



The Voter

The League of Women Voters of the Space Coast



Volume 31: No. 7

March, 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.

Annual Meeting – Saturday, April 9th

EAU GALLIE YACHT CLUB

10.00 A.M

HOLD THE DATE AND NOTE THE TIME

Lunch will be served at noon after the meeting.

COST \$20.00

Choice of

CHICKEN ROMANO

or

GRILLED MAHI WITH FRUIT SALSA

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

or

VEGETARIAN PLATE

Strawberry Shortcake

Rolls, coffee, tea

Reservations no later than April 5, 2011

to Doreen Archer 622-4071

State of the County

In late 2010, Howard Tipton, Brevard County manager, addressed LEAD BREVARD about the state of Brevard County. His speech was shared with League recently and we will report to you on major points over the next 2 issues of the VOTER.

On business. Harris Corp. plans no reductions in its 6500 employees in Brevard and will be making infrastructure investments to its existing campuses.

Embraer, Brazilian jet manufacturer, announced a \$1 billion agreement with Netjets for at least 50 of the Phenom aircraft that will undergo final assembly in Melbourne. Embraer will open its facility in 2011.

Port Canaveral is looking to expand both cargo and cruise activities. Currently they account for 13,000 direct and indirect jobs and they are looking to increase that by more than 3,000 by the end of 2012.

Tourism measures are holding their own, with the important RevPar line (revenue per available room) showing a strong increase over last year and occupancy up about 4%. In spite of the BP oil spill last summer, the only oil reported on our beaches turned out to be *Hawaiian Tropic*. You may not be aware but some of the tourism dollars are invested in beach renourishment. Economists estimate that for every dollar spent on beach renourishment we receive 9 dollars back. Since 2000, Brevard has spent cumulatively \$97 million to renourish 30 miles of beach for an ROI of more than \$800 million.

The Tourist Development Office (TDO) is working to secure a new Visitor's Center on I-95 just south of the Scottsmoor exit and it should be open sometime this year.

The Board of County Commissioners started 4 years ago to reduce its employee base. General county government, excluding public safety, is down 415 positions or 15% from 2006. The overall budget decreased by \$75 million and is down \$217 million since the budget peak in 2008. *(continued on Page 7)*

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President's Corner

Ruth Schechter

Dear League Members,
 "Governor Scott has sent a clear message to the voters of Florida - that he knows better than they do what they want for Amendments 5 and 6 and he is in no rush to implement their mandates!"

This is from Deirdre Macnab, President of the State League. Amendments 5 & 6 passed in this state with a good 62% solid support. Then Governor Crist started the judicial review process toward implementation as he should have. Last week Governor Scott had Kurt Browning send a letter to the Department of Justice recalling the start of the formal review process.

The House Speaker has resisted appointing members to the redistricting committee and opted to join the lawsuit contesting the amendments.

I see this effort as the same kind of destructive delays that have been put on education reform in the past - they figure they'll get at least one more important election done before they have to follow rules!! This is certainly not "Statesmanly" behavior.

The State League has joined with the NAACP and Democracy Ahora and other coalition partners to bring suit to force the Governor's office to refile the Amendments for implementation. We'll keep you posted.

Our big State event - a combination of Legislative seminar with Convention -- is happening in Tallahassee on March 23rd -26th. We need to have a big group to go and talk with these legislators. They need to be made to understand that the Fair Districts Amendments create exactly as billed "fair" districts - this is not a personal attack on any political party!! The League has been working on this for 30 years!!! We have attacked whoever was in control to change it - thus far no one has, and this group of politicians don't want to either! The difference is that now the people of the State have weighed in and it is a State Constitutional Amendment!!!!

If you'd like to join us in Tallahassee give me a call. State was even talking about a bus up each coast.

In League,
 Ruth

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.

Voter Service



Ayn Marie Samuelson - Chair

By the time you receive this report, the CONTACT will be published and ready for distribution. Thank you to: David and Ruth Schechter, Barbara Jagrowski, David and Brigitte Sinton and Ayn Samuelson for updating the various elected offices - from national right on down to our most local levels of elected officials.

This edition is the 2011-2012 CONTACT, which has been revised and redesigned somewhat to give it a more comprehensive edition with more information than previously. We need volunteers to help distribute the finished product to libraries, cities and other locations throughout the county. A few individuals have volunteered, and I look forward to your commitment to this project that provides the local League with recognition, as well as serves a larger community service. Ayn Samuelson, Voter Service Chair
 aynsamuelson@cfl.rr.com.



International Relations

Mary Nicolay - Chair

The International Relations Committee, Great Decisions Group wishes to again thank Barbara Conkle, Research Librarian at the Satellite Beach Library, for her assistance with topics. Barbara will be leading the group discussion on HAITI in September. Please visit the wonderful display she develops on each GREAT DECISION TOPIC and consider joining BARBARA'S BOOK CHATS monthly at the library.

