



The Voter

The League of Women Voters
of the Space Coast



Volume 32: No. 8

April, 2012

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 ~

When: Saturday , April 21, 2012
Time: 10:00 a.m.
Where: Eau Gallie Yacht Club
 100 Datura Drive
 Indian Harbour Beach, FL

Menu: Baked Salmon with Dill Sauce
 English Cut Prime Rib of Beef
 Vegetarian Meal on request

Accompanied by salad, chef's choice of vegetables and Bread
 Pudding with Bourbon Sauce.

Cost: \$22.00

Reservations: Doreen Archer at 321-622-4071
 by Tuesday - 5 p.m. April 17, 2012

The League of Women Voters of Florida encourages all citizens to vote with confidence.



To make sure voters are as informed as possible about the process, the League offers these voting tips by

Charley Williams, Voter Service Chair of the League of Women Voters of Florida.

What happens on Election Day if my residential address is out-of-date?
 Voters who have moved from one county to another, and who have not updated their address with their Supervisor of Elections, could be handed a provisional ballot at the polls under Florida's new election law. You can change your address by simply calling your Supervisor of Elections before you get to the polls.

I have heard that vote-by-mail ballots are not counted unless the election is close. Is that true? False! Vote-by-mail ballots are actually the first ballots to be counted. By Florida law, supervisors can begin tabulating vote-by-mail ballots 15 days before Election Day. Vote-by-mail results are not actually counted until after 7 p.m. on Election Day.

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President's Corner

Barbara Whitley

Hello Leaguers,

Welcome to April, the gateway to spring. I am ready for it. As many of you know I broke a few bones in my foot and have to wear a #@\$% (hope I spelled that right) boot. I need to take the stress off the bones and give them time to heal. At least the dog is scared and has learned to fear me as I lurch and he stays a couple of feet away as I walk.

Who said getting old was just fun and games?

As we were talking about changes, we had an interesting Timely Topic with friends from the School Board. Dr. Binggeli came loaded with so many statistics that it made your head swim. I needed a score sheet so I could keep track of all of the numbers that were being given. He certainly has his numbers down and knows them well. He has a picture of the school system that is interesting but somewhat difficult for me to follow, as being outside of the school system, it is like being in a foreign land.

I need a course in basic school system. What is the difference between a Charter School and a school that the school board contracts with for services? I learned a long time ago to follow the money and since it is still my tax money... Who gets my money? How much do they get? How much and what do they do with it? What do they produce with the money?

The subject they did talk about that I know a little about is the homeless. I work with not the children but the elderly. The elderly are impacted by children who are out of work. I see children who have raided parent's bank accounts because they are on as co-signers and other disgusting problems. It is a silent problem. If I hear "but he was such a good boy he probably needs the money" I will cry. The problem is, who pays the light bill when the money is all gone? The homeless have gone from 92 children to 1902 in just three years is easy to believe. It will go higher.

I am on the Board of Trinity Towers and our waiting list is long. Sometimes people wait a year or longer to get in. Low cost housing is hard to find. We have more people at the Daily Bread now than ever before and there are more elderly and young couples with children. If you watch the Sharing Center sign you know they are often looking for food items for their food pantry.

I did find it interesting that although our community appears to be changing, the census of our schools has not changed that much. They have about the same amount of children. Our community has seen layoffs, masses of people leaving our area and foreclosures on homes but school census stays the same. What has changed and more importantly what is the

average grade point average of the students in school now?

Changes are now coming to the schools.

We are almost coming to the end of our year of talking about change in our community. Timely Topics have been centered on changes and what has been changed. What interests you? What would you like to hear about in Timely Topics? Who in our community would you like to hear speak? On what subject would you like to hear both sides of the story?

Yours in League,
Barb



Welcome to New Members

Ina Fritsch

&

Glenda W. Raccuglia

Please add new members to your membership book.

Addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses of new members will be sent to you by e-mail.

If you have friends who belong to League of Women Voters of the Space Coast who do not receive e-mail, it would be helpful if you could contact them and give them addresses and phone numbers of new members to add to their membership books. We discontinued printing this information in our *Voters* because of privacy concerns. Our *Voters* are distributed throughout the community and are found on line on our web site.

