



# The Voter

The League of Women Voters  
of the Space Coast  
www.lwv-spacecoast.org



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January 2014

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.

**~Two Upcoming Events~**

Consensus Meeting - January 4, 2014

Women of Action with Deirdre Macnab - February 7, 2014

Consensus Meeting at Home of Maria Mogollon Seemer on Saturday, January 4<sup>th</sup> at 1 p.m. See Page 3.

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We are pleased to announce that **Deirdre Macnab, LWVF President** will be the keynote speaker at our **Women of Action luncheon on Friday, February 7<sup>th</sup> at the Suntime Country Club at 1 Country Club Drive, Melbourne, FL 32940**

We will be honoring:

**Mary Eason, Joan Borders and Polly Cordell** for introducing Rolling Readers to Brevard County.

**Maureen Rupe** for her environmental activity as President of the Partnership for a Sustainable Future and her many other community activities.

**Alberta Wilson** for her civic engagement with Central Brevard NAACP and she is Chair of the Space Coast Chapter of the National Congress of Black Women.

These Women of Action (except Mary Eason) are members of our League.

**Menu:**

**Chicken Mushroom Crepes**

**Seafood Stuffed Sole**

**London Broil**

**Pasta Primavera**

The meal will include a salad, bread, drink, entrée and warm cookies.

Cost: \$30.00

Reservations: Please call Doreen Archer at 321-622-4071 by Saturday, February 1<sup>st</sup>.

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**Answers to Health Quiz found on Page 2**

1. False (Medicaid was created in 1965), 2. True, 3. True, 4. False (3,420,845 are currently covered), 5. True, 6. False (51 billion to be administered over 10 years), 7. True, 8. False (120,000 new jobs), 9. True, 10. True.

**Underwriters are needed for The Voter. Please call Doreen Archer at 321-622-4071 for more information.**



## President's Corner

Marilynn Collins & Priscilla Griffith

Dear League Members,

For those of you who attended our Holiday Party at the Black Tulip, it was great to see you. We had a good turnout and there was no shortage of stimulating conversation.. I would like to thank everyone who brought items for Brevard's homeless students. For those of you who could not make the party, I hope you can join us at one of our upcoming events for 2014.

First on the calendar is our Consensus Meeting on Charter Schools to be held at 1 P.M. on Saturday, January 4th at the home of Maria Mogollon-Seemer, Chair of the Children's Committee. The committee has been studying the Charter Schools in Brevard County for several months. This is part of a statewide study in which 21 other local leagues are also participating. Please read Maria's article on page 3 to learn more about the study and the consensus process. If you would like to participate in the Consensus Meeting, please RSVP to me by phone, 773-8490 or email, marilynn.collins@gmail.com by January 2nd.

Have you marked your calendar for February 7th? That is when the League of Women Voters of the Space Coast will honor five local "Women of Action" at a special luncheon to be held at the Suntree Country Club. Our cover page gives all the details. Keynote Speaker will be our very own dynamic leader, Deirdre Macnab, President of the League of Women Voters of Florida and the Orlando Sentinel's 2012 Citizen of the Year. We are thrilled that she is able to take the time out of her very busy schedule to help us honor these ladies of achievement. RSVP by February 1st to Doreen Archer.

We are pleased to announce that Connie Dobrin has accepted the position of Co-Chair of our Health Committee with Jo Shim. The Health Committee has been active in reaching out to the community to educate citizens on the need for the expansion of Medicaid in Florida.

On page 5, please check out Voter Service Co-Chairs Tony and Barbara Dutton's report regarding the recent controversial directive from Florida Secretary of State Ken Detzner on absentee ballots. Updates on Florida's water issues can be found in Maureen Rupe's article on page 6.

Our active committees are always looking for new members. Consider sharing your time and talent to do the League's work of educating, advocating on issues and being a force for democracy.