This year the first article in the GD booklets is on HOW U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IS MADE and mentions the LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS as part of what they refer to as the ATTENTIVE PUBLIC or those having an 'ELITE OPINION ON FOREIGN POLICY". Social scientists tend to classify the public into three groups: the public at large or mass opinion, the attentive public and organized interest groups. By studying issues and sending opinion ballots to the Foreign Policy Association which are then shared with policy makers we affect change.

Of interest are the following statistics; 62% percent of the Great Decisions participants are women. Florida has the largest number of participants. They are generally well traveled, multilingual and 50% have advanced formal education. They, on average, spend 1-2 hours studying each topic, have access to the internet and are open to changing their opinion after studying an issue. An interesting group wouldn't you agree? We hope to have you join us at our next meeting.



Children's Committee

Marilza Novaes Card – Chair

I wonder how many of our members are familiar with the LWV Florida's Study and Action 2009-2011 guide to public policy positions. The positions taken by local, state and national League of Women Voters are based on formal studies that they have performed. Below is a summary of some of the studies conducted by the League of Women Voters of Florida:

Education has been a topic of importance to the LWVF since it was organized in 1939. In 1947 the League conducted its first formal study by reviewing and supporting the recommendations made by the Florida Citizens Committee appointed by Governor Millard F. Caldwell. The committee's program, called the Minimum Foundation Program, proposed to the Legislature to replace small school districts by countrywide ones. The state was to pay for funds to supplement the tax support supplied by the districts. The LWVF, in the following decade, became very active in advocating for funds to improve education.

The following is a list of the studies on education that the LWVF has conducted since 1958:

1958-1962 – Second Education in Florida study. It addressed the quality of education as well as school structure and organization. The LWVF supported: the appointment of a school superintendent by the School Board; statutory requirements for the district superintendent of schools; a non-salaried School Board; and the abolishment of the office of school trustee. The League also supported a free public school system.

1968-1971 – Third Education in Florida study. This study looked at the financial, structural and organizational issues related to education in our state. It supported: the state as the main source of funds for education; the state to fund all its required programs; local school districts to tax themselves to deal with funds shortage; the establishment of the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) to replace the MFP; the state Board of Education to be appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate or Legislature; district wide non-partisan election of School Board members; and consolidation of small school districts.

1970 – Fourth Education in Florida study. As a result of this study, the LWVF supported: a five-year plan based on teacher's salaries and student achievement; student progression standards from the Department of Education for all local school districts in Florida; state mandated competency test as a graduation requirement; and the Dropout Prevention Act to help disruptive students to succeed.

1987-1989 – Fifth Educational study. This study addressed teachers' remuneration and competency. The League supported: further funding for education; raising sales tax to five cents with a percentage for education; constitutional amendment to use gross receipts utility taxes for additional education facilities; and higher teacher certification standards; allowing teachers to participate in determining their schools' goals and policies; national certification for teachers.

1991-1995 – Education Reform and Accountability study. The League monitored the Florida Commission on Education Reform and Accountability that was created to implement the Blueprint 2000 proposal from the Department of Education. The LWVF supported most of its broad goals but had no position on the change of decision-making from the Legislature to local schools. Following the lead of the LWVUS, in 1994, the LWVF opposed vouchers to private schools due to concern that vouchers would further reduce the limited budget for the public schools, affecting equality education and desegregation.

1995-1996 – School-based Management study. After this study was completed, the LWVF concluded that Schools Advisory Councils (SACs) should be the ones making decisions at local schools instead of leaving the responsibility to the state or district. The SACs should make student performance their top priority, but also provide input concerning school budget, personnel and instructional programs. The principal should make the final decision. The Legislature should keep the best interests of the students in mind by passing public education policy that guarantees adequate and equitable funding, requires accountability from schools and allows local schools to have flexibility. The LWVF believes that the role of the School Board and the administration is to provide leadership and support to school-site councils at the same time that they allow them to be part of the decision-making process.

1996-1997 – Public School Choice study. This study was performed to determine if public school choice affects student achievement and student welfare. The LWVF concluded that parents should be able to choose schools that match the needs of their children and take local conditions into consideration.

