



# The Voter

## The League of Women Voters of the Space Coast



**Volume 32: No. 6**

**February, 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.

**~Panel Discussion~**

**~Charters and Vouchers in Brevard County Schools~  
on Wednesday, February 22, 2012**

Members of the panel to discuss  
School Choice are:

- Dr. Brian Binggeli, Superintendent of Schools
- Ms. Vicki Mace, Director of School Choice
- Ms. Pam Treadwell, Director ESE (Exceptional Student Education) Administrative Support
- Mr. Richard Dunkel, Principal Indialantic Elementary School



Dr. Brian Binggeli

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**When:** Wednesday, February 22, 2012

**Where:** Tuscany Grill in Suntree  
7640 N. Wickham Road  
Melbourne, FL

**Time:** 11:30 a.m.

**Menu:** Scampi ala Tuscany - Fresh jumbo shrimp sautéed with garlic, diced tomatoes, and scallions, in a chardonnay- lemon sauce, served over angel hair pasta.

Chicken Marsala Portabella - Tender chicken sautéed with portabella mushrooms in a Marsala wine and light cream sauce, served over angel hair pasta.

Eggplant Rollatini - Thin sliced battered eggplant stuffed with a garlic ricotta blend, baked and topped with mozzarella, and served over spaghetti and marinara.

All entrees served with house salad and Italian Bread with Pesto Dipping Oil.  
Price includes one non alcoholic drink.

**Cost:** \$20.00

**Reservations:** Doreen Archer at 321-622-4071  
By Sunday, February 19, 2012

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**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.



## President's Corner

### Barbara Whitley

Welcome to the winter in Florida.

Don't you just love it? If you missed the environmental ride we enjoyed in December, we missed you. It was a bright, sunny day and perfect for a cool ride on the lagoon. Don't miss our next adventures. They are informative and fun.

Now, back to my thoughts on changes. My thoughts go back to all the changes I have seen in my life. I was a Girl Scout and I volunteered as a Cherry Aide in a nursing home as a teenager. I realized that the people there were either very old or terribly demented. Not like today's nursing home.

After I married and moved to Florida I volunteered through my church delivering food to the needy. The food was provided through the Federal Agricultural Program and brought to our church once a month for distribution. The church people supplemented this food during the month through a food pantry. This was canned goods that we collected from church members and others who could help. I had five people that I delivered food to monthly. The church often tried to help them with other things. Eventually, this was phased out by the food stamp program and guidelines for eligibility were established.

The game began.

As you are aware Food Stamp fraud has become wide spread and the misuse of food stamps is well documented. There are now new guidelines for food stamps but they are difficult to enforce and the gamers have become more competent

Many years later I became involved with Hospice. Then it was a total volunteer organization. It was run by dedicated volunteer nurses who spent hours and many times their own money helping the terminally ill. This was an organization that was run by many people with big hearts. Then Medicare decided this was a good program and so they started funding this program. The money started coming in and Hospice was paid a set fee per day for each client they had in their care if they were on Medicare. So Hospice has now become both a "For profit" and "Not for profit" program. By that I mean some Hospices are now making a profit.

And so the game begins.

In my mail today came a request. "Please, join in the fight as Congress is submitting a budget that reflects a 15% cut in Hospice funding".

Now the game really begins.

I often think I have lived too long. When I had personal contact with those I helped I could ask the hard questions. We had a trust, a shared goal. Now we are a lazy society. We don't know what is really going to

help. We appear to take care of ourselves first, like starting programs that spend more in administration cost then for services. We haven't learned that money doesn't buy respect, pride, hopefulness or resolve. When will we ever learn?

Yours In League ,

Keep on Asking those hard question  
Even if it is hard to get answers !

Barb



## Board Bytes

- 118 members
- Doreen Archer is filling in as chairman of the Children's Committee since Marilza Novaes Card moved to South Korea.
- Plans are being formulated for a program in March about the Brevard Health department.
- Strategic Planning session for goals and priorities is planned for later in January.
- Treasurer, Brigitte Sinton has been asked to work on the State Budget Committee.
- Space Coast budget committee will meet to form budget for year starting in April 2012.



## Welcome to New Members

### Blaise Trettis

### Anita Smith - returning member

Please add these 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 Space Coast League of Women Voters 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.



## Children's Committee

Article by Margarite Orban

### NAEYC ANNUAL CONFERENCE

NAEYC held their annual conference November 2-5, 2011 in Orlando at the Convention Center. NAEYC is the National Organization for the Education of Children. It is a world wide organization with affiliate branches in each state and an office in Washington, DC. The annual conference is the largest gathering of thought leaders, classroom teachers and faculty, administrators, researchers and other critically important practitioners and contributors in early childhood education. Florida's state organization is FLAEYC and has an office in Tampa. Florida has about 3600 members and affiliates in 15 different counties. Marguerite Orban is the Financial Officer for the statewide organization and attended the Conference. You can get more information on the conference, training and advocacy goals from the website [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org). There were about 250,000 people attending. Marguerite had an opportunity to talk with members from Japan, England and Germany.

