



LEAGUE

HANDBOOK

LWV OF THE VILLAGES/TRI-COUNTY AREA

www.lwvtrifl.org



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Welcome to the League of Women Voters of The Villages/Tri-County Area, a nonpartisan organization of men and women who want to make a difference in their communities. While the League is nonpartisan and does not endorse or oppose political candidates or parties, we are political in that we do take positions on issues only after careful study and consensus by our members.

Our Member-at-Large Unit was established in 2005, and membership is open to all women and men who are residents of Lake, Marion and Sumter counties. We are one of 30 units in the state of Florida. In the summer of 2016 we achieved full League status. There are close to 1,000 Leagues across the country all working to inform their members and the general public of the importance of participating in the governmental process. As a member of the local League (www.lwvtrifl.org), you are automatically a member of the LWV of Florida (thefloridavoter.org) and the LWV of the United States (lwv.org).

We meet monthly from September to May on the fourth Monday of the month at the Community Bank & Trust Company, and all meetings are open to the public. Our topics can range from issues that affect the tri-county area as well as state and national issues. In addition to focusing on membership growth and learning about our tri-county area, members are kept up-to-date during the annual legislative session. By keeping our membership up-to-date on what is happening in Tallahassee, we are able to contact our elected representatives to let them know the League's position on proposed legislation. We conduct candidate forums, prepare a local voter's guide as well as hold issue-based forums. The League also produces a monthly newsletter which is distributed via email to all members as well as to our elected officials and other interested parties.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at a meeting or through the web site. Again, welcome to the League of Women Voters --- one of the most trusted nonpartisan organizations in the United States. I hope you will become involved to give our League a stronger voice in the community.

Beth Hicks President League of Women Voters The Villages/Tri-County (ethicks71@gmail.com)



- The League was founded in 1920 by Carrie Chapman Catt shortly before the ratification of the 19th amendment.
- LWVF was reorganized in 1939; LWVTRI was founded in 2005.
- Our membership comes from Lake, Marion and Sumter counties.
- The League is nonpartisan; we do **NOT** endorse political parties or candidates.
- The League encourages informed and active participation in government; works to increase understanding of public policy issues; influences public policy through education and advocacy.
- The League takes positions and lobbies on selected issues after member study and consensus.
- There are Leagues in all 50 states plus Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.
- There are 30 local Leagues in Florida.
- Membership is open to all women and men 18 years of age and older.
- By joining the local League, you automatically become a member of the state League (LWVF) and the national League (LWVUS).
- Examples of our activities are: monthly general meetings, candidate and issue forums (health care, immigration, growth management amendment and class size amendment); participation in local ethics study and statewide study on charter schools.

Check out our website, www.lwvtrifl.org

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The League of Women Voters believes in representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States.

The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government depends upon the informed and active participation of its citizens.

The League of Women Voters believes that the right to vote must be protected for every citizen; that every person should have access to free public education which provides equal opportunity for all; and that no person or group should suffer legal, economic or administrative discrimination.

The League of Women Voters believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, and the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing, and coordination among the different agencies and levels of government.

The Leagues of Women Voters believes that responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people. Government should maintain an equitable and flexible system of taxation, promote the conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest, share in the solution of economic and social problems which affect the general welfare, promote a stable and expanding economy and adopt domestic policies which facilitate the solutions for international problems.

The League of Women Voters believes that cooperation with other nations is essential in the search for solutions to the world's problems and the development of international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.

WHAT IS THE LEAGUE

PURPOSE The League of Women Voters works to educate and inform voters in a factual and nonpartisan way. We are community based and present information on all sides of an issue to help voters decide rather than taking political positions. That information/education function is a key value, and is seen by the public as even more necessary and rarer in today's world of biased ads and media.

