



The Voter

The League of Women Voters of the Space Coast



Volume 31: No. 6

February, 2011

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.

February Timely Topic

With speaker, Marion Brady



“Mr. Brady has taught at every level from 6th grade through the university, been a county-level school administrator, publisher consultant, teacher educator, textbook author, contributor to professional journals, author of professional books, writer of instructional materials, visitor to schools across America and abroad, and long-time education columnist for Knight-Ridder/Tribune.”

When Wednesday, February 16, 2011

Time 11.30 a.m.

Place PALM CAFÉ at Kiwi Club
30 Tradewinds Drive
Indian Harbour Beach, FL
(Upstairs in banquet room)

Cost \$20.00

Menu Lunch will be served buffet style.
Please choose one entrée.
Chicken Marsala with shitake mushroom marsala sauce or
Crab Stuffed Tilapia Rolls with lemon-dill sauce
Classic Caesar Salad, Starch and Vegetables
Selection of Fine Cookies and Brownies

Reservations - Doreen Archer 321-622-4071 by Thursday, February 10.

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.

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**THIS SPACE FOR RENT!
WOULD YOU LIKE TO
PROMOTE YOUR BUSINESS
OR SERVICE?**

This VOTER is distributed not only to our local members, but it is sent to other Leagues, many local legislators, as well as our libraries.

If these are the kinds of people you would like to reach with your message, consider becoming one of our monthly **underwriters**.

For Information- call 321-254-7183



President's Corner

Ruth Schechter

Dear League Members,

As President of a Local League, I have received copies of most of the Voters from around the state. I read them when I can and always enjoy seeing the concerns they express have been expressed in our Voter. Lucia does a wonderful job of keeping up with us and getting our Voter in your hands!!

This month much of the state is asking: "In a state that most experts agree is slowly trending blue, why did only Republicans get elected?" In Tallahassee's Voter Lance deHaven Smith, Professor (School of Public Administration and policy at FSU) said that while there are more registered Democrats in the state that has never seemed to matter in off-year elections - the reason - the Republican Party does a better job of getting out the vote! Less than half of the registered Democrats in Broward County actually voted! I'm glad to say that was not the case in Brevard - although our voter turn out wasn't dismal, everyone needs reminding -- whichever party you vote for - you must actually vote!!

While the Manatee County League appears to be in the lead in trying to tackle the topic of Immigration, every Voter I've seen has Education and Campaign Funding as topics for programs that are upcoming.

Our Space Coast League has an active Children's Committee which is "sponsoring" our February Timely Topic meeting. Let's turn out to support them and learn from an interesting speaker. (See front page and Children's article on Page 3.)

Remember the March State Convention and Legislative Seminar and make plans to go if you can! Call me if you're even thinking about it! I'll find a way to help!

At the February Board meeting we will be getting reports from the Nominating Committee and Budget Committee as well as the program changes or additions from our committee chairs. These will all be sent to you in next month's Voter for your consideration and participation in our Space Coast League's Annual Meeting on April 9, 2011.

This is your League and every one who can is invited to participate where ever possible! If you could step up to an office or committee chair be sure to let some one on the Board of Directors know! We need *new* and *fresh looks* and *your help!*

In League,
Ruth

Save The Date!

When: Wed. March 23, 5 p.m thru Saturday, March 26, 5 p.m.

What: TWO League Events in ONE!!!! Legislative Seminar (March 23, 24) and Convention (March 25,26)

Where: Tallahassee, Florida

Who: All of YOU...the MOST important, influential and intelligent people in the state of Florida!!!

Why: Many of you look forward every year to attending our terrific Legislative Seminar and lobbying as a group during Legislative session for our issues. Many of you, ALSO, look forward to our biennial State Convention where we do the very important League work of electing new officers, passing our budget and setting program items for the coming year. We know your time and resources are valuable! We don't want you to have to choose which event you have the time and resources to attend. We want everyone to have the opportunity to do BOTH in 2011!

Highlights:

Work and Fun!!

