



LWV of The Villages/Tri-County Area

www.lwvtri.org

Nationally Recognized! Locally Active!

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 6

November 2015



As we enter the of the holiday season beginning with Thanksgiving, on behalf of the board I would like to express our thanks to Ben Wilcox and Lisa Rinaman who traveled from Tallahassee and Jacksonville to speak at our recent general meetings. In addition, I would personally like to thank the following League members:

- Karen West who arranged the forum on retention of the one cent tax increase which is on the ballot this month in Lake County.
- Bernardette Aley, Margy Barrett, Richard Coen and Nancy Hurlbert for their help at the forum in Lake County.
- Carolyn Johnson for her hard work on the the Membership Directory.
- Kathy Hansen for her work in handling the PR for our League.
- Beth Hicks for work on the announcements that appear at every meeting.
- League members who have invited a friend to attend a meeting. In addition, we are very thankful for the increase in our membership, and look forward to their involvement in carrying on the work of the League. 2016 is an election year, and help will be needed as we prepare our online Voter's Guide and speaking engagements.

If you were unable to make the October meeting, Kathy Hansen has provided a recap. It is an excellent piece on campaign finance activity in the state of Florida.

There is a new film, **Suffragette**, opening shortly, and it mainly deals with the struggle of British women to win the right to vote a century ago. The article goes on to describe the movie. If you are like me, you might be confused at times between "suffragette" and "suffragists." According to the

article, "When women first campaigned for voting rights, they were called 'suffragists,' with the '-ist' suffix attached to the work 'suffrage' which meant to express support. Later on, a correspondent for the *Daily Mail* coined the term 'suffragette' as a derisive term for the new militants in contrast with the more dignified 'suffragists. The '-ette' ending was belittling, drawing on its historical use as a French-derived diminutive marker in words like statuette, cigarette, etc." While looking forward to this movie, there is an excellent one concerning the fight faced by our American suffragists/suffragettes, and it is called **Iron Jawed Angels**. This was shown on HBO several years ago, and if you have Netflix, you might want to check it out. It is well worth looking at. As you can see, when you are member of the League, you are always learning something new!

Our November meeting will be our consensus meeting on the national study, "Money in Politics." Background information and consensus questions have been emailed to all League members. Please bring this material with you to the meeting on November 16, and note the change in meeting date as well as a change in time, 10 a.m rather than 10:30 a.m.

The November meeting will be our last formal general meeting for 2015, and we are looking forward to celebrating the arrival of the holiday season with our annual luncheon and gift auction. Entree' selections and reservation information are contained in the Membership section of the newsletter.

Again, we are very thankful for the support of all of our members, and wish you a Happy & Healthy Thanksgiving.

In League,
Joanne M. Coen

NOVEMBER GENERAL MEETING

**When: 10:00 a.m. *Note time change!
Monday, November 16, 2015**

**Topic: Money in Politics National League
Consensus Meeting**



**Where: Community Bank & Trust Company
CR466 & Parr Drive**

The Villages, Florida

MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to new members **Joan Rintelman** and **Carol & Jerry Wahlenmayer**.

Welcome back to League member **Bernadette Aley** who was on the LWV Florida's recent trip to Cuba. Another member, **Ellen Dugan**, will be on the November trip. If you are interested in travelling to Cuba with the League, please go to the state League's website, www.floridavoter.org and click on Trips. Check in with Bernadette and Ellen for more information.

As a reminder, the **League's Annual Holiday Party** will be held on **Friday, December 11**, from **11 a.m. to 1 p.m.** at **Red Sauce** in **Lake Sumter Landing, The Villages**. The cost for the luncheon is **\$20** and includes tax, tip and non-alcoholic beverage. We ask that you choose your starter and entree from this [Please click here to see the menu for the Holiday Luncheon](#). Select your starter and entree and send that along with your check in the amount **\$20 payable to LWVTRI** to **Carolyn Johnson**, 2615 Caribe Drive, The Villages, 32162. If you prefer, you may make your reservation at the November general meeting. **Reservations must be made no later than Friday, November 20, and cancellations will not be refunded.** Our guest speaker will be **Beverly Steele** who will speak to us about the **Community of Royal in Wildwood**.