### Voter Service



Ayn Marie Samuelson – Chair

### League of Women Voters and Other Groups Ask Federal Court to Block Florida Voter Registration Restrictions

Attorneys for the League of Women Voters of Florida, Rock the Vote, and the Florida Public Interest Research Group Education Fund (PIRG) filed suit in federal court in Tallahassee challenging Florida's new restrictions on community-based voter registration drives. The civic groups asked the court to block Florida's new restrictions on the basis that they violate both the U.S. Constitution and the National Voter Registration Act.

The restrictions challenged in the suit were enacted by Florida legislators earlier in 2011 as part of H.B. 1355, a broad package of election law changes. They include extremely burdensome administrative requirements, unreasonably tight deadlines for submission of completed forms and heavy penalties for even the slightest delay or mistake. These restrictions have forced the League of Women Voters, among other groups, to shut down their voter registration programs in Florida.

Deirdre Macnab, President of the League of Women Voters of Florida explained: "For over 72 years League volunteers have faithfully and successfully helped to register eligible Florida voters."

The new law is regarded by many voter registration groups as an attempt to regulate voter registration drives out of existence by burying such efforts in red tape and threatening volunteer-based organizations with massive fines. The Brennan Center and the League of Women Voters also filed lawsuits against Florida's two prior laws restricting community-based voter registration. "This law represents Florida legislators third attempt in six years to drown voter registration groups in regulation" said Lee Rowland, counsel for the Brennan Center's Democracy Program.

The lawsuit argues that Florida's law forces League of Women Voters of Florida, Rock the Vote, and Florida PIRG to scale back or eliminate their voter registration efforts – even as voter registration rates have continued to decline in Florida. According to today's court filing, the League of Women Voters of Florida, Rock the Vote, and Florida PIRG argue that Florida's restrictions violate the U.S. Constitution or federal law in three main ways:

- (1) they violate Plaintiffs' constitutionally protected rights of speech and association;
- (2) they fail to give individuals and groups fair notice of how to comply with its confusing and unclear mandates;
- (3) they violate the National Voter Registration Act – a federal law designed in part to encourage community-based voter registration activity.



### Florida 2012 Legislative Session

The 2012 Legislative Session started on January 10<sup>th</sup>. The session started in January rather than March to re-draw Florida's political boundaries. The Legislature must come to agreement on 27 congressional and 160 legislative districts. It is not only redistricting as there are many bills to follow. It is unknown if they will complete their work in the 60 day time frame as there are many issues to resolve. The Children's Committee is following educational bills that apply to children.

Two websites to follow are <http://www.leg.state.fl.us> and <http://www.thefloridavoter.org>, Florida's first Capitol Report for the 2012 legislative session, which includes a session forecast, a wrap-up of this fall's pre-session committee weeks, the League's priority issues and ways to get involved. LWVF Governmental Consultant Ben Wilcox will be filing a Capitol Report every Friday during session, so stay tuned for more League updates from Tallahassee in January!



## International Relations

### Mary Nicolay – Chair

The International Relations Committee again presents GREAT DECISIONS. The Great Decisions program was started in 1954 and is designed to encourage discussion and debate of the important global challenges of our time. The format of this international discussion program is intended to promote thoughtful discourse, to bring people together to express their ideas and opinions, and to learn from others, culminating in the opinion balloting process.

**The group will meet at the Satellite Beach Library February 14th, at 1p.m.. Lucia Watson will facilitate the discussion on MEXICO.** Sharing borders with Central America and the U.S. has created a pathway through the country for goods, crime, contraband and people. How can Mexico address these transborder challenges? What is the future of Mexico's relations with its northern and southern neighbors? How will its foreign relations affect its domestic politics?

**February 28th at the Satellite Beach Library, 1 p.m., the topic will be ENERGY GEOPOLITICS. Ruth Almeida will lead the discussion on energy markets shaken by the instability of the middle East oil markets and the vulnerability of nuclear power.** We will consider developing countries like China as large energy consumers and Russia as an energy producer with resulting widening influence. In this changed landscape, how will the U.S.'s energy needs affect its relations with other nations?

Please join us for these interesting topics.

### Summary Analysis of Digital Learning

CS/CS/HB 7197 passed the House on May 2, 2011 and subsequently passed the Senate on May 4, 2011. The bill was approved by the Governor on June 2, 2011, chapter 2011-137, Laws of Florida, and became effective July 1, 2011. The bill increases the availability of digital learning options by:

- Authorizing virtual charter schools to provide full-time online instruction to eligible kindergarten through grade 12 students in the district in which the student resides;
- Requiring high school students entering grade 9 in the 2011-2012 school year to complete at least one online course within the 24 credit requirement for high school graduation;
- Authorizing charter schools to offer blended learning courses to full-time students of the charter school. The online instruction must be provided from the physical location of the charter school.