- Welcome Dinner on the 22nd Floor of The Capitol overlooking Beautiful Tallahassee! (A very important guest speaker to be announced soon!)
- Reception in the Historic Old Capitol Senate Chambers with all newly elected officials!
- Fun and Informative Convention Surprise Dinner Friday night!(another great speaker and League activity!!)
- Optional Tours and Activities to make your time as action packed and busy as YOU want it to be!

We are pleased to announce that we will be returning to The Doubletree Hotel as our central location for these two events at a SPECIAL room rate of \$105/night. FREE Parking, FREE Breakfast and walking distance to all ACTIVITIES!!!!

Mark your calendars TODAY! If you have never attended one or both of these events, this is the year!!!

www.thefloridavoter.org/legislative_seminar.htm



Children's Committee

Marilza Novaes Card – Chair

On February 16, 2011 we will have our Timely Topics presentation on Education. Mr. Marion Brady will be our guest speaker. Mr. Brady has been teaching since 1952. He has taught grades 6 through 12, as well as at the university level. He has experience in the following roles related to education: administration, publisher consultant, textbook author, and education columnist for Knight-Ridder/Tribune.

In his book entitled "What's Worth Learning?" Marion Brady criticizes the "dysfunctional core curriculum" used in the United States. He explains how general education can be provided for less cost, without affecting staffing, and with more positive results. Mr. Brady compares the No Child Left Behind initiative to a "paint-by-numbers approach". He states that under this approach educators follow standards that dictate what they tell the students. He claims that accountability is used to measure how much the students can remember at the time they take the standardized tests.

Mr. Brady also addresses the topic of "value education" and the fact that many people consider it unacceptable to include it as part of the school curriculum. In his point of view, it is important to teach about values, not the values themselves. In order to understand historical and contemporary events, one needs to be aware of the values that shape people's attitudes. Marion Brady explains that history is typically taught in our schools by getting students to memorize dates and events that will be easily forgotten. He believes that causes and beliefs make people take actions that will lead to changes.

On the topic of student evaluations, Mr. Brady believes that tests with single right answers are not valid. He suggests small group assignments that will provide students with the opportunity to think, to expand on previous knowledge, to use imagination and creativity. He states "in everyday life, what counts isn't what you know, but what you can do with what you know".

Please bring your questions and join us on February 16th. Marion Brady will tell us how we can reduce the costs of education, challenge our students, guide them to develop intellectually, and put what they have learned into practice. It will be interesting to find out what Mr. Brady thinks about vouchers and charter schools.

In my search for recent material on education, I came across an article that looks at education from what the author refers to as an economic perspective.

The article is entitled "Education – A Bad Public Good?" by Jane S. Shaw (The Independent Review, Col. 15, n.2, Fall 2010). Jane Shaw is the president of the John William Pope Center for Higher Education Policy.

The author points out that economists look at education as a public good because not just the people who are receiving education benefit from it. She calls that "spillover benefits". It benefits a large number of people because individuals who receive education will make a positive impact in everyone's lives by becoming productive citizens and innovators. Therefore, this is a benefit even for those who do not pay for it. Ms. Shaw states that the consequence is that education becomes underprovided because many people see no need to invest in education once they are receiving some "spillover benefits" already. The author also addresses the fact that if only private education were available, the poor would not be able to get an education in order to contribute to society.

Based on the above, Ms. Shaw explains the need for the government to step in. Even though the government spends billions every year on education in this country, that by itself, doesn't guarantee that the quality and quantity is suitable. She says that many people are not motivated to monitor and control publicly supplied goods because they can't understand the direct impact of their efforts. The result, in this case, can be a poorly supplied education. She mentions that when people pay directly for services, they have an incentive to monitor these services. The author believes that public schools as well as other public agencies could benefit from competition. Her point of view is that home-schooling and organizations such as the Friedman Foundation provide some positive competition to the "monopolistic power" of public schools. The fact that there is compulsory attendance, but not much choice of which school to send children to (e.g., magnet schools are limited), makes it more difficult to monitor the quality of education.

