



The Voter

The League of Women Voters of the Space Coast



Volume 31: No. 8

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Mission: The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Annual Meeting – Saturday, April 9th

EAU GALLIE YACHT CLUB
100 Datura Drive, Indian Harbour Beach, FL
10.00 A.M
NOTE THE TIME

Lunch will be served after the meeting.

COST \$20.00

Choice of

CHICKEN ROMANO

or

GRILLED MAHI WITH FRUIT SALSA

Both with Caesar Salad, Chef's choice of starch and vegetable

or

VEGETARIAN PLATE

Strawberry shortcake, rolls, coffee, tea

Reservations no later than April 5, 2011
to Doreen Archer 622-4071

State of the County-Part 2

In the March *VOTER*, Barbara Jagrowski reported on an address given by Howard Tipton, the Brevard County manager. Barbara is a member of the Local Government committee and this is the second part of Barbara's report.

Quality of Life: Four areas considered were Public Safety, Education, Affordability and Leisure Activities.

About 50% of the county general budget is devoted to public safety. According to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, crime dropped by 3.3% in 2009. For the first half of 2010, the latest figures reported a drop of another 7%. We have a low cost jail operation, using inmate labor to keep costs down and working with the justice system to help prioritize the most expensive portion – jail beds. Brevard continues to benefit from the efficiency of a single provider medical transport system and increased cooperation across municipal boundaries. From an Emergency Management perspective, we are blessed with the most respected leadership team in the state.

When companies or individuals relocate or remain in the area, often the quality of the public school system is an important consideration for families of the workers as well as the source for future workers. The Brevard school district is A rated. Higher education in our region is equally as strong. More

than 25,000 students, in a variety of disciplines, attend our Community Colleges. Florida Institute of Technology continues to grow in both student population and prestige and it is fast becoming a top research university. The University of Central Florida also has a presence at the Cocoa Campus of Brevard Community College.

In discussing affordability, two areas were addressed – taxes and housing. Of the 7 counties that make up central Florida, Brevard County's sales tax of 6% is the lowest. In the baseline property tax area, Brevard is the second lowest in the area and rated 16th lowest in the state. *(continued on Page 6)*

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President's Corner

Ruth Schechter

Dear League Members,

It's hard to believe it is March already! Seems we were just talking about educating voters on the Fair Districts Amendments on their ballots ----- What? We have to talk about Fair Districts again? Although those amendments to the Florida Constitution were passed by the people of this state by some 62+% -- well over the required 60% for passage - the governor and the legislators want to delay and stall and not implement these amendments! You should be angry - very angry!!

The League of Women Voters has been working in this state for over thirty years (through several administrations) to try and have districts drawn in a reasonable manner so that the will of the people is not so easily thwarted by legislative maneuvering. We are celebrating a victory of finally (after several attempts) getting the amendments to the ballot for the people of Florida to consider. The people have spoken and now this government which claims to be representing the people is pulling every trick they can think of to keep from having to follow the new guidelines!!! This is disgraceful!!

Let them hear your outrage! We have just published and delivered our new *Contact* so you have good telephone numbers and e-mail addresses for each of our legislators and all other public officials. Let them hear from you!

We have five members who will be representing Space Coast League in Tallahassee at the State Legislative Seminar and Convention on March 23rd through 26th. We will report back to you at our Annual meeting on April 9th. Please, plan to be there - it costs \$20, but it's lunch at the Eau Gallie Yacht Club and the special time our organization selects its program of work for the next year and our officers are elected and installed. (We have distinctly informal installations!)

As this is my last visit to the file marked *Voterpresletter* - I need to thank you individually and collectively for trusting me with this remarkable organization for the past two years. It hasn't always been a really smooth ride but life is marked by its difficulties as well as its triumphs and we've had our share of triumphs!

Although I leave this office I will continue to be active in the Space Coast League and I hope to stay in touch with all of you! Thank you again for the support you've shown me!

