



LWV of The Villages/Tri-County Area

www.lwvtri.org

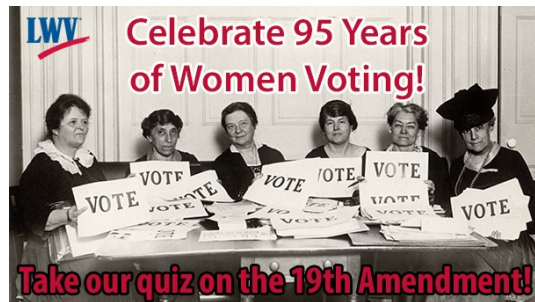
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The League of Women Voters does not endorse or oppose political parties or candidates.

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

Volume 10 Issue 4

September 2015



Happy Women's Equality Day!

The summer has passed by quickly and, while there were no general meetings, some League members stayed busy working on the joint VPK project with AAUW members. Others continued work on planning for upcoming general meetings and also participated in statewide conference calls about the proposed *open primary* study as well as the *money in politics* study. In addition, preparation is underway for the League's 2016 online Voter's Guide.

We are very pleased to welcome **Lisa Rinaman, St. Johns Riverkeeper**, to our September General Meeting. The [St. Johns Riverkeeper](#) mission is to work on behalf of the community for clean and healthy waters in the St. Johns River, its tributaries and its wetlands, through citizen-based advocacy. They are a privately-funded, independent and trusted voice for the St. Johns River and the public to whom it belongs. The origin of the term [Riverkeeper](#) dates back to the Middle Ages in England, and the concept was introduced into the U.S. in the mid-1980s.

Since our last newsletter, we have seen two Special Legislative Sessions; one dealing

Legislature was able to reach agreement on a budget but unsuccessful when it came to Congressional redistricting. One wonders why is it so hard for the elected representatives and senators to comply with the wishes of more than 75% of the electorate who voted "Yes" on Amendments 5 & 6 two years ago?

We have reached a milestone for our League--our 60th member. Since **April 1, 2015**, we have added **12** new members. In addition to the three new members mentioned below, welcome again **Beth Cocchini, Janet Davis, Carole Del Monte, John Eisner, Karen Elliott, Beth Hollis, Heather Rabinowitz, Joseph Schlosser** and **Anne Winn**.

As Beth Hicks mentions in her notice about the upcoming general meeting, "...there is something about the September meeting that seems like a new start." We hope that after the meeting you will plan on joining us for lunch at Olive Garden on CR466. This will be a wonderful way to welcome our new members and hopefully inspire you to find a League activity to involve yourself in. For example, two of our newest members, **Heather Rabinowitz** and **Anne Timoner** attended the **LWVOC Gun Safety Seminar** held in Orlando in August. Many thanks to them for the excellent article on this issue. There is something for everyone in the League: It could be as a greeter at meetings, joining the speaker's bureau, working on the online voter's guide, helping with publicity, etc. Please give some thought to lending a hand. Our League is only as strong as its membership.

Looking forward to seeing you on September 28 and don't forget to invite a friend!

In League,
Joanne M. Coen

SEPTEMBER GENERAL MEETING



Lisa Rinaman
St. Johns Riverkeeper

When: Monday, September 28, 2015
Where: Community Bank & Trust Company
CR466 & Parr Drive
The Villages, Florida
When: 10:30 a.m.

MEMBERSHIP

We are pleased to welcome three new members to our League: **Beverly Grappy, Jeri Spriggs** and **Anne Timoner**.

Congratulations to **Karen West** who is serving on the Lake County School District Charter School Application Review Committee and to **Mary Hampton** who will be representing the Preserve Our Environment group on the Florida Springs Council.

Thank you also to those members who responded to the request for legislative priorities for the 2016 Session which begins in January. The top three were: **all areas of education, government/election laws** and **natural resources**. We have forwarded this information to the state League office.

Officially, the league year may begin in April, but there is something about September that seems like a new start. Our membership has increased by 12 since the start of the April League year. Some of these new members are League "Veterans" who have relocated to the area. Others are League "Rookies" who have found time to join.

Prior to our **September 28** General Meeting, **beginning at 10 a.m.**, there will be a short **League 101** presentation by the board to introduce all members to our local league. Focusing on our newer members, but not forgetting our veteran members, we hope to provide an answer to the question of "Where can I fit in and what can I do to help?". We are gearing up for a 2016 election year and would welcome any and all members on our different committees. We extend a special invitation to our new members, but welcome all.

Please bring the League 101 Handbook with you if one was mailed to you. Following "League 101", our **general meeting will begin at 10:30 a.m.**

We invite all members to join us for lunch at Olive Garden, on CR466, following the general meeting. This will be a chance to socialize and get to know the new

Please let **Beth Hicks**, bhicks71@gmail.com, know, no later than **September 29**, if you are able to attend lunch at Olive Garden.

It is not too early to mark your calendars for the **League's Annual Holiday Party** which will be held on **Friday, December 11**, at **Red Sauce** in **Lake Sumter Landing, The Villages**. There will be an extensive menu to choose from, and we hope to see you there. More information in the October newsletter.

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.

