



LWV of The Villages/Tri-County Area Voter

*Nationally Recognized! Locally Active!
The League of Women Voters does not endorse or oppose
political parties or candidates .
The League encourages engagement and participation in the political process.*

October 2013

Volume 8 Issue 4



President's Letter

What a wonderful turnout to kick off our meeting calendar beginning in September. With the focus on charter schools, we are very grateful to Sumter County School Supt. Richard Shirley and members of his staff for not only walking us through the process but also explaining the finances, curriculum and personnel issues connected to charter schools. Sumter County is very fortunate to have such a dedicated team working for the benefit of the students. Unlike other counties in Florida, we do not have many charter schools in the tri-county area. The Villages Charter School is the one school most of us are familiar with, and it is unique in the state because it is an employer based school. As we continue along with our participation in the statewide League study on school choice, I hope you will mark your calendars for Saturday, October 19, as the committee prepares to lead a consensus meeting on this issue.

With our federal government in shutdown, please see a letter from Elisabeth MacNamara, LWVUS president. She outlines the League's position on the role of Congress as well as the core mission of the League-voter service and education. In carrying out that mission, our League has been asked to

moderate the Candidates' Forum being sponsored by the Mount Dora Chamber of Commerce.

Time is running out for the collection of signed petitions for the Florida Water & Land Conservation amendment. League members will, once again, be at the Lady Lake Library on West Guava Street, on Tuesday, October 8, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thank you to Kathy Hansen and Charlene Walker for being at the library two weeks ago. If you would like to help with collecting signed petitions, please contact Charlene Walker.

Now that fall is here, I hope to see more members attending general meetings and becoming active in our various committees. If you are interested in helping out with voter service and education, you can contact Richard Coen; for membership, you can contact Beth Hicks; for ethics, contact Carolyn Van Noy; for education, contact Karen West, and for Natural Resources, contact Charlene Walker.

See you at our General Meeting on Monday, October 28, 2013, 10:30 a.m. at the Community Bank & Trust Company and don't forget to bring a friend!

In League,
Joanne M. Coen



October General Meeting
Monday, October 28, 2013
10:30 a.m.
Community Bank & Trust Co.
CR466 & Parr Drive
The Villages

Pat Grierson,

**Florida Water and Land Conservation,
Orange County Volunteer Coordinator,
will be our guest speaker as
the deadline for gathering signed petitions to place an
amendment on the 2014 ballot that will ensure state funding
for the purchase and maintenance
of conservation land
throughout Florida approaches.**

From the LWVUS President

The LWVUS board is meeting this weekend in Washington. As board and staff work together making decisions intended to advance the mission of the League, we are keenly aware that our elected officials on Capitol Hill have failed in their duty to work together to create a better America. What we can see around us are shuttered offices, museums and monuments, but besides frustrated tourists, the government shutdown is impacting millions of families, including those civil servants across the country who work every day ensuring that our government runs smoothly.



Mall Closed Down

The shutdown also demonstrates a breakdown in how our government should function. The League of Women Voters believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing, and coordination among the different agencies and levels of government. The inability to fund the government and keep it running fails many of these key tenets.

The League's position on the role of Congress outlines what a responsive legislative process should look like. Key to this is the ability for Congress to "make decisions that meet national needs and reconcile conflicting interests and priorities", as well as "function[ing] in an efficient manner with a minimum of conflict, wasted time and duplication of effort." The government shutdown has only illuminated the issues that have riddled Congress in recent years - the impact of huge amounts of outside special interest money in elections, including primary elections, gerrymandered districts, and an inability by Members of Congress to put what's best for the nation ahead of how an issue is perceived in their home districts.

As voters we can demand that our Representatives end this shutdown and get back to work on the issues that matter to the American people. As the members of the League of Women Voters we can redouble our efforts to ensure that government of the people, by the people and for the people truly reflects and includes the voices of all the people. We can work to eliminate and overcome barriers to registration and voting; we can use this moment to highlight the need for true reform of our redistricting process; we can work for real election reform that focuses on including as many voices as possible; and we can call for public financing of congressional elections.

Let's not waste this crisis! The American people deserve better, let's help them demand it!

Elisabeth MacNamara

Membership

We would like to welcome a new member, **Barbara Fieldman**, to our League.

If you were not at the September General Meeting, and have not received your Member Handbook, please contact **Beth Hicks**, ethicks71@gmail.com. Handbooks will also be available at the October General Meeting.

Don't forget that we are all part of the Membership Committee so invite a friend or neighbor to check us out!

Education Committee Charter School Study

The committee will be hosting a breakfast consensus meeting at the home of League members, **Carolyn & Tom Johnson, 2615 Caribe Dr., Village of Santiago, The Villages**, on **Saturday, October 19**, beginning at **10 a.m.** Please contact Carolyn, cgljohnson@comcast.net, if you are coming and haven't already sent an R.S.V.P.

