



# The Voter

LWV of The Villages/Tri County Area ♦ Sept 2007 ♦ Vol. 2 Issue 3

**Officers**

**Joanne M. Coen**  
President  
750-1366

**Helen Gozdanovic**  
Vice President/  
Program  
259-7812

**Linda Thomas**  
Vice President/  
Membership  
750-0907

**Thelma Kuperberg**  
Treasurer  
245-4030

**Judie Brown**  
Secretary  
259-6228

**Directors**  
**Gladys Corbin**  
**Sylvia Jones**  
**Carolyn Johnson**  
**Frances Spedding**

Well, school is back in session, and with that comes the start of the League year. September also finds the Florida Legislature holding a special session on the budget and budget cuts. As we all know, there will be an amendment on the ballot during the January 29 presidential primary election. Voters will be asked to change the homestead exemption which affects their property taxes. The LWV Florida, at their July Board Meeting, voted not to support this amendment. Please see the comments from Terry Coble, 2<sup>nd</sup> VP, LWVF Board, further in this issue.

We will be starting off the League year with our first meeting, **Monday, Sept. 24**, at the Marion County Sheriff's Office, Buena Vista Blvd & CR 42, The Villages, with a **"Hot Topics"** luncheon. Our meeting will revolve around the LWVUS Immigration Study which is presently underway. Several Members of our Unit have been involved in this study. Carolyn Johnson is in charge of this meeting. See Carolyn's notice further in this issue. Feel free to bring a friend.

On **Tuesday, Oct. 2**, we will be cosponsoring, with the LWV of Lake County, the Social Action Committee of Temple Shalom and the United Church of Christ, a panel discussion on the subject of immigration. Speakers will include a farm labor contractor, an immigration attorney as well as representatives from the Citizenship & Immigration Service.

The Villages Greens group will be holding an environmental expo on **Saturday, Oct. 13**, and we will be there with information about the League. If you can volunteer time, please let us know.

If you received your Dues Renewal Notice over the summer and renewed your membership, thank you. If not, please reconsider and do so. There is much going on and your participation and involvement are both appreciated and needed! Let's make this an active League year!

**Joanne**

# Calendar

## September

- Tues., Sept. 11 10:00 a.m. Board Meeting at the home of Joanne M. Coen
- Thurs., Sept. 13, 6:00 p.m. LWV Lake County Guest Speaker: Bob McKee, Lake County Tax Collector
- Mon., Sept. 24, 10:00 a.m. General Meeting at Marion County Sheriff's Office

## October

- Tues., Oct. 2, 7:00-9:00 p.m. Immigration Forum, Temple Shalom, CR 101, Oxford
- Tues., Oct. 9, 10:00 a.m. Board Meeting at the home of Joanne M. Coen
- Sat., Oct. 13, 10:00-4:00 p.m. Environmental Expo, Lake Miona Rec. Ctr.
- Mon., Oct. 22 General Meeting, TBA

## !!HOT TOPICS LUNCH!!



We will have our first **Hot Topics Lunch** on **Monday, September 24<sup>th</sup>**, at **10:00 a.m.**, at the **Marion County Sheriff's office**. We are asking that all attendees chip in \$5 to cover the cost.

**!!Hot Topics!!** lunches have been adopted by many Leagues across the country as an excellent method of the learning about issues and networking over a nice meal. Bring your friends!

We will be discussing issues related to the **LWVUS Immigration Study**. The presenters will be those of you who attend. The discussion will be lead by immigration study committee members.

In what should be a surprise to no one, immigration turns out to be a very complex topic. Therefore we are asking you to do a little homework by way of preparation

Clip those articles you see in the newspapers and magazines that seem to appear almost every day. Choose an issue of particular interest to you and be prepared to bring up questions and options related to your immigration issue.

On October 2<sup>nd</sup>, our League, along with the LWV of Lake County, Temple Shalom and the United Church of Christ, is presenting a forum on immigration. The **Hot Topics** lunch will help us prepare for the forum and for some great questions for the panel.

Background information in the form of several white papers, as well as several other resources, are available at the LWVUS website. Just go to [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org) and click on the link which is on the bottom left side of the opening page. Also please refer to your "National Voters." Let's make this a successful first Hot Topics Luncheon!

