wrap their minds around.

The League is nonpartisan in that we do not endorse or support any political party or candidate for office. We don't rate legislators, we don't track their votes and we don't threaten them if they don't vote our way. Voter service is one of our main missions and we publish nonpartisan voter guides and hold candidate forums to help voters educate themselves beyond TV ads.

Education is an important League function, and we try in our meetings and in this newsletter to inform our attendees/readers and stimulate them to think about issues in our world. However, the League is also an advocacy group, and we have positions on issues that have been developed over the years since our founding in 1920 and are the result of study and consensus of the local Leagues nationwide. These positions are updated from time to time, but are basically consistent. The positions and platforms of the political parties, on the other hand, do change and at times they resemble our League position, or not. But the League doesn't change or drop its positions because they are currently those of one party or the other. And we do speak out!

An example is health care. The League has a position on comprehensive health care for all Americans. President Truman liked that idea too and President

Eisenhower delivered a special message to Congress on January 31, 1955 recommending a comprehensive health program for Americans. Lyndon Johnson got Medicare passed and that took the pressure off for awhile. But President Nixon encouraged HMOs as a way to rein in costs and provide health care for more people. Then President Reagan came along and decided the free market was the best way to manage health care and the Republicans have basically supported this idea since. But clearly both parties have been on both sides of the issue.

The key is not to confuse politics with position advocacy.

(Reprinted with permission from Susan Gilbert, Newsletter Editor, LWV Berrien & Cass Counties, Michigan)

HOW TO DETERMINE IF YOU ARE A TRUE FLORIDIAN!

You must own at least one Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings book.

You should have a memory of a glass-bottom boat ride at Silver Springs, preferably when there were enough catfish to play football.

A memory of Ross Allen milking a rattle snake at his Reptile Institute.

You must have God's own respect for lightning.

A tolerance for Spanish moss, shaggy palm trees and cockroaches.

An acceptance of the Golden Rain Tree as a substitute for Fall colors.

You must have a huge reverence for live oak trees and stand in awe of a bank of poinsettias---not in pots.

Along that line - there will exist an undying hankering for hibiscus, crotons, and maybe bougainvilleas.

You must understand that your dog will NEVER-EVER be rid of fleas and most likely ticks.

Hopefully, there will be knowledge of a back road where in April or May you can see a field of Wild Phlox blooming.

You will have a taste for boiled peanuts.

A belief that lime juice makes almost everything better.

There will be a memory of mornings waking to the smell of orange blossom thru an open bedroom window.

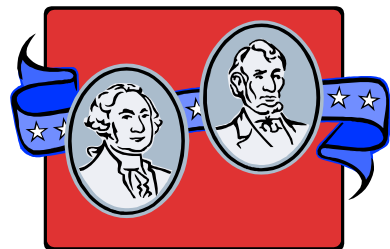
God did not create anything without a purpose but Floridians wonder about fire ants, mosquitoes, sand gnats, pocket gophers and fruit flies.

For all us here on this peninsular we KNOW that Florida citrus is the best thing growing.

How do you rate??

Courtesy of League member Barbara Cope, a long time Florida and Marion County resident!

PRESIDENTS' DAY
FEBRUARY 21!





League of Women Voters of The Villages/Tri-County Area
Be a Voice for Citizens! Be a Force for Change!
Be Involved in the Process!
www.lwvtri.org

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:

Susan B. Anthony	\$100.00	_____
Individual	\$ 50.00	_____
Household	\$ 75.00	_____
Student	\$ 25.00	_____
Add'l. Contribution	\$ 10.00	_____

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 Voter*.