Thanks

We want to say thank you to the phone committee of League of Women Voters of the Space Coast. These women call our membership with reminders of upcoming events.

Ruth Schechter has been chairman of this important committee this past year. Her committee includes **Jan Bancroft, Ann Downing, Barbara Howell, Sue Mart, Fern Patton and Carol Riley.**

We also communicate with the membership and community by publishing *The Voter* 9 months of the year and through our website www.lwv-spacecoast.org.



International Relations

Mary Nicolay – Chair

The International Relations Group is currently studying GREAT DECISIONS materials put out by the Foreign Policy Association. CYBER SECURITY will be covered April 10th and April 24th INDONESIA is the topic. The public is invited to the meetings held at the Satellite Beach Library from 1-3 pm.

Each year the group participates in a National Opinion Ballot after each topic. The following is a description of members of GD groups and the opinions on the 2011 issues.

PROFILE: There is an almost equal number of men and women participating. Of those 53% have advanced college degrees, most are well traveled, speak more than one language and find that GD materials "informative, useful and thought provoking...and significantly add to awareness and knowledge." (Oakton, VA) It was found that 69% use computers at home. Ballots returned numbered 20,061, the largest numbers were from, in order, FL, CA, NY, CO, and AZ. Of the topics covered there was:

SUPPORT FOR:

- An emphasis on counterinsurgency capability (COIN) in addition to traditionalist military strategy.
- Channeling aid to Haiti through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).
- Promoting the leadership of a strong Germany in Europe.
- Prioritization of U.S. relations with Russia and Turkey over relations with other states in the Caucasus.
- U.S. participation in international financial regulatory regimes.
- Enlisting China's influence to halt North Korean nuclear proliferation.

OPPOSITION TO:

- U.S. military involvement in an international mission in Somalia.
- Supplying arms to Georgia in light of Russia's objections.

The Foreign Policy Association has an excellent web site that we recommend.

Ruth Almeida led our interesting topic of **"Energy geopolitics: quandaries intensify"** by William Sweet from Great Decisions 2012 at the meeting on February 28th.

Access to economical, reliable energy sources will be the chief determinant of global economic and political stability for the present and the future.

After the break up of the Soviet Union in the 1990's, the newly independent states followed a policy to sustain their autonomy yet not offend their militarily dominant neighbor, Russia. This was especially important for the oil and gas rich Caspian Sea states. Azerbaijan exemplified this careful dance, placing their first pipeline through Russia and the second and third outside Russian to the nearest open sea port. Russia faced pipeline problems of its own as landlines from Russia to W. Europe were penetrated as they crossed the obstreperous Ukraine. At considerable cost they solved the problem by building underwater lines beneath the Black Sea directly to Germany. Similar underwater lines were built to Turkish ports with a future proposed to service Italy via Belarus.

Russia also has its eyes on (and its flag beneath) the Arctic Ocean. Together with the U.S., Canada and the Scandinavian members of the Arctic Council they plan for energy exploration in the Arctic Ocean as climate change and money permits. European Union members hope to join the Arctic Council.

Canada's oil(tar) sands are the newest tapped resource. Plans to build the Keystone XL pipeline from Alberta to refineries in Texas are temporarily shelved due to environmental concerns in the U.S. Canada has expanded its production from surface extraction of oil sands to deep drilling and separation of the oil below ground with hot steam. This newer method has increased production and reduced surface degradation of the environment. Carbon costs continue to mount as both heat and water are used abundantly in this process. Disposal of the contaminated drilling residue is also an issue.

Discoveries of natural gas suspended in shale rock have enthused energy developers and consumers. Unintended consequences of such drilling methods cause concerns. Pushing water, sand and chemicals down the pipe to fracture the rock and separate the suspended gas (or oil) is called hydraulic fracturing (fracking). Although productive, this method may endanger the water table making some drinking water toxic. It has also led to concerns about earthquakes in the drilling zones when such were previously rare or non-existent. For these reasons some states (e.g. New York et al) and nations (France) have banned fracking pending future safety studies.