In League,
Ruth



Board Bytes

- The 2011-2012 **Contact** is finished and 20,000 copies are being distributed throughout the county. A copy of this publication is enclosed in the envelope along with your renewal letter.
- Membership renewal is due April 1st. Letters have been mailed. A survey is enclosed so members can send suggestions to the Board with their renewal checks.
- Profit from **Politicos on Parade** was **\$1,566.21**. 108 people attended including our models.
- It is suggested that you share your monthly *Voter* with friends. Copies of present and past *Voters* are also available on our website, www.lwv-spacecoast.org
- May Timely Topic will be on May 21st. Guest speaker will be Randell Brown speaking on **Identity Theft**. Mr. Brown is a representative from the Florida Department of Financial Services.
- Local government committee will be interviewing Clerk of the Circuit Court in Brevard County.
- Children's committee gathering information on charter schools and vouchers in Brevard County and Florida. See article on Page 3.

(Global Governance article continued from Page 5)

These goals are on the path to reaching their targets by 2015. Much progress has been made in fighting AIDS, TB and malaria. The World Food Bank and Food and Agricultural Organization have alleviated much hunger, and the G-20 has pledged \$20 billion over the next 3 years to secure food supplies. The G-20 is currently creating a pool of money to pay teachers and medical personnel in down times.

In the area of human development, the UN has adopted the R2P (Responsibility to protect). There have been successes and failures as the United Nations have worked to protect mass atrocities. They are currently working on systems to track events on the ground, to analyze the risk of conflict and to get the information to the key decision makers. These are key steps to prevention. **Karen Raboin**

The League of Women Voters of the Space Coast will promote in all aspects of the League's activities a philosophy of inclusion that reflects the diverse composition and issues of the community.



Children's Committee

Marilza Novaes Card – Chair

It seems as if policymakers are still convinced that Charter schools provide an answer to failing students. Our committee is researching this topic and would like to share information with our members. A summary of recent publications related to the topic follows.

The article by Janelle Scott and Adriana Villavicencio, entitled "School Context and Charter School Achievement: A Framework for Understanding the performance Black Box" (Peabody Journal of Education, 84, 2009), explains that charter schools started in Minnesota in 1991. Forty states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico had embraced the concept by 2009. In 2008 there were 4,000 charter schools and more than 1 million students attended them. The authors state that researchers, unlike policymakers, have disagreements concerning the advantages of charter schools over traditional public schools. They also have disagreements about factors that might influence the outcomes of charter schools such as organizational, fiscal, curricular, and demographic factors. The authors call attention to the fact that many families send their children to charter schools for reasons other than academic considerations, such as "safety, racial/ethnic identification, or school size". Many charter schools have self-selected populations, control over admissions, and follow their own curriculum and organizational structures. They conclude that in order to have a complete understanding about the performance of charter schools, one needs to include race, social class and student selection influences in the performance analyses, instead of just looking at students' grades. They suggest mixed-method studies that can find out which factors are present at the schools that have achieved positive results. Scott and Villavicencio, further explain that policymakers have already started to change the original purpose of charter schools by arguing that charter schools don't do as well as expected because they serve "harder to educate students". Also, they claim that charter schools serve social purposes in addition to increasing achievement. The authors urge policymakers to support charter schools as well as traditional public schools "to craft educational environments that are diverse, highly resourced, and of high academic quality".

Evan Thomas and Pat Wingert, in their article "Understanding Charter Schools", (Newsweek, 46, 2010) discuss a study conducted by Stanford University's Center for Research on Educational Outcomes. The study found that 37% of charter schools had lower academic achievement than traditional public schools. Seventeen percent had better results. The authors point

out that the initial understanding was that if a charter school was failing after 3 to 5 years, it was supposed to close down, but in many cases that doesn't happen. Many charter schools are not worried about student test results because they claim that they concentrate on self-esteem and cultural identity. Thomas and Wingert explain that in cities such as Boston, New York, D.C., and Chicago where the bar is set high for entry and performance, the charter schools do really well. On the other hand, states like Arizona, Florida, California, Ohio, and Texas have more mixed results. The authors believe that the states that improve charter schools' quality and close those that are not performing well should receive extra credit, instead of giving states extra credit for removing caps on the number of charter schools.