In League,

Marilynn



## Health Care Committee

Jo Shim & Connie Dobrin Co-Chairs

### Test your knowledge of the Affordable Care (ACA) Act by taking the Medicaid Expansion Quiz

True or False:

1. The Medicaid program was created in 1967 to provide health care to those under the age of 65 who had no other means of affording health coverage.
  2. Medicaid is a jointly funded state and federal program that is administered by the states.
  3. In 2012 the Supreme Court made rulings on the Individual Mandate and Medicaid Expansion sections of the Affordable Care Act.
  4. Currently 1 million Floridians are covered by Medicaid.
  5. Medicaid expansion through the Affordable Care Act will extend services to an additional 1.2 million Floridians.
  6. By opting not to expand Medicaid, Florida turned down 51 billion in federal funds to be awarded over 5 years.
  7. The League of Women Voters of Florida supports Senator Negron's plan to accept the federal funds and manage the program through the "Florida Healthy Kids Program". This proposal would allow those who qualify to purchase private insurance plans.
  8. The University of Florida estimated that 50,000 new jobs would be created by implementing Medicaid expansion.
  9. Economic benefits of Medicaid expansion in Florida include:
    - Job creation
    - Relief for hospitals due to less admissions to emergency rooms
    - 100% federal funding for Medicaid Expansion for the first 3 years
    - Health insurance benefits for employees in Florida's tourism, agriculture and hospitality industries who may not qualify through the health care marketplaces
  10. The LWV of the Space Coast Health Care committee meets at 6 p.m. at the Suntree Library on the third Monday of each month.
- Thank you for participating – **Answers to the quiz can be found on Page 1, Second Column.**

If you are interested in health issues please consider joining the Health Care Committee. New committee members are always welcome.



## Children's Committee Maria Mogollon-Seemer – Chair

### Charter School Consensus Meeting

We have scheduled our consensus meeting on the local Charter School Study for January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 PM at the home of Maria Mogollon-Seemer, located at 515 Rockledge Drive, Rockledge FL 32955. RSVPs are very much appreciated so that we may know how to plan seating arrangements. Marilyn Collins will be taking reservations by phone 321-773-8490 or e-mail at [marilynn.collins@gmail.com](mailto:marilynn.collins@gmail.com)

Why have a consensus meeting? We have been participating along with 18 other leagues representing 26 counties in a Florida Charter School Study. The League of Women Voters of Florida (LWVF) will be collecting the consensus from all these local leagues, and deciding whether as a State league (after Board approval) we develop a position statement.

Initially presented at Convention in April of 2013, and spearheaded by the Alachua County local league, the primary goal of the study is to raise public awareness on the way charter schools are managed and what some of the problems are. At the heart of the consensus statements developed by the LWVF is the basic issue of whether or not charter schools are a part of a “uniform system of education” or a separate system. Consensus results will be incorporated into the next issue of Study in Action and the basis for the LWVF to decide how to support/or not, a lawsuit that has been filed by The Southern Legal Council to that effect, which will go to trial in the 2014/2015 time frame; and other legislation related to school choice.

Study and Consensus began right after Convention. Studies are part of the League Program and to quote LWVUS, “Program is the League’s reason for being.” A Program has three parts:

1. Selection of an issue,
2. Study of the issue, consensus, and formulating a position,
3. Use of the position to influence public policy.

Following is a list of the consensus statements we must address. Although we may have very explicit thoughts on charter schools, these are the ONLY statements we will be addressing at the meeting, and ONLY as they relate to BREVARD County. Our committee has worked very hard in trying to compile some information as to possible PROs/CONs of each statement to help you think ahead as to how you stand on each of the issues addressed in the consensus statements.

Some background on Charter Schools:

Charter schools in Florida started in 1996 and currently have about 200,000 students in almost 600

schools, or close to 10% of the total student population. Brevard County has 10 charter schools in 13 locations with 3773 students.

Charter schools are public schools, which operate under a performance contract, or a “charter” which frees them from many regulations created for traditional public schools while holding them accountable for academic and financial results.

They receive State of Florida taxpayer money but it is not money allocated to the Brevard County School District. The charter school receives operating funds from the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) based on the number of full-time (FTE) students enrolled. So in other words they are publicly funded but privately managed.