1997-1999 – Two studies were conducted during this period of time. The School District Size study assessed whether the Florida Constitution should be amended to allow more than one school district per county. The Leagues in Florida did not reach an agreement. The District wide Election of School Board Members study was restudied in 1997 because some delegates at the 1997 Convention argued that the situation had changed since the district wide election position was first adopted. There was no consensus at the end of the study. (continued on Page 6 – 2nd column)



Natural Resources

Maureen Rupe – Chair

53 Florida State Parks and Six Aquatic Preserves to Close?

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) proposes closure of 53 state parks if the department is ordered to reduce its budget by 15%. Not only would 53 parks be closed to reduce budget cost, but they want 3 parks to be returned to their previous owners. **1. Egmont Key** (Located at the mouth of Tampa Bay, southwest of Fort DeSoto Beach, accessible by private boat only. It has Light House and Mellon Battery Ruins from Spanish American War), **2. Three Rivers** (Located along 2 ½ miles of Lake Seminole shoreline, just south of the southwest corner of Georgia), and **3. Forest Capital** (13-acre Northeast Florida park south of Perry contains a museum and 1866 Cracker Homestead). Three Rivers, the only park of the three without historical significance, has a modern log cabin (1 bedroom with a queen bed and 2 smaller beds in the loft), boat ramps and full facility campground with 30 campsites. Surprisingly, the previous owners of Three Rivers is the U.S. Corp of Engineers.

The list of parks at risk of closure includes several archaeological sites, significant Civil War historical sites, important botanical sites, and one of the largest preserves in Florida. All were chosen due to their low attendance. Unfortunately, the Florida House is not willing to remove these park cuts from the table. In addition, suggestions in the House included selling the park lands and putting them back on the county tax rolls, making cash-strapped local governments manage them, and closing the parks except on weekends.

There's too many things that could allow this to happen with the state's budget deficit of \$3 to \$5 Billion depending upon the amount of corporate income tax reductions. When our government is looking for any way to chip away at state spending, closing or getting rid of these parks will save \$5.7 million. The governor and the legislature seems to be looking at any way to save on spending. It is time to ask questions of our state government, specific questions on why they are going along with such a drastic step with public property:

1. Exactly how will this help the economy
2. Will the Parks and any historical buildings/areas still be maintained?
3. How many jobs will be made redundant?
4. Why are they giving public property back to former owners?
5. Will this practice lead to the sale of our state parks?

Visitors to Florida are increasingly seeking nature-based tourism, to the tune of 20.7 million visitors to Florida State Parks in 2007, which brought an estimated

billion dollars to Florida's economy. With a sour economy, the family needs a cheap place to take the family. Where better to go than your local state park? Although tourism is down in most sectors, visits to parks and campgrounds are up, according to reports given at the December 2008 VISIT FLORIDA board meeting. Unfortunately, many of the parks at risk are in rural parts of Florida, where they help stimulate the local economy. We should not be closing specific parks "because they don't make money", a dangerous precedent. Public lands is stewardship for the common good. We should not set one park against another in a competition for income.

Florida State Parks:

<http://www.floridastateparks.org>

Egmont Key:

<http://www.floridastateparks.org/egmontkey/default.cfm>

Three Rivers:

<http://www.floridastateparks.org/threerivers/default.cfm>

Forest Capital:

<http://www.floridastateparks.org/forestcapital/default.cfm>



Please add this information to your membership book.

~We Welcome New Members~

Kathy Wall

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Evelyn W. Blow

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New Address for Bonnie Orban & Robert Bickley
14204 60th Avenue W
Edmonds, Washington 98026

Program of Work for 2011-2012

Local Government

1. Observe county commission meetings.
2. Research current powers of the Clerk of Courts and his execution of those powers.
3. Research the fiscal practices of the county with respect to
 - a. a citizen advisory board to make fiscal recommendations.
 - b. a periodic review of special tax districts.

Natural Resources

1. Monitor and act on desalination in Brevard.
2. Oppose the elimination of the Endangered Species Act.
3. Support adding Scrub Jays to the Endangered Species list.
4. Monitor and act on the protection of the Indian River Lagoon System, all surface waters and the St. John's River.
5. Monitor My Region.org "How Shall We Grow" and the Century Commission.
6. Monitor Climate Change Issues.
7. Monitor and act on offshore drilling issues in Florida.

Social Policy/Children's Issues Program

1. Continue to take action on any current position relating to children's issues, including education.
2. Network with other local groups and organizations in an effort to make a bigger impact on children's well-being.
3. Monitor and take action on the use of vouchers in the Brevard public school system.

**Nominating Committee Report
Slate for 2011-2012**

- President - Barbara Whitley**
- First Vice-President - Marilyn Collins**
- Secretary - Susan Little**
- Director - Doreen Archer**
- Director - Lucia Watson**

Proposed Nominating Committee for 2012

- Sue Mart - Chairman**
- Martha Bradshaw**
- Ann Downing**

(These three members would serve with two members elected from the Board of Directors)

(Thanks to Karen Raboin, Chair of the committee and the Committee)

(Children's Committee Report continued from Page 3)

Note: in 1998 a Florida Constitutional amendment made the state responsible for providing adequate funds for a free public school system that is "efficient, safe, secure, and high quality".