MEMBERSHIP The League is open to all persons (women AND men) who subscribe to the purpose and policies of the League. Voting memberships are available to any persons who are at least sixteen years old

ORGANIZATION The structure of the League parallels the representative system of government under which we live. Local, regional, state and national governments are dependent one upon the other; the base is the individual citizen. The League levels are also interdependent, based on the individual member. Members determine the policies and program of all League levels. Membership is simultaneous on all four levels, where applicable.

NONPARTISAN & POLITICAL Being nonpartisan toward candidates and political parties is critical to the effectiveness of the League's unique voters' service/citizen information work. This does not mean that the League isn't political. Our nonpartisan stance provides a strong foundation for the work done in support of issues. Action on legislation and ballot proposals is more effective when the public and the legislators know for certain that the League's conclusions are based on merit rather than playing politics.

FINANCING The League is a non-profit organization. It is financed by member dues, contributions from individuals and corporations, and grants from foundations and governmental entities for specific League projects.

WHAT WE DO

STUDY AND ACTION The League of Women Voters is an action group. However, it takes action only on issues which have been extensively studied and on which the members agree. One of the reasons for the political effectiveness of the League is its reputation for thorough study.

Action includes:

- providing information to members and the public
- supporting or opposing legislation
- building public opinion
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Complete facts, the pros and cons, are researched before acting. Members study and discuss the issues so that each member has an opportunity to express an opinion. When the membership has reached a position through the **STUDY/DISCUSSION/CONSENSUS OR CONCURRENCE** process the League and its members as individuals, implement that advocacy position by lobbying; testifying in public hearings; sponsoring forums and discussions; issuing media releases and holding press conferences; writing letters to editors and officials; and providing information in League publications. The League board is responsible for planning and directing League actions.

Voter Services Voter Service activity is directed toward encouraging citizens to register and vote, and to participate in government and politics. League does this by providing factual information about voting procedures, candidates and ballot issues.

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

NATIONAL Founded as a national organization in 1920, the League has kept pace with the changing times. The League promotes equal rights for all with access to opportunities in education, employment, and housing. Issues of concern include child welfare, accessibility of health care, protection of the environment, and international cooperation. The League supports a system of government that is open, representative, accountable, and responsive.

STATE The League got its official start in Florida in 1939, when women in Winter Haven, Winter Park and St. Petersburg initiated the Florida League of Women Voters, following some earlier efforts. Today, with 30 local Leagues statewide, members hold candidate forums, issue voter guides to help inform citizens on local races and ballot amendments, and sponsor public forums to encourage Florida's citizens and elected officials to broaden their understanding of key issues, while promoting engaged citizenship through an informed and active participation in government. The League has worked tirelessly on redistricting, voting and elections, campaign finance reform, education and natural resources.

LOCAL The League of Women Voters of The Villages/Tri-County Area was established in 2005 with membership being open to women and men in **Lake, Marion and Sumter Counties** who support the principles of the League. In addition to its monthly programs, the League holds candidate forums, publishes an electronic voter's guide during the election season and speaks on issues to interested groups. The League studies issues that not only affect citizens on the local level, but also the state and national levels.

HOW WE DO WHAT WE DO

BOARD OF DIRECTORS Members on each level of the League organization elect a board of directors to manage the activities of the League. The structure of a board includes elected officers as provided for in the organization bylaws. Other directors may be elected for specific responsibilities or assigned tasks as needed.

THE MEMBER The League structure is designed to give members every chance to voice their views. Because League is a membership organization, every member is encouraged to become a member of a working committee. This is the key to League success.

COMMITTEES League of Women Voters Tri County Area (LWVTRI) has operated on an "ad hoc" committee basis. During the national League study of the immigration issue, a local committee was formed and a program presented to the community. The same is true for health care and most recently, the national League study on the role of the federal government in education and the Florida Primary System. In each instance, the committees did the research, clarified the issues, and identified the problems. The committee then presented the facts to the members for their consideration. A standing committee for all Leagues is the Voter Service & Education Committee. We are currently working on a local Voluntary Pre Kindergarten Study and a statewide Florida Primary Study.