The search for renewable energy also has met problems. Wind turbines and solar panels produce intermittent energy dependent on the weather. They are costly to produce, install and maintain. At present they are not considered commercially viable on a large scale.

(Article continued on Page 6 – 2nd column)



Children's Committee

Doreen Archer - Chair

The program presented by four members of the Brevard County Public School system on February 22, 2012 was interesting. Dr. Brian Binggeli, the Superintendent of Schools, gave a short description of the State of Our Schools and some of the legislation working its way through the Florida Legislature. Richard Dunkel, Principal of Indialantic Elementary, spoke of his experience in different schools, Pam Treadwell, Director, Exceptional Student Education Administrative Support gave us information about the McKay Scholarship and Vicki Mace, Director of School Choice, talked about charter schools.

We learned that there are currently seven charter schools in Brevard, and four more have been approved to start in August, 2012. Ms. Mace described the application process for starting a new school. The charter is an agreement that sets out the school's mission, goals, methods and financial status. Most charters are given for 3-5 years - if by that time the school has not performed, or has not been administratively competent, the charter will not be renewed. One school in Brevard lost its charter last year. Charter schools receive the same per pupil funding as public schools, unless the school is run by a religious institution.

Charters are accountable to the parents whose children attend them, the School Board, the taxpayer, and the state. And they're accountable for the right things - not whether they've filled in the right forms or ticked the right boxes, but whether they have provided a good education for their pupils.

The charter school idea in the United States was originated in 1988 by Ray Budde, a professor at the [University of Massachusetts Amherst](#) and embraced by [Albert Shanker](#), President of the [American Federation of Teachers](#), when he called for the reform of the public schools by establishing "charter schools" or "schools of choice". At the time, a few schools already existed that were not called charter schools but embodied some of their principles, such as [H-B Woodlawn](#).school, in Arlington, Virginia, which first opened its doors in 1971 with a charge to provide more educational freedom to those students who did not "fit in" at their home school. The first "charter school" opened in 1992. As originally conceived, the ideal model of a charter school was as a legally and financially autonomous [public school](#) (without tuition, religious affiliation, or selective student admissions) that would operate much like a private business - free from many state laws and district regulations, and accountable more for student outcomes rather than for processes or inputs (such as teacher

certification requirements). [Minnesota](#) was the first state to pass a charter school law in 1991. [California](#) was second, in 1992. As of 2009, 41 states and the [District of Columbia](#) had charter school laws.

Charter Schools can be run by groups of parents, teachers or community members, large charities, philanthropists, corporations or businesses and existing schools that want to become charter schools because of the flexibility it gives them.

Charter Schools have gained support from both Republicans and Democrats, but have lost support from Teacher's Unions. The waiting list of parents wanting to place their children in a charter school continues to grow throughout the country. Some schools have produced good results, but generally it is claimed that the charter schools which do succeed, do so because of motivated parents.

(Some information from [Wikipedia](#) and [Voices for America's Children](#))



Board Bytes

- 122 members
- Net profit from Roast for Sheriff Parker increased to **\$2729.14**.
- **Annual meeting will be Saturday, April 21st at Eau Gallie Yacht Club.**
- Membership letters were passed out to board members. Letters will be mailed or hand delivered to membership later in the month.
- Discussion on revising the membership flyer sent to prospective new members.
- Timely Topic for May will be **Brevard County Libraries** with Director, Catherine Schweinsberg as our speaker.
- New website is to be launched later in March.
- Research will be done on helping homeless students.
- \$50 will be given to the Brevard School Foundation in the names of the 4 speakers on our panel at the February Timely Topics.
- \$60 donation to Satellite Beach Library.
- We should be thinking about our new theme for the upcoming year. The new fiscal year for LWV Space Coast begins April 1st.

Diversity Mission Statement

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.



Local Government

Priscilla Griffith - Chair

Have you ever looked at your property tax statement when it arrives in the fall and wondered what all those special tax districts are about? Are they “another layer of government” or do they provide things not delivered by local and state government? Who has the power to create these districts? Who runs them? How are they funded? Are they time limited? Can they be dissolved? Are they accountable? If so, to whom? Did you know that there are some 50 of them in Brevard county with another one being created while you are reading this piece, so to speak.