1999-2001 - Charter Schools. The LWVF Convention decided that the League should monitor charter schools in our state due to the fast growth of charter schools in Florida since 1996. The study covered legislation, the financial and organizational structure, how it would affect the public school budget, evaluation of the program and accountability. The study found out that charter schools affect the district finances. Five percent of the budget is used for administration and some times exceeds that amount. It was concluded that legislative changes need to be made in the areas of accountability, better understanding of funding, teacher certification and transportation.

2003-2007 - Single Vs. Multiple Pupil Progression Tests. The LWVF did not reach consensus after this study. In 2005, at the Convention, the League adopted another study and readopted it at the Convention 2007. The LWVF opposed the new version of the Social Studies Student Progression legislation because it did not address the original intent of the bill. In 2005, the Constitutional Accountability Commission (CAC), with the LWVF's president as one of its members, conducted a study required by the 1998 education clause in the Florida Constitution. The CAC recommended the establishment of ten performance and four funding criteria by which the state's education system can be compared to other states. This standard has not been adopted by the Legislature.

If you are interested in additional information on any of the LWVF public policy positions, you can find the complete Study and Action guide 2009-2011 at the Website http://www.lwvfla.org/pdf_files/Study%20&%20Action%20Book%202009-2011.pdf



Environmental Award to Priscilla Griffith

Priscilla received an award from **Partners for a Sustainable Future, Inc.** for her lifetime dedication and commitment to the environment. She was a co-founder of the partnership formed for networking problems and support on environmental issues. Today there are 17 groups plus individuals that make up the Partnership. Due to Priscilla's foresight and vision, there is strength in unity. Priscilla has also been a major supporter of the EEL program from 1990 and served for many years on the EEL Policy and Procedure Committee. Priscilla has been an example for many, and looked upon as a great teacher of the Natural World.

(State of the County Article continued from Page 1)

Like a business, one of the things we are looking to do is focus our energies and resources for better outcomes. One of the adjustments to ensure fiscal integrity will be defeasing \$23 million in bonds that we can no longer afford to carry. Brevard will not build it if we cannot pay for it and maintain it. The government center bonds will be paid off in 2011 and our Utility and Stadium Bonds in 2013. The County's efforts have resulted in positive market ratings and stable outlook from both Fitch and Moody's rating services.

As a business, Brevard needs to invest in expanding our markets. In addition to the TDO, the County also is a major contributor to the Economic Development Commission, which is the County's marketing and development unit. The EDC brought to the Board an investment opportunity with a photovoltaic collaborative effort with Sematech, UCF and Palm Bay.

While development has slowed, the County's planning efforts have ramped up. In 2010 alone, over 23,000 acres have been planned to adhere to today's most innovative approaches to designing livable and sustainable communities in the future. The concept of Green Printing has been adopted as the future roadmap for growth in District 1. Green Printing identifies the green infrastructure first and ensures that regionally significant wildlife corridors remain interconnected before development occurs. Through collaborative partnerships we should be setting up our community for future success.

Next month we will report on Quality of Life issues.



Small Ads for Voter

Through the years we have had financial sponsors for our Voter who have been acknowledged on the front page of our Voters as "Underwriter of the Month" listing their names and logos. We continue to welcome new Underwriters of the Month. It was suggested at the February board meeting that an article should be written for the Voter to see if there would be interest for a business or organization to have small ads placed in the Voter that would give exposure to their businesses and would provide income for the League. Our Voters are mailed to all members, political offices throughout the county, and distributed to the 17 libraries. The Voters are also found on the League's website at

www.lwv-spacecoast.org. For more information on purchasing a small ad in our Voter call 321-254-7183.



Space Coast Community Law School is a FREE community service sponsored by the

Florida Bar Foundation, Brevard Bar Foundation and local Judges and Attorneys. Topics for March are March 3- **U.S. Constitution, Articles** - Judge Silverman, March 10th - **Contract Law** - Lisa Hogreve, March 17th - **Bankruptcy** - Roy Praver and March 24th - **Consumer Law** - James Torres. The seminars are held on Thursday evenings from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Government Center at 2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way Bldg. C, Viera, FL.

For registration please call: 321-269-6833 or e-mail communitylawschool@yahoo.com. Seating is limited.

Calendar for March 2011

~Members Welcome at All Meetings~

Thursday, March 3,	Board Meeting - Home of Carol McDonald - Titusville - 10 a.m.
Tuesday, March 8,	International Relations Meeting - Satellite Beach Library 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Topic is The Caucasus led by Mary Nicolay
Monday, March 14	Children's Committee - Suntree Library at 1:30 p.m.
Tuesday, March 22,	International Relations Meeting - Satellite Beach Library 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Topic is Banks, Governments and Debt Crises led by Ruth Almeida
Wednesday March 23 to Saturday March 26	- Legislative Seminar and League State Convention in Tallahassee

Voter: Monthly publication (except June, July, August)

Issue Date: March 2011

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