Ms. Shaw explains that many economists believe that "federalism" is the solution because it allows competition between governments from different states. Higher education in the United States already allows for more competition than in K-12 education. Therefore, more people become active in demanding better education. Still, students and parents only pay for 35.4% of their education. Taxpayers, alumni and other donors supply the rest. The author believes that if students received less support they would "become more careful shoppers". Yet, Ms. Shaw points out that some characteristics of higher education, in contrast with the ones from K-12 education, facilitates better outcomes for higher education. *(continued on Page 6)*



Natural Resources

Maureen Rupe – Chair

Environmentally Endangered Lands Selection & Management Committee

On December 21, 2010, the Brevard County Commission reappointed the seven Selection and Management Committee (SMC) members to a two year term. The vote was 4-1 vote (Anderson opposing). The county commission voted unanimously to approve the most recent revision of the procedures that will add an ninth person to the SMC – representing either the Tourism Development Council or the Economic Development Council. The process to fill this position will be in January. Note: One other SMC member was appointed last year to a vacated seat and will be up for reappointment in 2012.

A press release by Commissioner Infantini inviting interested persons to apply for SMC positions was discussed. Seven resumes were received by the EEL Program in response to this press release (published only in the electronic version of Florida Today). Mike Knight, EEL Program Director, indicated that these resumes were received far too late to be ranked and evaluated. The majority of the board decided to proceed with the reappointment of the seven current members regardless of the late responses. Commissioner Nelson criticized Infantini's issuance of a press release that was not approved by the county commission and that did not mention the qualifications needed to serve on the SMC.

Scott appointments may unravel growth management and environmental policy

Rick Scott has appointed Billy Buzzett as secretary of the Department of Community Affairs and Herschel Vinyard Jr. to head the state Department of Environmental Protection.

Billy Buzzett is an attorney, has worked for the Legislature, was Gov. Bob Martinez's general counsel and served as executive director of the 1998 Constitution Revision Commission and an administrative law judge before going to work for St. Joe. St. Joe is a real estate company that has rapidly reshaped the Florida Panhandle as the state's second largest landowner. While at St. Joe, Buzzett spearheaded a number of controversial developments. He helped sell a plan opposed by many Gulf County residents to re-route U.S. Highway 98 away from the water in Port St. Joe so the developer could have more waterfront land for a condo project. He was also instrumental in a Panama City Airport Project. The debate over the airport built on St. Joe land outside Panama City was very heated. Environmentalists strongly opposed the Northwest

Florida Beaches International Airport, but Buzzett helped steer the project towards approval, which increased the value of nearby St. Joe property. The airport opened last year. Now, water quality samples collected by Patrice Couch of the St. Andrew Bay Resource Management Association, a Bay County environmental nonprofit, showed stormwater runoff from the site is polluting the bay and creeks.

Herschel Vinyard is more of an unknown among the environmental community. Vinyard is the former BAE Systems Southeast Shipyards director of business operations in Jacksonville. BAE is the world's second-largest defense contractor. Mr. Vinyard has a law degree and spent 10 years with a law firm, specializing in environmental and land-use issues. Vinyard does serve on a DEP panel involved in the protection of the lower St. Johns River; Eric Draper of the Florida Audubon said those who have worked with him describe Vinyard as "very sharp and easy to work with." Vinyard has also served on the local chapter of the Trust for Public Lands, an environmental group involved in the acquisition of conservation land – a key role for the state agency that he will lead.

Scott's picks to lead the DEP and DCA still face a confirmation hearing in the state Senate – although that appears a given.

League Board Member Receives Environment Award

League Board Member Priscilla Griffith received an award from the Partnership for a Sustainable Future in recognition for Priscilla's many years of support and dedication to the environment. The Partnership for a Sustainable Future is a coalition of 19 Brevard environmental and community groups.



Board Bytes

- 120 members (National members who chose not to join the local League were removed from the roster).
- Members are encouraged to attend combination Legislative and biennial State Convention March 23-26 in Tallahassee. (Details on Page 2.)
- Annual meeting will be Saturday, April, 9th. Details of location will be in March Voter.
- Carol McDonald, Vice President presented a workshop on ideas for our League to be more visible in the community and how to improve fundraising.