In succeeding VOTERS, this committee plans to deal with examples of some of these districts. The first things that is important to know is that while for the most part, unincorporated areas of the county are under the direct jurisdiction of the County Commission, there are several types of special districts. Some of them are completely independent of the Commission while others are dependent. Some are multi-county while several, both independent and dependent, are restricted to a certain area of the county.

Another way to look at special districts is to see that they are local special purpose governments. Like municipalities and counties they have governing boards with policy-making powers, provide essential governmental services and facilities, and operate in a limited geographical area. Their powers are limited and specific and they can only provide specialized governmental services.



Court Stands Up for Voters, Invalidates Senate Map March 9, 2012

Tallahassee, FL -- This morning, the Florida Supreme Court gave real meaning to the new redistricting standards approved by voters and invalidated the Senate district plan passed by the Legislature. The Supreme Court gave a voice to the Florida citizens who gathered signatures, contributed their hard earned dollars and voted for the Fair Districts Amendments in November 2010, sending a clear message to Tallahassee politicians that they cannot continue the unfair practice of designing districts to favor themselves.

"From this day forward our elected officials are on notice that they cannot ignore the Constitution and abuse the public trust by drawing districts to favor

themselves," said Deirdre Macnab, president of the League of Women Voters of Florida. "The League of Women Voters of Florida has been working on redistricting reform for decades, and this is a historic day for all Florida citizens."

Peter Butzin, president of Common Cause of Florida, echoed Macnab's comments and said, "This is the first time in the history of Florida that the Supreme Court has had grounds to stop politicians from gerrymandering districts to favor themselves at the expense of the voters. In 2012, for the first time in our state, legislators will be running in districts where voters can fairly select their representatives rather than having politicians choosing their voters."

"We cannot overstate the importance of this ruling," said Jared Nordlund, national field director for the National Council of La Raza. "The Florida Supreme Court has sent a message to Florida voters that their work in passing Amendments 5 and 6 means that every vote will count equally; trying to rig districts for political gain will no longer be tolerated."

All members of the Fair Districts coalition expressed the hope that in redrawing the map, the Legislature will scrupulously adhere to the fairness rules now in the Florida Constitution.

(Governor Rick Scott called lawmakers back for a 15 day “extraordinary” session beginning on March 14th to deal with this subject.)

(The Supreme Court approved the 120 House districts that were drawn by the Legislature.)



Vote with Confidence *(continued from Page 1)* It's democracy made easy!

Where do I vote if I have been forced out of my home due to foreclosure?

The law states that you must vote in the precinct where you live on Election Day. Voters in a foreclosure situation have several options: any voter can vote early at one of several designated early voting sites in their county. There are no assigned precincts for early voting. In addition, you may request a vote-by-mail ballot by calling your local supervisor. The most practical option is to contact your supervisor and update your residential address before Election Day so that it is current and accurate. You can do this by phone. Then go to your assigned precinct for your new address on Election Day.

Update your voter status!

The League encourages Florida voters to be ready for all three elections in 2012. The League has made it easy. The League encourages voters to take action: update your voter record for address changes, name changes and updates to vote-by-mail ballot requests. Visit BeReadyToVote.org or VamosAVotar.org



Natural Resources by Maureen Rupe -

Jurassic Park Bill

There are two bills going through the Florida Legislature CS/HB 1117 and the Senate companion bill SB 1456 submitted by the Florida Association of Zoos and Aquariums. The two bills would permit any of the 16 members of this Association to hire state-owned land so they can conduct research on selected populations of ungulate and avian species. Apparently an ungulate is any animal with hooves, so this would open up conservation lands to raising things like rhinoceroses, zebras, hippos, elephants, giraffes, antelopes, gazelles, and camels, besides American animals like donkeys, cattle, goats, pigs, sheep, giraffes, moose, elk, and deer. At least it does not include big cats. Laurie MacDonald of Defenders of Wildlife called them "the Jurassic Park bill" because of what might happen if some of the beasts got loose. She believes, "It's possible these non-native wildlife species could cause damage that would be economically and environmentally costly,"