- Authorizing Florida Virtual School (FLVS) to provide full-time instruction to students in kindergarten through grade 12, and part-time instruction to students in grades 4-5; part-time courses for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students are limited to public school students taking grade 6-8 courses for acceleration purposes;
- Expanding the options available to school district virtual instruction programs by:
  - Requiring school districts to provide opportunities and provider options for virtual instruction;
  - Authorizing full-time K-12, part-time 9-12 and full or part-time instruction for dropout prevention, academic intervention, and Department of Juvenile Justice courses;
  - Authorizing school districts to operate/create their own virtual instruction programs;
  - Modifying eligibility criteria for participation in virtual instruction programs to allow kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade eligibility without prior year public school enrollment;
- Revising requirement for issuance of adjunct teaching certificates by school districts to encourage the use of experienced individuals to provide online instruction in Florida;
- Authorizing students to take an online course offered by a school district other than their district of residence, provided that the total FTE reported by both school districts does not exceed one;
- Requiring the Department of Education to issue a report identifying and explaining the best methods and strategies for increasing student access to digital learning.

### January Program

Dr. Tauhida Parveen, Adjunct Professor at Florida Tech was our January speaker. She spoke to us about online teaching pros and cons at the college level. She said there have been advances in technology so there is more interaction between the instructor and student for on line courses. However, face to face is often needed for the teacher to see that the student truly understands the subject matter. There are software programs that help the instructor identify possible cheating but not all issues in this area are resolved. Technology has brought many changes that are good but Virtual Schools should not replace schools where students are interacting with their instructors in the same room.





## Natural Resources

by

Maureen Rupe –

### Who Owns Florida Water?

Over the holidays I read an article in the Orlando Sentinel on Water Rights in Florida. Apparently the battles are becoming more frequent and heated as clean, available water becomes harder to come by.

There are two sides to the argument. One argument is based on the Florida Constitution. When Florida became a state in 1845, it acquired ownership of all land lying beneath non-tidally influenced (i.e. fresh) navigable water bodies, which included both lakes and rivers. That includes water in the Florida Aquifers that sprawls under the majority of the state. The argument is that they can sell a permit that gives a temporary and revocable right to the water, based on their conditions.

The other argument states the utilities and landowners bought the water and/or the land, so they have the right to sell it to anyone they like, at whatever price they like. They sell it through meters and once you have it, you can do what you want to with it, as long as you follow regulations.

Just this last fall, former Gov. Bob Graham launched a group called the Florida Conservation Coalition, to stop the "privatizing" of Florida's water supply. Graham believes Gov. Rick Scott and lawmakers are trying to substantially weaken state-watchdog agencies to give utilities greater control over our water resources. As an example, House Bill 639 plans to eliminate much of the state oversight on treated reclaimed water, which is increasingly considered a valuable type of water. The state wants the reduced oversight to encourage investors in recycling greater amounts of treated sewage.

House Bill 639 removes reclaimed water from the current definition of "waters in the state", and changes the definition of treated wastewater/reclaimed water so the water management districts no longer have approval authority. For the first time in Florida's history, a part of the state's waters will be called private, to be distributed to whomever the owner wants and under whatever conditions decided by the water's owner. If the bill passes, all you would have to do is run water through a waste treatment facility and you could then sell the water to the highest bidder. From a local standpoint, this change does bring questions to mind. For example, does this mean the injection wells planned by Cocoa Beach and Rockledge would no longer be under approval authority from the state?

From a public ownership of land submerged under Florida Waters, Senate Bill 1362 changes the definition of the high water mark such that millions of acres of

currently owned state submerged lands, wetlands, etc., would suddenly move from public to private ownership, which would have major environmental implications.

In 1995, I wrote a guest column in Florida Today on this issue, and spoke before the Titusville City Council opposing the privatization of water. At that time I was representing the Space Coast League of Women Voters, as the Natural Resource Chair. The League of Women Voters of the United States is opposed to the privatization of water.

We must be assured of fair access to water, regardless of income, and protection of the environment. Unlike renewable resources like trees, we cannot produce more water. Privatization I believe, would place profit making above the need to expand clean and affordable water. Water is a commodity that must be owned by the people to ensure equal access for all.



### **Summary of Ecological Tour of Cocoa Beach Thousand Islands**

Weather was very pleasant for our ecological tour on December 14<sup>th</sup> of the Cocoa Beach Thousand Islands. Our tour guide pointed out that there really are not 1,000 islands there.