The article, "The New Dawn in the Sunshine State", by Ron Schachter (District Administration, 46, 2010) explains that the number of charter schools in Florida has increased to 410. This number corresponds to 5% of the total public school enrollment in our state and it is the third largest number of charter schools in the U.S. It is expected that 60 or 70 more charter schools will open in the 2010-2011 school year. The author reports that Michael Kooi, the executive director of the Florida DOE's Office of Independent Education and School Choice says that more than 125 charter schools have closed down because they were not doing well. Schachter's article discusses a Stanford University study from June 2009 that concluded that students in traditional public schools in Florida achieved better results than those in charter schools in our state.

In the article entitled "Brevard Leads Education Push" (Florida Today, February 27, 2011), Matt Reed points out that "the Department of Education knowingly published skewed data that show charter schools outperforming regular public schools in Brevard", when in reality traditional public schools' performance in Florida exceeds charter schools' grade achievement. The article included a table with the data. It is worth reading this article if you have not had a chance to do it yet.

Another interesting article concerning charter schools in Florida is called "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Comparing Teacher Mobility in Florida's Charter and Traditional Public Schools" by Debbi Harris (Peabody Journal of Education, 82, 2007). This study analyzed data collected in Florida from 1998 to 2003. The article describes the different mobility patterns of teachers at charter and traditional public schools in Florida. The author states that teachers in charter schools must be certified as in public schools, but charter schools don't have to follow the same bargaining agreements that traditional schools have to follow in their districts. Administrators at charter schools can choose salary levels with different reward structures. *(continued on Page 4 - 2nd column)*

Update

Please add this information to your membership book.

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At the annual meeting we will be re-affirming Space Coast League's positions on **Justice** and **Health** found on pages 5 and 6 in the current membership book. We need to do this since we do not have active committees operating in either area.



(Children's Committee report continued from Page 3)

They can even set individual salaries for teachers at their discretion. They don't have to follow tenure rules either. Some types of teachers might be attracted to the different policies and the autonomy that charter schools offer. The study found that traditional school teachers are more experienced than charter school teachers. On the other hand, charter school teachers graduate from more prestigious colleges, and have higher SAT and ACT scores, even though their GPAs are lower. The author suggests that it might be because they took more challenging courses. Charter school teachers, in general, get paid less, but might enjoy the less bureaucratic environment of these schools. Teachers from charter schools who have lower GPAs are more mobile than other charter school teachers and traditional school teachers. In traditional schools, teachers with higher verbal SATs who graduated from more selective colleges are more likely to move from traditional to charter schools than their peers. Teachers from both kinds of schools are more likely to move away from high poverty schools and low-achieving schools. Another interesting finding is that even though teachers at traditional public schools have higher salaries, charter schools have more highly qualified teachers. The author suggests that administrators at traditional schools may be rejecting candidates with higher cognitive abilities, or high quality candidates are more willing to accept lower salaries in exchange for what they consider better and more supportive working conditions. Debbi Harris believes that both types of schools should work together, learn from each other, and find ways to better retain high quality teachers.

“Make Democracy Work”

“Be a Voice for Citizens and a Force for Change”



International Relations

Mary Nicolay - Chair

The International Relations Committee is off to a great start with GREAT DECISIONS topics. Attendance has been good and the materials covered have been thought provoking. Guest speakers and video presentations have added to the meetings.

A suggested reading recommended by member Martha Bradshaw is, "COW MOST SACRED: WHY MILITARY SPENDING REMAINS UNTOUCHABLE", written by Andrew Bacevich. He has also written the book THE LIMITS OF POWER: THE END OF AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM. Bacevich is a professor of history and international relations at Boston University.