International Relations

Mary Nicolay - Chair

The International Relations Committee will be resuming the GREAT DECISIONS PROGRAM beginning in February. The committee meets every two weeks while covering Great Decisions material then monthly for the remainder of the League of Women Voters year.

The GREAT DECISIONS discussion program is designed to encourage discussion and debate of important global issues. A briefing book is used. We are fortunate to have Barbara Conkle, League member and Research Librarian provide additional study materials. We sincerely THANK our members who volunteer to facilitate the discussions.

League members are encouraged to attend these meetings which are held on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month, 1 pm, at the Satellite Beach Library. The following is a list of topics to be covered in the next few months.

February 8th, Karen Raboin will lead GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

February 22nd, Rhoda Bosley will lead GERMANY ASCENDANT

March 8th, Mary Nicolay will lead THE CAUCASUS

March 22nd, Ruth Almeida will lead RESPONDING TO THE FINANCIAL CRISIS

April 12th, Sue Mart will lead U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY

April 26th, EDUCATIONAL REFORM, unassigned topic

May 10th, Martha Bradshaw will lead THE HORN OF AFRICA

May 24th, Priscilla Griffith will lead SANCTIONS AND NONPROLIFERATION

We hope to see you there.



Ethics Letter

**Campaign Legal Center - Common Cause - CREW
Democracy 21 - League of Women Voters - Public
Citizen - U.S. PIRG**

December 21, 2010
House Speaker-designee John Boehner
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker-designee Boehner:

Our organizations are writing to strongly urge you to support, without any weakening changes, the gift, travel and other ethics rules adopted by the House in 2007 in response to the Jack Abramoff scandals.

We are pleased to see that, according to Roll Call (December 16, 2010),

Representative Greg Walden (R-Ore.) said on December 16 that "he doesn't 'anticipate any change' to the Office of Congressional Ethics in the 112th Congress, as members of the House GOP transition team concluded it will not issue recommendations about the future of the fledgling office."

As you know, our organizations strongly support the OCE, a critically important ethics reform from the last Congress and believe it is essential that the OCE continue in the next Congress with its authority, powers and funding fully intact.

We also strongly urge you to oppose any efforts to weaken or backtrack on any of the existing ethics rules and standards of conduct that have been adopted to protect the integrity of the House and the interests of the American people. We further urge you to seek ways to strengthen the existing ethics rules and standards in order to ensure that members of the House are held to the high ethical standards that citizens expect from the federal officeholders who exercise great power over their daily lives.

The organizations include the Campaign Legal Center, Common Cause, CREW, Democracy 21, the League of Women Voters, Public Citizen and U.S. PIRG.

The ethics rules adopted in 2007 included new restrictions on lobbyists and lobbying organizations paying for trips, gifts, meals and entertainment for Members, and ended the practice of Members paying cut-rate amounts to use corporate planes for their travel.

These rules also established pre-approval requirements for trips financed by persons other than lobbyists and lobbying organizations and timely disclosure of these trips after they occur. This is an area where the rules and oversight apparently need to be strengthened, in the wake of the Caribbean trip that was the subject of a House Ethics Committee investigation based on the recommendation of the Office of Congressional Ethics.

Another important rule adopted in 2007 prohibited House members from participating in events held at the presidential nominating conventions to "honor Members" and financed by lobbyists or by private entities that retain or employ a lobbyist.

This rule was adopted to stop the abuses that had occurred at national conventions where lavish parties paid for by lobbyists and lobbying organizations were, in essence, parties thrown by House members and financed by influence-seekers.

(continued on Page 6)



(continued from Page 3) **Children's Committee**

They are: no compulsory attendance, 24% of students go to private colleges while 11% of K-12 students go to private schools, students pay more of their costs related to their college education than K-12 students, there is more of a choice of where to attend college than where to attend K-12 grades. Higher education has a more diverse market, prices vary, and entrepreneurs provide information about their universities.