There was a large turnout for the tour so two boats were needed. Unfortunately it was not a day to see the manatees or dolphins. Our tour guide said that the dolphins go where the fish are located and evidently fish were not close to our boats the day of the tour. However, many interesting birds were seen including pelicans, blue herons, ospreys, cormorants, vultures, and anhingas, often known as snake fish.

"The Thousand Islands are a flood tide delta deposit, formed in the past by a breach in the barrier island by a strong storm surge. Propelled by a powerful hurricane, the ocean pushed its way through the barrier islands centuries ago and formed the Thousand Islands. This natural occurrence created a maze of narrow trails & canals through the natural mangrove islands and hidden hammocks."

The Banana River is a lagoon. The water is brackish with 70% salt water and the fresh water mostly made up of rain water. The boat stays within the designated channel as outside the channel the depth may be only 18 inches deep. In this area are the sea grasses.

The area is known to have 4300 species.



Message from Deirdre Macnab - President

It's been another difficult year for many who call Florida home. But as our state and nation prepare to close the books on 2011, there are reasons to be optimistic that 2012 will be a better year for us all.

Here are a few of mine:

1. An Invigorated League of Women Voters of Florida: With nearly 10,000 supporters and 30 Leagues, a diverse and resourceful state board, smart young office staff, and some of the strongest local leadership we've had in years, LWVF is on a roll! Our work is in the news daily throughout Florida, and we're even getting national exposure via media outlets such as CNN, MSNBC, the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, and the Washington Post.

2. Fairer Representation: After a 72 year campaign to cure Florida's gerrymandering cancer, LWVF demonstrated the power of speaking with one voice. This summer, League volunteers throughout the state stood up and gave their input on the importance of moving up the redistricting timeline and providing the public with legislatively-drawn maps to review. Since then, the Florida Legislature has moved up the timeline and the drafts have been released. Our organization's dynamic work in this area, as well as our strong coalition partnerships, will help ensure fairer districts - and fairer representation - in our state next year.

3. Florida's Voter Suppression Law is Now in Court: After the passage of one of the worst voter suppression laws our state has seen in recent memory, LWVF worked with our partners at the Brennan Center for Justice to challenge the law in court. We are currently fighting this law through two lawsuits, one in Washington D.C and one in Tallahassee, and are looking to secure an injunction that will block implementation and allow us to resume our voter registration activities in 2012.

4. Broad and Diverse Membership: Like all membership organizations, the League must continue to expand our base of support and bring in new energy to supplement our long term members. Our League University program, designed to help students and young professionals develop important civic leadership skills, will be expanded in 2012. Additionally, our success in

mounting trips across the state and Cuba have enabled us to engage a new part-time employee in the state office to meet the growing demand. LWVF is seeing a larger, more diverse, and younger membership.

5. A More Engaged Florida: Our diverse membership continues to hone hard-hitting programs and forums, successfully advocating for ethics reform in Jacksonville and Palm Beach, and SunRail in Central Florida. Our Education Fund plans to distribute one million printed Special Edition Voter Guides across Florida in 2012, and our Speakers Bureau is gearing up to explain the pros and cons of the numerous ballot initiatives to Florida voters. Finally, LWVF's first-of-its-kind "Be Ready to Vote" campaign will help voters avoid chaos and confusion on Election Day, by connecting them with their local Supervisor of Elections now to check/update their voter status.

The League's work gives true meaning to Margaret Mead's phrase: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." We have an important job to do next year -- getting Florida's eleven million plus voters informed, engaged and ready for a fair election. Will you help?

Get involved, join the League, friend us on Facebook, or sign up for a trip!

Best wishes for a wonderful New Year, and thank you for believing in the importance of an educated and empowered electorate.

In League,  
Deirdre Macnab



## Florida Election Dates for 2012

**Presidential Preference Primary - Tuesday, January 31**

**Primary - Tuesday, August 14<sup>th</sup>**

**General Election - Tuesday, November 6<sup>th</sup>**

Photos of Board Members at work



Doreen Archer - Legislative Action and Hospitality



Marilynn Collins - 1st Vice President and Publicity



Connie Hogerty Membership Chair



Barbara Whitley - President



Susan Little - Secretary



Brigitte Sinton - Treasurer



Barbara Jagrowski - Finance

Calendar for February 2012

~Members Welcome at All Meetings~

Monday, February 6

Board meeting at Suntree Library at 10:00 a.m.

Monday, February 13

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

Tuesday, February 14

International Relations Committee meeting - Satellite Beach Library 1.p.m. to 3 p.m. Subject is "Mexico" led by Lucia Watson

Wednesday, February 22

Timely Topics at Tuscany Grill - 11:30 a.m. Panel Discussion of Charters and Vouchers in Brevard County Schools

Tuesday, February 28

International Relations Committee meeting - Satellite Beach Library 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Subject is "Energy Geopolitics" led by Ruth Almeida

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