In the past few years, the legislature has pondered on how to utilize state conservation lands, ignoring why the lands were bought; for land preservation and protection for our children and children's children. We have heard suggestions of golf courses to oil wells, all to create revenue. The people have opposed them all. Now they have a proposal that will not really bring any revenue, but may be cause of expenditure. According to the bills, the State of Florida would be required to pay to put up the fences. Sam Ard, a lobbyist for the Florida Cattlemen's Association estimated that a mile of cattle fence cost \$4,000 per mile, and said fence to hold hippos or rhinoceroses would cost at least twice as much. Personally, I would be worried if the fence didn't cost a lot more than twice as much.

For 17 years, Mary Barnwell, oversaw the management of state lands for an agency known as Swiftmud, and she stated exotic animals can bring in non-native parasites and diseases. She said these animals would dislocate the native wildlife, for example bring about the collapse of gopher tortoise burrows. She also thought leasing the land for zoos would prevent how much land is available for birders, campers and hikers.

Larry Killmar, president of the Florida Association of Zoos and Aquariums and vice president of the Lowry Park Zoo in Tampa, stated it was to save the zoos money. Cheap land is required for large breeding herds of giraffes and rhinos, and importing them is very expensive. Killmar said they only want the same land

the state uses to lease to cattle farmers. They don't want our forests or swamps.

Believe it or not, the Florida House bill has passed every committee without a single person voting against it. The Senate bill was sponsored by Sen. Miguel Diaz de la Portilla, R-Miami, is fortunately still sitting in committee. I hope it stays there.

Former Southwest Florida Water Management District director E.W. "Sonny" Vergara, summed up the idea up in two words: "truly boneheaded."

Reference:

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/environment/wildlife/florida-zoos-could-be-allowed-to-breed-herds-of-giraffes-rhinos-and/1217291>



International Relations

Mary Nicolay - Chair

(Article continued from Page 3)

Electric cars and hybrids require rare earth materials (mostly from foreign sources) to create batteries for long-distance driving. Such batteries are still being developed. The cost of these cars and their driving limitations make them less competitive to improved internal combustion engines. Another hurdle is improving our out-moded electric grid to accommodate widespread plug in capability. All such research and development will require large subsidies both public and private.

Nuclear power expansion hit a brick wall with the Fukushima disaster. The lack of scientific insight into potential problems shook the industry. It undoubtedly will inhibit the pace of future nuclear investment. Safe disposal of spent nuclear fuel is still undeveloped.

Biofuels such as corn ethanol have their problems. The energy to extract, produce and distribute the ethanol make it less economically viable. Corn used for ethanol produces food problems for the U.S. and the wider world in cost and supply. Sugar cane ethanol is an easier energy source to produce and refine but has been banned for import because of the political heft of the domestic producers.

To meet some of these challenges, the Obama administration and Congress have established a new agency, The Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy. It concentrates on original research and coordinating such energy labs throughout the U.S. As Daniel Yergin says in his new book, **The Quest**, the answers to our energy problems lie in Research and Diversity. This book is highly recommended.

Ruth Almeida

Timely Topic Pictures - Charters & Vouchers in Brevard County Schools



Richard Dunkel



Vicki Mace



Dr. Brian Binggeli



Pam Treadwell



Ina Fritsch



Richard Tweed



Karen Raboin



Barbara Howell



Maria Mogollon-Seemer



Francis Clifford



Vera Walker

~Members Welcome at All Meetings~

Monday, April 2
Monday, April 9
Tuesday, April 10th

Saturday, April 21
Tuesday, April 24

Board Meeting - Suntree Library at 10:00 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 Cyber Security led by Pat Huggins and Martha Bradshaw
Annual Meeting Eau Gallie Yacht Club, Indian Harbour Beach 10 a.m.
International Relations Meeting - Satellite Beach Library 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
Topic is Indonesia led by Rhoda Bosley

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