Charter schools are open to all students residing within the district; however, charter schools are allowed to target students within specific age groups or grade levels, students considered at-risk of dropping out or failing, students wishing to enroll in a charter school-in-the-workplace or charter school-in-a-municipality, students residing within a reasonable distance of the school, students who meet reasonable academic, artistic or other eligibility standards established by the charter school, or students matriculating from one charter school to another.

Individuals, parents, teachers or a group of people may apply for a charter to our district school board. If the charter is granted, the school becomes a 501(c)(3) non-profit and is managed by a board. The charter school board may decide to hire a management company to manage the school, and set their own operating policies and procedures. These companies may be non or for profit companies. They can hire teachers, determine salaries and lease or buy land and buildings.

Not all rules that traditional public schools must abide by are mandated for charter schools such as class size requirements, however they must comply with all applicable state and local health, safety, and civil rights requirements.

All teachers MUST be certified and vetted, although principals and other administrators do not have to be certified.

Charter schools DO take the FCAT.

In Florida the State of Florida Department of Education publishes student achievement results based on FCAT scores between traditional and charter schools. The latest data available for the 2011-12 school year shows in 96 different comparisons. The percentage of students making learning gains was higher in charter schools in 83 of the 96 comparisons. The percentage of students making learning gains was higher in traditional public schools (*continued on Page 4*)

(continued from Page 3) in 6 of the 96 comparisons, and there was no difference in the percentage of students making learning gains in 7 of the 96 comparisons.

On a national level, CREDO, a research unit at Stanford University that supports charter "reform," found that only about one in five charter schools had better test scores than comparable public schools and more than twice as many had lower ones. Earlier this year, CREDO released an updated study that looked at charters in 27 states, and little had changed. As the National Education Policy Center explained, "The bottom line appears to be that, once again, it has been found that, in aggregate, charter schools are basically indistinguishable from traditional public schools in terms of their impact on academic test performance."

**Consensus Statements**

You can also find a chart on our website, [www.lwv-spacecoast.org](http://www.lwv-spacecoast.org) with these statements that you can use in preparing for our meeting on January 4, 2014.

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS STATEWIDE STUDY ON CHARTER SCHOOLS CONSENSUS STATEMENTS**

Florida's constitution provides for a uniform, high quality school system as the paramount duty of the state. The purpose and management of charter schools are subject to study and debate. A lawsuit has been filed in Florida that alleges that the current educational system is neither uniform nor high quality. The League supports the Florida constitution. Discuss these statements and reach consensus on whether or not they will improve charter school management and make Florida's educational system more closely aligned with the Florida constitution.

**For each statement, respond: Consensus reached:**  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

**Comment:**

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**Purpose of Charter Schools**

1. Districts must identify unmet student and community educational needs as part of their strategic plans and submit priorities for alternative and/or charter schools to the Florida Department of Education.
2. Only charter schools that offer identifiable innovative teaching/learning methods or meet specific unmet needs should be authorized.

**Management**

1. Traditional public and charter schools procedures must allow flexible schedules and curricula.
2. Charter and traditional schools may have flexibility in salary and benefit compensation packages, but they must adhere to a minimum and maximum salary range that reflects district salary guidelines.
3. A charter school governing board must have a minimum of one local representative, not the

administrator, who resides in the community and is answerable to the school parents and community.

4. Charter school admissions and dismissal policies and procedures should be supervised by district staff to ensure they conform to state guidelines.
5. Those charter schools that educate students requiring ESE services must hire appropriately certified full or part time instructors before applying for additional funding for the services.

**Transparency and Accountability**

1. All public schools, including charter schools, must report teacher and student retention.
2. The charter school audit template must be adequate for comparison and analysis and identify facilities ownership and management contractors.
3. Teachers and administrators, including principals, must meet certifications and qualifications at the same level as all other public school instructors and administrators.
4. All schools, even small ones, receiving state funds must report state assessment test scores, and receive some indicator of student achievement levels.

**Conflict of Interest**

1. Administrators and board members of all public schools, including charters, must not supervise or determine compensation for family members.
2. Members of charter school governing boards must **not** have financial interests in the charter school.
3. Legislators serving on education or appropriation committees must recuse themselves on votes related to charter school finance if they have financial interests in charter schools.