Carolyn Johnson has updated our membership list and sent it to all members via email. If you have not received your updated list, please contact **Carolyn**, cgljohnson@comcast.net.

EDUCATION

VPK Committee

Over the summer, members of the committee from the League and AAUW met to discuss how to proceed with their joint project to examine and summarize the state of early childhood learning experiences, specifically the VPK programs in Florida. In addition to developing definitions in order to clarify and focus the project, members prepared a questionnaire for use as they visited the Early Learning Coalitions serving the tri-county area. The Early Learning Coalitions establish programs and policies for the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten programs which are available free to all 4-year olds in Florida. The Committee will be preparing a report on their findings to be shared with League and AAUW members respectively.



League of Women Voters Florida

Gun Safety Summit

August 13, 2015 - Orlando

"THIS IS NOT A SECOND AMENDMENT ISSUE, IT'S A PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUE"

concerned and worried citizens who understand that guns and college kids don't mix. Some of the realistic concerns include: lack of training in use of guns in stressful situations (police training is a year-long experience), difficulty for police to identify actual criminal perpetrators, the high suicide rate among young adults, commonplace lethal gun accidents, impaired thinking that results from youthful experimenting with drugs and alcohol, to say nothing of the costs involved both financially for decreased campus security and in enrollment of new students, parents (and faculty) deciding on alternative institutions.

This excellent program was attended by a large number of those vehement in their opposition to carry laws on campus. Keep Guns Off Campus bracelets and No Guns On Campus buttons were well received and the offered literature was accepted with eagerness and the intention to read and share with others. News media were present and rolling their cameras.

Patti Brigham, Chair of the League's Gun Safety Committee, was thorough in her introductions of speakers and did an outstanding job in maintaining the pace of the program. The audience was enthusiastic with applause and questions throughout the day.

The 15 speakers and panelists were inspiring and informative within their particular spheres of the issue. The panel of police chiefs presented clear and logical rationale for avoiding the potential dangers of mixing the turbulent emotions of college-aged students with deadly weapons. College faculty, deans and presidents pointed out situations in which students, not yet mature enough to accept responsibility for their own poor grades, could easily become obsessed over the ability to "get even" with professors who "failed them." The police chiefs expressed concern that their current practices built on trust of the students would likely change to fear-based ones if officers suspected that a student might be armed.

A special treat was the talk by former US Representative from Colorado, Patricia Schroeder, who had been the first woman to serve on the House Armed Services Committee. She reminded us that even in the old west where guns were an ordinary article of daily wear, the common attitude was to "check your guns in the closet before you got to the bar" because even then it was understood that "angry people might shoot first and ask questions later." Death is so permanent.

It was repeatedly emphasized that the campaign against carry laws on campus does not demand the elimination of gun ownership, but rather demands curtailment of the high risk of death posed by the presence of guns in groups of immature young people.

legislation at local and state levels. Reminding us of the statistic that 63 people are killed by guns every day in this country, he stated that his experience has shown that pressure by active, outspoken college students, their parents, the faculty and administrators, outweighs the gun lobby pressure on state legislators.

An audience member said we need to do more about fighting the myths about gun violence. For instance, college campuses are not more violent than the street, and a woman in a sexual attack is not likely to think of or be able to get at a gun. A second member reminded us that the legislative house is lost. We must contact our senators, and do it now. Every single senator should get a personal visit from us soon.

An excellent resource for greater in-depth discussion on this issue can be found at <http://www.armedcampuses.org/>

NATURAL RESOURCES

If you are new to Florida, you might not be aware that the state is divided into five water management districts that are under the supervision of the Florida Department of Environment. Two of the five districts cover the tri-county area and in preparation for our September meeting with Lisa Rinaman, St. Johns Riverkeeper, we have prepared [Florida's Water Then and Now](#) which is a basic "101" of water management districts.

From League member, Karen West, "I'm so disappointed! Florida has some good laws on the books to protect the water that by rights belongs to the citizens - but the *political powers that be* act contrary to these good intentions. I gained historical perspective and political insights from:

[MIRAGE: Florida and the Vanishing Water of the Eastern U.S.](#)

(Winner 2007 Florida Gold Media for Nonfiction) by Cynthia Barnett."

This 200 page paperback book reads like a murder mystery - but of course it is our springs and lakes and the Floridan Aquifer that are the victims. Certainly this is a book to read, along with SILENT SPRINGS, in preparation for our September meeting.

Currently, there are two studies being conducted by the League at the national and Florida state levels in order to gather information that could cause consensus to be reached by the League's membership on the following issues respectively: (a) Money in Politics, and (b) Open Primaries. Look for more information as these studies move forward. If these items are of interest to you, please think about joining us.



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 two speaking engagements scheduled. On April 4, 2016, we will be speaking to the Temple Shalom Sisterhood in Oxford, and on April 11, 2016, we will be speaking to the Leesburg Women's Club. 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.

Finally, forums are being planned in Lake County regarding the extension of the penny sales tax. If you are a League member from Lake County, your help is needed. Please contact either **Lucy Espey-Francis**, francisle@embarqmail.com or **Karen West**, west.k9@gmail.com.

Don't forget to check out our website, www.lwvtri.org

and

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