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.

2015 HOLIDAY PARTY & GIFT AUCTION

After long discussions about possible alternatives, we have returned to our traditional Holiday Auction format. This is our only fund raiser. As such it has two things going for it:

- 1) it is simple to do, and
- 2) it is fun.

In the past we have encouraged white elephant and slightly used items. This has not worked out well. This year only new items will be accepted for the auction. Also we ask that you bring only one (1) item per member. And did I say it has to be new?

For our new members who might not know how a Chinese auction works. We will sell you a strip of tickets for \$10 (the fund raising part). It is a real bargain too since you receive 20 tickets for your \$10 contribution. There will be a cup in front of each item. If you would like to win an item you put a ticket or tickets in the cup. Later in the afternoon we will draw a winner from each cup. Of course if you are feeling very generous, you



could buy two strips of tickets.

We cannot tell you how much to spend on your item but roughly \$15 to \$20. Some items will cost you nothing but this would be the ballpark. Some suggestions: wine, a best seller, jewelry, scarf, homemade goodies, movie pass, gift cards.

Be creative! Have fun! Support the League!

Carolyn Johnson, Treasurer

OCTOBER GENERAL MEETING

The League was happy to welcome **Ben Wilcox, Research Director, Integrity Florida**, to our October 26th General Meeting. [Integrity Florida](#) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit research institute and government watchdog whose mission is to promote integrity in government and expose public corruption.

Ben began his career as a journalist. In addition to his work with Integrity Florida, he is an advocate for Common Cause, an independent and non-partisan citizen advocacy organization.

In 2000–2010, Florida was the state with the most convictions from political corruption. Founded in 2012 and based in Tallahassee, Integrity Florida has found common ground on issues among diverse groups and built coalitions in order to increase government transparency and accountability.

With the LeRoy Collins Institute, Integrity Florida recently produced the report [Money In Politics Reforms In Florida: Initial Impacts And Comparison To Other States](#). Some solutions offered in the past such as lower direct contribution limits to candidates have not worked. The amount of money raised and spent for campaigns by political parties and outside committees is growing and is much more difficult to track than direct contributions to the candidate.

There are three loopholes in Florida law:

1. Political Action Committees can accept unlimited contributions,
2. Political parties can take unlimited contributions from any source and give "in kind" monetary support, such as travel (basically anything but advertising), to the candidate.
3. Limited Liability Corporations can be set up to collect contributions that can be used in support of the candidate.

The Report concludes with some possible options that policymakers and advocates might consider making the process more balanced and transparent:

- Create a balanced system of regulation where all vehicles for campaign fundraising and spending are subject to the same, uniform contribution limits.

- Subject political party entities to the same disclosure requirements for frequency of reporting as candidates and committees.
- Require disclosure of target and position for independent expenditures.
- Tighten regulation on coordination between candidates and committees.
- Revise the state campaign finance database to include campaign finance information from local government races to allow for better tracking of money in politics.

Regarding, "Citizens United," the Supreme Court decision that equated corporations with people for the purpose of campaign contributions, Mr. Wilcox pointed out that such has been the case in Florida for a long time. He also expressed doubt that a constitutional amendment to overturn that decision will be doable.

On the bright side, Mr. Wilcox told us how local governments can be turned into laboratories of democracy through model legislation such as the Anti-Corruption Act. You can see how the city of Tallahassee used it at represent.us to pass an ethics and anti-corruption code for city commissioners.

Also, the state ethics commission is doing good work; however, it needs to be given the ability to start investigations on its own.