One way of looking at International diplomacy is to recognize the BRINKSMANSHIP involved.

Brinksmanship we have learned is the technique or practice of maneuvering a dangerous situation to the limits (BRINK) of tolerance or safety in order to secure the greatest advantage. This is often done by creating a diplomatic crisis. Much of what we study for these discussions involves these crises. Please join us as we learn more about the world we live in. Meetings are held **the first and third Tuesday of each month at the Satellite Beach Library, 1-3 PM.**

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

One of February's Great Decisions discussions was based on the increasing number of world conditions that cannot be fixed by one country alone. The argument is that our lives are so interrelated, that conditions in countries thousands of mile away affect what we do right here in our country...in our state...and in our own home towns.

A stumbling block for fixing these conditions is that we must come together as a world. This violates the dearly-held beliefs of many Americans -- that we should always protect our national sovereignty.

Our discussion centered on four prominent global issues: nuclear arms, global climate change, the global economy and economic and human development.

NUCLEAR ARMS:

The risk of terrorist nations and terrorist groups acquiring nuclear weapons is considered the most immediate and extreme threat to global security. In May 2010, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) made progress in agreeing to reduce nuclear arms. One goal is to have a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East. The eventual goal is to have a nuclear-free world.

One major problem with nuclear materials is the poor security of many nuclear sites, some which are secured only by a chain-link fence and a guard dog.

There have already been 18 documented cases of theft or loss of plutonium or HEU (highly-enriched uranium). Once the materials are lost, they can be easily transported over national borders. Their small size and weak radiation signal make it hard to detect.

GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

Global climate change affects all nations, causing problems with flooding, disease, disruption to agriculture and extinction of species. The issue of global climate change often pits the wealthiest countries against developing nations. The current goal is to reduce carbon emission levels using a system of trades. Agreement on this issue is very sensitive.

William Antholis (Director of Brookings Global Economy and Development for Climate Change) has offered a 5-step plan to reach agreement on this without interfering with national sovereignty.

Antholis suggests following the example of the World Trade (WTO) agreements. The first step is start with the largest emitters. Next, create a General Agreement, begin action in these countries, and set long-term goals with provisions for developing countries to join as they become larger producers of carbon emissions..

Part of this process is to develop a self-enforcing system for violators. This works well in the WTO because individual countries can choose to withdraw from the agreement or face penalties agreed upon in advance. Withdrawal prevents the country from sharing in the benefits of the trading pact. However, no sovereignty is violated.

GLOBAL ECONOMY

We are currently experiencing the problems an economic crisis can create. The loss of jobs, businesses and homes extends across the globe. Our government has worked with global leaders in finance to counteract these problems and keep the world economy from freefall. This depression shows signs of ending. However, there are groups working to ensure this does not happen again.

Several groups, the G-8, G-20 and WTO, working with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are preparing a system that creates a "strong, sustainable, and balanced growth," by focusing on debt levels of banks, fair monetary exchange, and balancing budgets,

ECONOMIC AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

"Market forces distribute resources and income without any moral considerations for what is equitable." This is an issue that needs no example. The main agency working to reduce poverty is the United Nations. In 2000, the UN wrote the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Four of the goals aid countries in human development. These are education, infectious diseases, nutrition and poverty reduction. *(continued on Page 2 column 2)*

State of the County Part 2 continued from Page 1

Orange County is the lowest, but here's the rest of that story. Their sales tax is .5% higher and they also charge a Public Service tax. About 7% of this last tax is required to go to Parks and Endangered Lands. Housing prices continue to drop almost to the 1990's level. However this is the glass being half full point of view, as the impacts of falling prices are considerable across the board. It is very attractive to businesses relocating or expanding here. It has never been a better value.