Please contact **Carolyn Johnson** at [cgljohnson@comcast.net](mailto:cgljohnson@comcast.net) to let her know if you will be attending.

### Mission Statement

The League is a nonpartisan organization. We do not support candidates. We promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government and act on selected issues.

## Complexities of Immigration

On **Tuesday, Oct. 2, 7:00 p.m.** our League, in conjunction with LWV of Lake County, the Social Action Committee of Temple Shalom and the United Church of Christ, will be cosponsoring a panel discussion on the topic of immigration. This forum will be held at **Temple Shalom, on CR 101, 1.9 miles north of CR466.**

Our panelists will be: **Susan A. Dugas, Acting Field Office Director and Therese A. Frye, Supervisory District Adjudication Officer from the United States Citizenship & Immigration Service; Julian Sanchez, Farm Labor Contractor and Deborah Townsend, Immigration Attorney.**

We all agree that our immigration laws need work and there are so many aspects to this important issue. Our panelists will be addressing this topic from different perspectives and it is our hope that we all come away with a better understanding of this complex issue.

## News from the LWV of Lake County

On **Thursday, Sept. 13,** the LWV of Lake County will have as their guest speaker, **Bob McKee, Lake County Tax Collector.** Mr. McKee was appointed by Gov. Christ to serve on the Florida Taxation and Reform Commission, and he will share his insights about the new and old tax policies of Florida.

This Commission, made up of 25 private citizens, will examine our tax and spend laws and, if it deems necessary, make recommendations for change. It can offer recommendations to the Legislature, but it also has the rare ability of being able to take its proposals directly to the voters in the form of proposed constitutional amendments.

Eleven members of the panel have been appointed by the Governor and seven

appointed by the Senate President and House Speaker. No appointee is a member of the Legislature. However, four legislators are serving as additional non-voting Commission members. Two are Democrats and two, Republicans. The Chair is selected by the membership of the Commission.

Public hearings around the state are scheduled to get underway soon. There will be a hearing in Orlando on Oct. 9. A two-thirds vote of the membership is required for the Commission to propose a revision to the Constitution.

The Constitution says the Commission must file any proposed constitutional revisions no later than one hundred eighty days prior to the general election in the second year following the year in which the Commission is established. However, since the Commission is established in 2007, and there are only general elections in even-numbered years, there is no general election "in the second year following the year in which the Commission is established." That was the language from the original amendment that established the Commission in 1990. However, the amendment was changed in 1998 to adopt a different timetable and established the Commission in 2007. The language about the "second year" was not changed. This creates some confusion, but it may mean the voters will have to consider the Commission's proposals in November 2008.

The dinner is being held at the **Venetian Gardens Community Center, 109 E. Dixie Ave., Leesburg. Registration begins at 5:30 p.m. and dinner will be served at 6:00 p.m. Mr. McKee will speak at 7:00 p.m. The cost is \$15.00.** If you are interested in going, please contact Joanne Coen, [joannejon@aol.com](mailto:joannejon@aol.com). We can arrange carpools. The deadline for Reservations is Sept. 7.

**Remember, dues renewal notices come from Tallahassee!**

**When you receive your notice, please renew your membership.**

**Thank you.**

# Villages Greens Environmental Expo

Our League will be hosting a table at the **Environmental Expo** to be held on **Saturday, Oct. 3, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**, at the **Lake Miona Recreation Center**. As you know, the Governor recently convened a Climate Change Conference in Miami. Clara Anne Graham, treasurer of the LWV of Florida, represented the League at this meeting. On both the national and state levels, the LWV has positions under Natural Resources which reflect our interest in and support of measures affecting our environment. We will be covering three two hour shifts and would like to have two League members present during each shift. If you would like to help us out, please contact **Joanne** at [joannejon@aol.com](mailto:joannejon@aol.com).

## News from LWVUS...

**Podcasts from the 2007 LWVUS Council Now Available** - Audio recordings from LWVUS Council 2007 are now available online. These include a segment of LWVUS President Mary G. Wilson's [address to Council](#), a [keynote speech](#) on immigration, religion and politics by *PBS Newshour's* Ray Suarez, and an [inspiring statement](#) by DC Delegate, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, who thanked the League for its decades of work fighting for DC voting rights.