**Facilities and Funding**

1. As a recipient of public education funds, charter schools should be required to meet the same procurement requirements as other public institutions, including competitive bids for leasing, acquisition of sites and purchasing of supplies, equipment and facilities. The records should meet all public records laws for full disclosure.
2. Charter schools that acquire their facility using public funds must assure that the facility reverts to public ownership at the termination of the charter. If a facility is subject to a mortgage to be paid using public funds, the mortgage must disclose and protect the public's interest in the facility.
3. A conversion of an existing public school to a charter should only be authorized by the local governing school board retaining full public ownership of the facility and assets associated with the school.
4. A charter schools may be housed in a religious institution in order to broaden the availability of facilities for use by charter schools so long as secular identity is maintained and the student body reflects broad racial/ethnic and economic diversity.



## Voter Service

### Barbara & Tony Dutton – Co-Chairs

#### RETURN OF MAIL/ABSENTEE BALLOTS

For a number of years some of Florida's more urban counties, including Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas in the Tampa Bay area, have provided to voters the option of dropping-off their mail/absentee ballots prior to election day at certain locations other than the offices of their county Supervisors of Elections ("SOEs"). The other option for voters is to mail or deliver their mail/absentee ballots to their SOE's office in time for them to be received no later than 7:00 PM on election day. These drop-off sites have been government offices or public libraries fitted with locked, sealed ballot boxes supervised by deputized SOE workers. Though, in Broward County, voters may submit their completed mail/absentee ballots to an elections office staffer who drives its "Election Connection" van to various announced spots. Broward's SOE calls the van an office on wheels that is equipped, like her office, for most election functions. In each case all petitions deposited at the drop-off sites have been transported nightly to the SOE office for tabulation.

The practice has been viewed as a secure method of making voting more convenient for voters, especially those living a considerable distance from an SOE office. So far as we know, no one has ever complained about the drop-off practice. Brevard County, which has four elections offices, does not provide remote drop-off locations, instead instructing mail/absentee voters that their ballots "can be returned to any [SOE] branch office by that time [7:00 PM on election day]."

Several weeks ago, apparently without notice to the election officials affected, the Florida Secretary of State, Ken Detzner, threw the remote drop-off practice into confusion by issuing a Memorandum to all Florida's 67 SOEs directing them to, "never solicit the delivery of absentee ballots to any locations other than the supervisors' offices." In his Memorandum, or "Directive", Mr. Detzner asserted that, "A supervisor of elections cannot accept delivery of a marked absentee ballot anywhere than in his or her office without violating the requirement that supervisors 'shall safely keep in his or her office any envelopes received containing marked ballots of absent electors'...." The Secretary of State's office has defended the new Directive, saying that it will help "to provide uniformity for the statewide implementation of elections."

Almost immediately several SOEs challenged the Directive, calling it, among other things, "a solution to a problem that didn't exist" and "ridiculous". In an editorial the Tampa Bay Times asserted that the Florida

SOEs "should refuse to make it harder to cast absentee ballots and continue to provide reasonable dropoff sites." The Tampa Tribune wondered why the supervisors "are being told to eliminate a practice that makes it easier to vote", and Florida Today criticized the Secretary of State, "for making voting a hassle for thousands while doing nothing to make it more secure."

Our own LWVF President, Deirdre Macnab, said, "It would seem poor timing for Gov. Scott to squash the vote on the eve of an election year, but it's hard to draw any different conclusion." She added that the state order, "unjustifiably interferes with absentee voting." Some, including U.S. Senator Bill Nelson, expressed concern that the new rule is an attempt at voter suppression and is meant to influence the March 11, 2014 special election for the District 13 U.S. House of Representatives seat (formerly held by the late C.W. Bill young) representing most of Pinellas County. It was noted by the Tampa Tribune that Pinellas voters cast 105,000 absentee ballots in 2012, more than any other county in the state.