VOTER SERVICE & EDUCATION

On October 3 at the Leesburg library, the League sponsored and moderated a discussion on renewing Lake County's penny sales tax. The monies are used to fund county wide projects, including roads, public safety needs, parks, and school facilities. Speaking in favor of extending the tax were Tim Sullivan, a Lake County commissioner; and Bill Mathias, Lake County School Board member. Opposing the tax extension were Vance Jochim, the editor of FiscalRangers.com; and Andy DuBois, a Lake County resident. Thanks to those league members who participated in the discussion, and a special thanks to Karen West for her hard work in making it a success.



At our October 26 general meeting, we heard from Ben Wilcox, research director of Integrity Florida which is a nonpartisan research institute and government watchdog about the affect that money has had on the political process. Mr. Wilcox discussed the changes to both federal and state law over the past 20 years. A lengthy question and answer period followed his presentation. Previously, we had heard from Judge Alan Gold, a senior federal district court judge and husband of league member Susan Gold, who discussed the impact of money on judicial elections.

All of this is was in preparation for our November meeting when we will participate in the national league's Money in Politics member study and consensus. Background materials for this meeting have recently been emailed to all League members. Please review the various attachments that were sent to you prior to the meeting and remember to print out the questions and bring them with you. After the conclusion of the meeting, our results will be reported to the LWVUS.

Currently, the League of Women Voters' position on Campaign Finance states that methods of financing political campaigns should: (a) ensure the public's right to know, (b) combat corruption and undue influence, (c) enable candidates to compete more equitably, and (d) allow maximum citizen participation in the political process.

Using this position, the League has worked toward two main goals in recent years:

- (a) transparency in financing political campaigns, and
- (b) fighting big money and its influence in elections and government.

Through this study and consensus process, it is hoped that the League will be able to update its position on campaign finance as it relates to First Amendment-political speech issues. We will be focusing on the extent to which political campaigns are protected speech under the First Amendment.

If you have any questions about the material, please contact **Richard Coen**, joannejon@aol.com.

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

October 29, 2015

For several years, the League of Women Voters and its partners have been lobbying the states and the Obama Administration to bring the health care exchanges required by the Affordable Care Act (ACA) into compliance with the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA). The NVRA was designed to increase voter registration by requiring that eligible persons receive voter registration opportunities when applying for services through agencies that administer a variety of programs, including Medicaid and other forms of public assistance. The ACA requires that persons applying for most health care benefits including Medicaid do so through a health care exchange created by their state government or facilitated by the federal government. As such the NVRA requires that voter registration be offered on the health care exchanges.

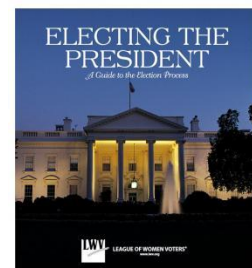
Those states that have created exchanges have recognized their obligation to bring their exchanges into compliance with the NVRA. To date, the Obama Administration has not. The result is not just a loss of as many as 1.7 million voter registrations through the Federal facilitated Exchanges (FfEs), but also a backward movement as those applying for or renewing Medicaid benefits do so on the FfEs instead of state Medicaid offices. As the state exchanges come into compliance with the NVRA, the failure of the Administration to offer the same registration opportunity on the FfEs means that citizens in different states will not be treated equally.

While the FfEs and the ACA were first being implemented and a legal challenge, *King v. Burwell* was pending in the United States Supreme Court, the delay was understandable if not acceptable. However, November 1 marks the third open enrollment period using the FfEs and *King* has been decided in favor of treating the state federally-facilitated exchanges exactly the same under the law. The time has come to insist that the Administration follow the law. The NVRA permits a private right of action to force compliance. That right of action has allowed for lawsuits by voting rights groups that often have been needed to ensure that states provide the services guaranteed under the NVRA. That right of action may not need to be used to force the Administration to do the right thing.

On October 28, the League and its partners, Demos and Project Vote, delivered a letter to the President asking for voluntary compliance and alerting the Administration to our intent to sue if necessary. The ball is in the President's court. With so much at stake for our democracy, it is essential that every eligible voter be protected by every available means. The NVRA is an important protection that the League worked hard to get. Voters deserve a chance to use it.

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!



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

Like us on Facebook! 