## News from LWVF Board...

### STATEMENT OF 2008 LWVF LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The LWVF Board has selected Legislative Priorities for the 2008 Regular Session of the Florida Legislature. The priorities were selected

using input from local Leagues, the LWVF Board and other sources. They are as follows:

**Government in Florida:** Promote an open government that is responsive to the people of the state.

- **Equitable Taxation:** Support a state fiscal structure that is equitable in its distribution of the tax responsibility and responsive to public needs.
- **Redistricting:** Support single-member election districts that are equal in population, provide access for minorities, and are not determined by the legislature.
- **Citizen Initiatives including the Statutory Initiative:** Support the citizen's right to have both constitutional and statutory initiatives.

**Natural Resources and Sustainability:** Promote an environment beneficial to life through protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest, and support governmental action that results in sustainability.

- **Protection and restoration of the water supply:** Support public policies that promote conservation of freshwater and its availability for environmental, public supply, agricultural, industrial and mining uses on a priority basis.
- **Coastal Management:** Support intergovernmental stewardship of and fiscal responsibility for the Florida coast, under the management of the state, while recognizing the dominance of nature and the role of the sand transport system.
- **Energy:** Support environmentally sound policies that reduce energy growth rates, emphasize energy conservation and encourage the use of renewable resources.

**Civics Education.** Promote the teaching of civics education in public and private schools.

# LWVF's Position on the Proposed Constitutional Amendment

At the July Board Meeting, the League of Women Voters of Florida voted to OPPOSE SJR 4, the proposed state constitutional amendment that will be on the special election ballot on Jan. 29, 2008, because it would:

- (1) Require the state legislature to limit the ability of local governments to raise revenues to meet local needs;
- (2) Extend and increase tax limitations on homesteads without regard to the ability of homeowners to pay; and
- (3) Worsen Florida's current infrastructure deficit and the decline in the level of state services and in our quality of life.

A more detailed explanation of this position is set forth below:

(1) LWVF positions provide that local governments in Florida should have available a variety of options for generating revenues to meet local needs. SJR 4 contravenes this principle by requiring that the State Legislature limit the authority of local governments to increase property taxes.

(2) LWVF positions state that property taxes collected in Florida should be equitable and levied based on ability to pay. We believe that tax relief should be provided only to those who need it, for example through a "circuit breaker" that, like the device that automatically interrupts the flow of an electric current when the current becomes excessive, provides property tax relief for households when taxes on housing exceed a certain percentage of income. SJR 4 is contrary to these positions because it allows current homesteaders to keep the Save Our Homes tax limitation, which has produced large inequities in the taxes paid by more recent home buyers, and which grants the same tax limitations to homeowners regardless of their ability to pay.

(3) LWVF positions provide that Florida presently has an infrastructure deficit, and state service levels and our quality of life are declining. We believe that sufficient state taxes should be levied to reverse the decline in levels of service and improve the quality of life for all Floridians. According to the Legislature's own calculations, passage of SJR 4 will result in revenue losses of \$3.6 billion in 2008-09 and as much as \$4.4 billion by 2010. These losses are on top of the already mandated revenue cap passed by the Legislature during the special legislative session. Over the next five years, the total loss of revenue due to SJR 4 is estimated to be \$32 billion, over 16% of Florida's budget. This will compound the revenue losses that the state is now projecting due to an economic downturn which is estimated to trigger an additional \$1 billion in cuts to services and infrastructure during this fiscal year alone.

**See you Monday, Sept. 24<sup>th</sup>,  
10:00 a.m. at the  
Marion County Sheriff's Office!**

**League of Women Voters  
of  
The Villages/Tri-County Area MAL**

**JOIN THE LEAGUE**

- **Be a Voice for Citizens!**
- **Be a Force for Change!**

**Become a member of the LWV of The Villages/Tri-County Area MAL Unit**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone No.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **Zip Code** \_\_\_\_\_

**Village, if applicable** \_\_\_\_\_

**Former League Member: Yes** \_\_\_ **No** \_\_\_ **Where:** \_\_\_\_\_

- **Dues are \$50 annually for an individual and \$75 annually for a household.**
- **Checks should be made payable to the League of Women Voters of Florida and mailed to Linda Thomas, 1662 Osprey Ave., The Villages 32162.**
- **Your dues include a subscription to *The Florida Voter* as well as *The National Voter*.**