At the time of this writing, we cannot predict how this issue will be resolved. But its coming on top of the Secretary of State's recent efforts to purge the voter rolls and the recent 2011 efforts of the Florida Legislature to infringe on voters' rights, suggests that we must all remain vigilant.

~Welcome to our New Members~

**Teresa Barrett**

**Lilly Kohler**

**Jane Wilson**

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 to libraries and other community locations. They are found on line at our web site, [www.lwv-spacecoast.org](http://www.lwv-spacecoast.org)

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.



## Natural Resources

**Susan Little – Chair**

### Report from Maureen Rupe–Natural Resources Consultant.

#### Florida Legislature Planned Environmental Spending

Not unexpected, the Florida Legislature has a very mixed bag when it comes to environmental spending, and not sure what will be left after the Legislature is done, and especially after vetoes by Governor Scott.

For the Florida Forever Program who received \$300 million per year between 1990 and 2008, this year is \$20 million, and the bill prioritizes purchases for buffering military bases. There was also language to give another \$50 million if they found enough surplus land to sell. The amount of surplus land available that was not needed for conservation came up to a lot less.

Beach restoration, which can be argued is more of a tourism/land value issue than for environmental spending was allotted \$26.7 million in new spending and \$10.6 million left over from the previous year's budget.

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) petroleum contamination site cleanup program was giving a whopping \$125 million, which sounds great until you find out that the state receives \$200 million from a tax from oil imports that is supposed to be used for this type of clean up. I wonder what the legislature has planned for those funds? Even there, the state has written in language to hold back \$75 million until the Florida DEP submits a plan to the Legislative Budget Commission on how it plans to implement program laws. There's also proviso language that has the site cleanup contractors worried, as it seems to be written to appear there might be no cleanup funding available after June 30. Good news are Senate Bills requiring competitive bidding and requiring statements under oath by site owners that they aren't receiving kickbacks from contractors. A little surprised, as I would assume both of these would have been required by state law anyway.

The 2008 Florida Legislature gave \$10.1 million to a DEP Dry-Cleaning Solvent Cleanup Program, but the Legislature reduced it to \$4 million for the following 3 years, then \$5.5 million in 2013/2014. Again a low number given the state collected \$6.9 million for this cleanup, and \$3 million less per year for the 3 years past. Florida DEP is asking for \$6 million, a million less than revenue. Still wondering what the state does with these funds that were collected for specific programs. At what point would it start looking like a slush fund?

For water, the Legislature allotted \$70 million (including \$32 million in water cleanup projects), and \$10 million for springs clean up. The Florida FDEP combined the recurring \$10 million amount with almost \$27 million from their department, local governments and water districts, to be spent just for spring water quality issues. From quotes of various Senators in the article, the Legislature probably plans to spend a large amount on springs. I assume everyone is starting to wake up to the fact that our water is not only important to our

health, but also to our economy, tourism, and our quality of life overall.

On a final note, the Select Committee on Indian River Lagoon and Lake Okeechobee Basin recommended the state spend \$220 million in projects, which unfortunately pushes \$160 million of that spending into FY2014-2015. It didn't breakdown how much would be allocated for the Indian River Lagoon, but unfortunately probably not much. Besides, that is a committee recommendation, not what will actually be allocated by the time the Legislature slims the numbers, and the Governor finishes with his axe.

#### Reference:

Lobby Tools, Environmental Appropriations, 11/27/2013, Email received by County from Lobbyist Guy Spearman



## International Relations

**Mary Nicolay – Chair**

The International Relations Group will meet Tuesday, January 14th from 1 P.M. to 3 P.M. at the Satellite Beach Library. There will be an open discussion of current events and an overview of the coming Great Decisions program. Please come ready to take part in a lively meeting of people interested in global issues.