THE PROGRAM The League's program consists of governmental issues chosen by the members for **study and action**. At program-planning meetings, members discuss their ideas for the local, regional, state and national programs. The proposals are submitted to the Board. Individual members may also submit proposals. The Board considers all proposals and then presents a recommended program for consideration at the annual meeting or convention. Final decisions on state and national program are made by delegates at respective biennial conventions. A recommended program requires a majority vote for adoption.

Criteria which must be considered when selecting program:

- The issue must be one on which governmental action is needed.
- The issue must fall within the Principles of the League.

Additional considerations, which may help members in making a choice:

- Is the issue important enough to inspire member interest and commitment?
- Can the League be effective in this field?
- Would it be a duplication of effort?
- Is it timely? Are there funds, time, and people available to do a thorough job?
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GOING FORWARD

Please consider becoming an active member of our League. Attend monthly meetings; participate in a committee; volunteer to serve on the Board; volunteer to work on the monthly newsletter or website. ***BECOME INVOLVED!***

League Websites

LWVTRI	www.lwvtrfli.org
LWV Florida	www.thefloridavoter.org
LWV of the United States	www.lwv.org

League Publications

“Study & Action” is the state League’s guide to public policy positions

<http://www.thefloridavoter.org/resources/study-and-action>

“Impact on Issues” is the national League’s guide to public policy positions

<http://www.lwv.org/files/Impact-on-Issues-2012-2014.pdf>

2013-14 LWV of The Villages/Tri-County Area Calendar

The League meets on the 4th Monday of the month at the Community Bank & Trust Com, CR466 and Parr Drive, The Villages (unless noted otherwise) from April to May.

There are no meetings in June, July and August.

<u>April 2013</u>	
Wednesday, April 10-13	LWVF Legislative Summit & Convention, Tallahassee
<u>May</u>	
Monday, May 20	LWVTRI Monthly Meeting
<u>June</u>	
No League General Meeting	
<u>July</u>	
July 19	No League General Meeting Anniversary of the Seneca Falls Convention
<u>August</u>	
Monday, August 26	Women's Equality Day Celebration, Lady Lake Community Building, Lady Lake
<u>September</u>	
September 17	Constitution Day
Monday, September 23	LWVTRI General Meeting
<u>October</u>	
Monday, October 28	LWVTRI General Meeting
<u>November</u>	
Monday, November 18	LWVTRI General Meeting
<u>December</u>	
Monday, December 9	Holiday Party
<u>January 2014</u>	
January 9	Carrie Catt Chapman's Birthday
Monday, January 27	LWVTRI General Meeting
<u>February</u>	
February 14	Birthday of the LWV
Monday, February 24	LWVTRI General Meeting
<u>March</u>	
Monday, March 24	Women's History Month LWVTRI Annual Meeting

LEAGUE LINGO

ACTION	the means used for stimulating interest in, giving information about and urging support for League positions, press conferences, lobbying, letters, etc.
BOARD	the Board of Directors
BRIEFING	a meeting at which the resource committee briefs non-committee members so they may become discussion leaders at unit meetings
CONSENSUS	substantial agreement of the members developed through study and discussion
CONCURRENCE	substantial agreement of the members on a position previously adopted by another League
ITEM/ISSUE	any specific topic on the <i>list</i> of program local, regional, state or national
LOCAL UNIT	state League-organized group of members (e.g. LWV of The Villages/Tri-County Area) in an area where there is no local League.
POSITION/STAND	a body of opinion expressed in consensus upon which action can be taken
PROGRAM	local, regional, state and national governmental issues suggested by members and adopted for study and action
CALL TO ACTION	a request from a Board for a specific Action on a program item

UNIT

small discussion group which meets regularly to discuss and evaluate League program

VOTER

monthly online newsletter sent to members and the community