The last area is leisure activities. With 72 miles of beautiful beaches and 3 rivers, water related recreation opportunities are virtually unlimited. From birding festivals to surfing contests, from world class fishing to conservation lands, Brevard is blessed with incredible natural beauty. Parks? Brevard has one of the best park systems in the country. We had 3 strong additions in 2010, Sam's House on North Merritt Island, Christianson's Landing Boat Ramp in south county on the Indian River and the restored Prichard House in Titusville. There is a centralized library system in 17 locations. You can stroll down safe streets in beautiful downtowns, enjoying good food and entertainment. Throughout the county, there are numerous choices as to how you want to enjoy a beautiful day or evening. In case that is not enough, about an hour away you can experience Daytona 500, Shamu, Mickey or Harry Potter.

Next month will be the final portion. Stay tuned.



Book Review by Ruth E. Almeida

Carter, Jimmy. "White House Diary." 2010. 537p. "We obeyed the law, we told the truth, and we kept the Peace." So said Vice-president Walter Mondale in describing the Carter White House years.

President Jimmy Carter kept a diary from 1977-81 which he has turned into his 25th book. Here he recorded his impressions of those he met with from domestic to foreign leaders as well as his daily activities. True to form, the language is simple, candid and often personal. His selections from this larger diary are not edited so this gives a uniquely honest picture of his actions and thoughts at the time, warts and all. To balance this historical record, thirty years later he has interspersed annotations with the original entries and has included a thoughtful critique of his successes and failures in his Afterword.

The longest entries cover the Camp David Accord, the Panama Canal Treaty, and the Iranian Hostage

Crisis. His post White House years turned out to be much more successful and productive than most past presidents. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002 for his continuing pursuit of Human Rights.

President Carter's ambition was to create a better world through sound conservative government policies. Often he found his best allies across the aisle with the moderate Republicans. He was particularly prescient about the energy crisis and global environmental problems which are still unresolved.

Carter frequently turns to his family (esp. Rosalynn), his Christian faith and his love of fishing to sustain him during the hard times. Although complex and intelligent, Carter as President was often misjudged as simple even naïve by his political foes. This highly readable diary should lay that misperception to rest. Recommended. Ruth Almeida.



TABOR

Residents of Florida should know about TABOR. What is TABOR? The acronym stands for Taxpayer Bill of Rights. From these words it sounds great.

Colorado voted for TABOR in 1992. It was not a success and in 2005 Colorado suspended the TABOR formula. This suspension was backed by a Republican governor and almost the entire state establishment. The business community realized it needed to be changed. They had originally supported it but changed their minds. It may sound good but it has been tried and it has problems. It is a concept for limiting government growth that requires overall tax revenue to be tied to inflation and population increases unless larger increases are approved by the voters. Colorado is the only state that approved TABOR.

TABOR has been proposed in 20 states but if it appeared on the ballot it has been defeated.

The Florida Legislature plans to propose a 2012 constitutional amendment of TABOR for Florida. Recent interviews with legislators from Brevard county indicate that our legislators want TABOR for Florida.

You can watch an interesting video on the main page of www.lwvfla.org - middle of the page in blue is "Understanding Florida's Issues" followed by TABOR.

League has opposed TABOR since it was first proposed in 2008.

Please become informed on this issue.
Lucia Watson- LWV Space Coast Voter Editor

Politicos on Parade Fashion Show Pictures
Our local elected officials are modeling fashions from Talbot's and Jos.A. Bank



Rita Pritchett



Carl Beatty



Kristine Isnardi



Mitch Needelman



Mary Bolin



Sybrina Anderson



Stephany Eley



Dr. Michael Krupp



Kristine Isnardi



Mary Bolin



Rita Pritchett

~Members Welcome at All Meetings~

Saturday, April 9,
Monday, April 11
Tuesday, April 12th,
Tuesday, April 26,

Annual Meeting Eau Gallie Yacht Club, Indian Harbour Beach 10 a.m.
Children's Committee - Suntree Library at 1:30 p.m.
International Relations Meeting - Satellite Beach Library 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
Topic is U.S. National Security led by Sue Mart
International Relations Meeting - Satellite Beach Library 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
Topic is Education

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