The nonpartisan, not for profit Foreign Policy Association each year takes an Opinion Ballot which allows participants to express their views on topics covered in the Great Decisions program. The ballot results are sent to the White House, the departments of State and Defense, members of Congress, the media and concerned citizens. This past year almost 20,000 ballots were returned. The largest number of ballots come from Florida with California, New York, Colorado and Arizona following. The ballots cast demonstrated:

#### SUPPORT FOR:

- \* Scrutinizing European banks that operate in the U.S.
- \* Continuing aid to Egypt to stabilize the country in the face of great instability and to continue U.S. influence in the country and region.
- \* Prioritizing human rights in Myanmar over free and fair elections and economic development.
- \* Choosing diplomatic dialogue over military action and sanctions when dealing with Iranian nuclear problem.
- \* NATO focusing on keeping Afghanistan from becoming a sanctuary for terrorists.

#### OPPOSITION TO:

- \* Instituting banking regulations to discourage U.S. financial institutions from investing in Europe.
- \* Cutting aid to Egypt due to economic hardship and/or because Egypt was slow to criticize those who carried out the attack on the U.S. embassy in Cairo.
- \* Justifying a U.S. led intervention in Syria under the doctrine of responsibility to protect (R2P)
- \* U.S. military cooperating with Israel to carry out a military strike on Iran.
- \* The belief that sanctions have prevented Iran from building a nuclear weapon.

## The Pros and Cons of Charter Schools

Article by Doreen Archer

Many are the opinions about the merits or faults of Charter Schools. All over the country, the topic is being debated. Are the corporations that run charters destroying the public school system? Should education be profit-making?

In Brevard County, there are now ten charter schools, six of which operate under the auspices of four different organizations. Two of these organizations are for-profit management companies. None are headquartered in Brevard.

Let's look at some of the pros and cons. Much of this information is gleaned from different websites and conversations with principals and those directors responsible for the authorization and oversight of charter schools for the Brevard County School District.

Probably the most compelling argument in favor is the choice for parents, who may feel that the public school is not meeting their child's needs, and that the curriculum and teaching methods offered at the charter might be more (or less) challenging. This choice may result in parents being more involved in the school.

Competition may be another plus. Charter schools must work to maintain academic standards, student retention and good financial management, and may even be a catalyst for the improvement of the public schools. In Brevard County, one new charter school has alleviated an excess enrollment at two public schools.

Another plus is the ability of a small charter school to be innovative. In Brevard, there is one in which some instruction is given in Mandarin, and another which follows a Montessori curriculum. Provided the school offers the necessary core curriculum, the classroom may be very different from a public school classroom. Teachers can be very creative in their methods of educating and student learning can be quite individualized.

Parent choice, however, may create less diversity. Charter schools usually have a target group of students, and could be racially or economically segregated. This could lead to an unfair situation for other children. Although the charter is required to be open to all students, if the curriculum is one that a parent would like for the child, to be enrolled may present a problem for those who need transportation or special education.

In Brevard County, the charter schools receive the same per pupil funding as the public schools. To many critics, this "taking money from public schools" is not acceptable, especially when the fiscal management of the charter school is inefficient. In Brevard County, one charter is under surveillance for debts incurred that cannot be repaid. For-profit companies usually spend less on instruction than public schools, have lower teacher compensation and do not always provide transportation. Charters mostly do not offer high school grades, in which extracurricular and elective classes are more costly.

Charter schools run by private individuals and or corporations are not obligated to be as transparent and, although they may have appointed Boards of Directors, these are not elected by the general public, which means that dissatisfied parents have no control, and cannot vote to change the make up of the board.

A study done by Stanford University found that on average, charter schools perform about the same or worse compared to public schools. Although there are some excellent charter schools, they may not be fulfilling the expectations of those who started them.

### ~January Calendar - Members welcome at all meetings~

Saturday, January 4<sup>th</sup> Consensus Meeting - All members invited to home of Maria Mogollon-Seemer at 1 P.M.

Wednesday, January 8<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting at Suntree Library - 10:15 A.M.

Sunday, January 12<sup>th</sup> ,- Children's Committee Meeting at Home of Doreen Archer at 2 P.M.

Tuesday, January 14<sup>th</sup>- International Relations Committee meeting at Satellite Beach Library 1 P.M. to 3 P.M.

Monday, January 20<sup>th</sup> , - Health Committee Meeting at Suntree Library - 6 P.M.

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