The article discusses education as a public good. It acknowledges that some parents are too poor or not able to provide education for their children in grades K-12 without help from government schools. The same would be true of higher education students who may not be able to graduate from college without government involvement. Nevertheless, the author believes that K-12 education would improve with more competition from charter schools as well as from more vouchers and home-schooling. She also believes that if more students and parents become "avid demanders" the quality of higher education will also improve.

The article above is just a little bit of "food for thought" and it doesn't mean that the LWV and my committee endorse this point of view. The LWVUS is a member of the National Coalition for Public Education, which opposes vouchers. The LWVUS's 1974-76 program addresses equality and quality as inseparable. The fact there the LWVUS doesn't have a common League definition of quality education has allowed local and state Leagues to conduct studies related to vouchers and quality education. Some oppose private school vouchers and others are in favor (www.lwv.org). The LWVF opposes school vouchers because there is already shortage of tax monies for public education and it could also cause re-segregation; thereby affecting both the quality and equality of education in Florida. Furthermore, private schools do not follow the same guidelines as public schools, are not accountable for student achievement and are not required to hire certified teachers (www.lwvfla.org). The LWVF believes that legislative changes are needed to "improve accountability, and clarify funding, teacher certification and transportation issues" at charter schools.

(<http://www.lwvmiamidade.org/PDF/LWVF%20Study%20and%20Action%202007-2009.pdf>)



(continued from Page 5) **Ethics Letter**

In December 2007, the House Ethics Committee issued a guidance to House members that opened gaping loopholes in this rule. In a letter sent on

December 18, 2007 to the Ethics Committee, reform groups stated:

The Committee's guidance, issued on December 11, 2007, provides a clear roadmap for Members and lobbyists on how to circumvent and ignore the new rule at the party conventions next year. The door is opened wide by the Committee for lobbyists and lobbying organizations to continue their past practices at conventions of sponsoring and paying for lavish parties to "honor" Members - abusive practices that led to the adoption of the new rule.

With the presidential nominating conventions coming in 2012, we urge you to provide the leadership necessary to overturn this unjustifiable guidance and restore the "convention parties" rule to its original meaning.

In conclusion, we urge you to take all steps necessary to preserve and, where necessary, strengthen the House ethics rules and standards of conduct that exist to protect the interests of the American people in an honest and ethical House of Representatives.

Campaign Legal Center League of Women Voters
Common Cause Public Citizen
CREW U.S. PIRG
Democracy 21

Below is information about the other organizations that joined with League of Women Voters in sending the ethics letter.

The **Campaign Legal Center** is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization which works in the areas of campaign finance and elections, political communication and ... www.campaignlegalcenter.org/

Common Cause is a nonpartisan, nonprofit advocacy organization www.commoncause.org/

(**CREW**) Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to promoting ethics and accountability in government and public life by targeting government officials -- regardless of party affiliation -- who sacrifice the common good to special interests. **CREW** advances its mission using a combination of research, litigation and media outreach. www.citizensforethics.org

Democracy 21 is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to making democracy work for all Americans. We work to eliminate the influence of big money ... www.democracy21.org/

Public Citizen serves as the people's voice in the nation's capital. www.citizen.org

U.S. PIRG is an advocate for the public interest.. www.uspirg.org

Photos from December Holiday Luncheon



Priscilla Griffith & Susan Little



Sue and Bob Mart



Ruth & David Schechter



Richard Tweed, Iris Cultra & Barbara Howell



Brigitta Hawkins & Vera Walker



David & Marilza Novaes Card & Doreen Archer

Calendar for February 2011

~Members Welcome at All Meetings~

Thursday, February 3,

Board Meeting - Home of Connie Hogerty - Rockledge - 10 a.m.

Tuesday, February 8,

International Relations Meeting - Satellite Beach Library 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Topic is Global Governance led by Karen Raboin

Monday, February 14

Children's Committee - Suntree Library at 1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, February 16

Timely Topics at Palm Café - 11:30 a.m.

Speaker is Mr. Marion Brady - Topic is Education

Tuesday, February 22,

International Relations Meeting - Satellite Beach Library 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Topic is Germany Ascendant led by Rhoda Bosley

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