For our new members it will be an opportunity to take part in the consensus process. For our experienced members this is one of the reasons we joined the League. Background information, as well as the consensus questions, will be sent to all League members prior to the meeting.

Consensus by group discussion is the technique most often used in the

League for reaching member agreement. It is a process whereby members participate in a group discussion of an issue. The consensus reached by members through group discussion is not a simple majority, nor is it unanimity; rather it is the overall sense of the group as expressed through the exchange of ideas and opinions, whether in a membership meeting or a series of membership or unit meetings.

Several League members have read **REIGN OF ERROR** by Diane Ravitch, and have recommended this book as another source of background information in preparation for the meeting.

Ethics Review Committee

The Ethics Review Committee continues to educate itself on ethics issues in the Tri-County area. In furtherance of that goal, the Ethics Review Committee will meet to review the day-to-day conflicts of interest that are presented to the State Ethics Commission by Town, City, and County officials and employees who are seeking the Commission's advice. By reviewing this information, the Ethics Review Committee members will educate themselves with the most frequent conflict of interest, post employment, gift restriction, lobbyist involvement issues presented to local officials and employees. If you would like to participate in this interesting work, contact **Carol Van Noy** at denny.carol@gmail.com or 352-633-5353.

The **Ethics Review Committee** will also be sponsoring the November General Meeting. The featured speaker at the November 18th meeting will be **Ginger Delegal, General Counsel for the Florida Association of Counties** who will speak about the difference between charter and non-charter counties. Whether you are a native Floridian or a relative newcomer, you won't want to miss this meeting.

Natural Resources Committee

As you know, the League of Women Voters of Florida is part of the coalition of more than 4,000 individual volunteers and 330 conservation and civic organizations from across the state working to put the Florida Water and Land Conservation Amendment on the November 2014 ballot.

At our October General Meeting, we will be hosting Pat Grierson, Florida Water & Land Legacy Campaign, Orange County Volunteer Coordinator on this important initiative. This amendment is necessary because deep funding

cuts are seriously jeopardizing the great work Floridians have been doing for decades to protect what's best about Florida: miles of beaches, beautiful parks, crystal clear springs, endless opportunities to swim, bike and fish, and an amazing diversity of plants and animals.

The Amendment will allocate less than one percent of our state budget (starting in with \$648 million in 2015) to keeping our waters clean and to protecting our beaches, springs, wildlife habitat and other natural areas for future generations! As a reminder, **THIS IS NOT A TAX INCREASE**. On September 26, 2013, the Florida Supreme Court approved a 2014 ballot proposal that will set aside money to conserve land and other natural resources and help restore the Everglades. The Court is required to review proposed constitutional amendments to make sure they meet legal standards such as a requirement that ballot initiatives deal with single subjects and do not have misleading summary language. The Justices, in a 10-page opinion, unanimously found that the proposal known as the "Water and Land Conservation" amendment, met the standards.

So far more than 385,000 Floridians have signed, BUT to place this important amendment on the November 2014 ballot, we need to gather a total of 683,149 valid signatures from Florida voters. We need your help to reach that goal!

League members will once again be at the Lady Lake Library on Tuesday, October 8, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The deadline for collecting the signed petitions is November 30, so there is still work to be done. Please contact **Charlene Walker**, cawalker413@gmail.com, if you can help.

Mark Your Calendar

It is not too early to put **Friday, December 13, 11 a.m.**, on your calendar. That is date of our **Annual Holiday Party** at the **Continental Country Club** on CR44 in Wildwood. The cost of the luncheon will be \$15 and reservations must be made in advance. You will have a choice of entrees. This is our League's fundraiser and as in the past, we will be having a Chinese Auction. For more information and to find out about carpooling, contact **Carolyn Johnson**, cgljohnson@comcast.net.



Voter Service & Education

Even though there are no national or state races this November, it doesn't mean that the campaign season is quiet on the local level. Our League will be moderating the **Mount Dora Area Chamber of Commerce Candidates' Forum Wednesday, October 23, 2013** beginning at 7 p.m. In addition to the Mayorial race, there are three City Council seats up. If you would like to help out please contact **Richard Coen**, joannejon@aol.com.

Join or Donate to the League

I would like to: ___ join ___ donate to the League.

Name _____

Address _____

Village or Community _____

Zip Code _____ Phone No. _____ Email _____

Membership Categories:

Susan B. Anthony	\$100	_____
Individual	\$ 60	_____
Household	\$ 85	_____
Student	\$ 25	_____

Please make your check payable to the
LWV of The Villages/Tri-County Area and mail it to
Carolyn Johnson, 2615 Caribe Drive, The Villages, Florida 32162.
Dues include membership in the national and state League of Women
Voters as well as the local League.
Dues are not tax deductible.

The League of Women Voters does not endorse or oppose
political parties or candidates.
The League encourages informed and active participation in government and works to
increase understanding of major public policy issues.