



The Voter



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

Volume 36: No. 6

February 2017

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.

Important February Events



Politicos on Parade

Luncheon and Fashion Show

Models are newly elected officials from
Brevard County

The Politicos on Parade fundraiser has been presented by League of Women Voters of the Space Coast every two years since 2005.

Fashions will be provided by La

Moda in Suntree and Mens Wearhouse in Melbourne. Our models are newly elected Brevard County officials: Tina Descovich, Melinda Gibson, Karalyn Woulas, William Capote, Ed Martinez and Matt Susin.

Date: Friday, February 3rd at 11:30 a.m.

Place: Suntree County Club

One Country Club Drive, Melbourne, FL 32940

Menu: Chicken Piccata

Strawberry Salmon

Vegetarian Lasagna

Meal includes garden salad, rolls, & beverages.

Cost: \$45

RSVP: Deadline for Reservations is Thursday, January 26, 2017.

You can make your reservation by going to our website www.lwv-spacecoast.org and clicking the Eventbrite option of making a reservation or you can RSVP to Doreen Archer at doreenarcher1@gmail.com or 321-622-4071. However, if you make your reservation by contacting Doreen Archer with your meal choice, your check should be sent at that time to

Treasurer, Brigitte Sinton

6629 Canal Road, Melbourne Village, FL 32904

This is our main fundraiser for the year.

If you are unable to attend but would like to send a donation for expanded citizen education and advocacy for voting rights, health care, education, environmental, and other issues, please send check to above address.

February Timely Topics

Children's Oral Health - Why is it so important?

Date: Thursday, February 23rd

Time: 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Place: Brevard Central Library - Room 2

308 Forrest Avenue, Cocoa FL 32922

Presented by Linda Meeuwenberg and Sherryl Worst

(see Board Bytes on Page 7 for more information on Dental Health)

Dental friendly refreshments will be available.

This presentation is free and open to the general public

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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

Fran Baer & Priscilla Griffith

Making Our Voices Heard

Believing as the late US Speaker of the House, Tip O'Neill, said, "All politics are local", we presented to the Brevard delegation in the allotted 3 minutes, the following as they prepare for the upcoming session, March 7th through May 5th:

"Good Afternoon and congratulations on your elections and thank you for this opportunity to share with you the priorities set by the members of the League of Women Voters of the Space Coast for the 2017 Legislative Session.

You have already heard the priorities of our state organization, and of course our priorities are aligned. What I will do is add our Brevard County flavor. I know you will agree that the local perspective gives you something to aim for since the League is and always will be a non-partisan group of women and men who care passionately for good, responsive and informed government elected by active, equally informed citizens. We study before we advocate.

Members were asked to choose five of the many significant issues confronting our state. They chose as their priorities, Education, Environmental Protection & Pollution Control, Finance and Delivery of Health Care, Gun Safety, and Land Use.

Now for the Brevard County flavor with members' additives verbatim.

- On Education: Adequate and sustainable funding is essential. Failure to do so will block the economy of the state. More funding for economically challenged schools.
- On the Environmental Protection & Pollution Control: Support initiatives to reduce, reuse, and recycle as a means to preserve our limited natural resources and minimize environmental pollution.
- Ban fracking.
- On Finance and Delivery of Health Care: Ensure that everyone, especially our children, have access to sustainable, affordable, quality health care.
- On Gun Safety: Support expansion of mandated background checks and 3 day waiting periods for all gun sales and transfers including gun shows and unlicensed gun sales. Do not put guns on campuses.
- On Land Use: Preserve and maintain our valuable property using Amendment 1 funds for land purchase. And in one voice,

members said, "The Lagoon needs our immediate attention."

Please know that your League will be monitoring bills pertaining to our stated priorities as well as the many other issues involving justice, anti-corruption, voting rights protection, term limits, and the Constitutional Revision Committee appointees and decisions.

We know your plates are full and we want to work with you. We will see you at home and in Tallahassee and hope you will stay in touch with us."

Extending our voices, we will lobby with Leagues from all over Florida on March 28-29 and we will be meeting with them individually in their local offices. Interested? Contact Fran at 321 264-1465 or fbaer@cfl.rr.com

Also, be sure to attend the League of Women Voters of the Space Coast's biennial "**Politicos on Parade**" Feb. 3rd at 11:30a.m at **Suntree Country Club** when we invite, honor and get to know some newly elected local officials as they model and hear our voices in a relaxed and cordial setting.

Fran Baer



Open Primaries

At the Wednesday, January 4th LWVSC board meeting there was discussion and approval that our League would participate in a Consensus meeting for Open Primaries. Twenty One chapters from the Florida League have been participating in this study for over a year and a half. We were invited to be very involved in this study but did not have a volunteer willing to take on the task of researching for Brevard County. However, we would like to have our members become familiar with the data of this study.

Florida is one of only nine states that uses a closed primary system, and the statistics show a very low turnout in our primary elections. We have a Constitutional Revision Commission this year, so any consensus we reach can have an impact.

Co-president, Fran Baer received the following e-mail from Michelle Levy in Orange County who has chaired The Open Primary Study.

"The 2016 Election has challenged many of the assumptions about what voters want and how elections work. This comprehensive study on primaries and improving voter turn-out is your chance to evaluate and reinvent the process. Do you think the current system of selecting candidates works for Florida voters? Do you believe that everyone who wanted to was able to participate to their fullest? Do you think we can and should improve our primary system?"

(continued on Page 6)



Education

Linda Scales – Chair

2017 Legislative Session – Education

Article by Lucia Watson

The Florida Legislature 2017 sixty day session begins on Tuesday, March 7th. However, during the months of January and February there are many committee meetings. One can follow what is happening in these meetings by going to www.myfloridahouse.gov and www.flsenate.gov. If you are interested in following certain bills you can sign up to track bills.

The League of Women Voters of the Space Coast Education committee will be following what is happening for bills that affect Education issues. What happens in the Florida Legislature has an enormous impact on what happens in the schools of Brevard County.

The two Senators who represent Brevard County are Debbie Mayfield and Dorothy Hukill. Ms. Hukill is chair of the education committee and Ms. Mayfield is the vice-chair of the education committee. Ms. Mayfield has stated that she will continue to advocate against Common Core, push for voters to elect the state's education commissioner and work to revamp how students are tested.

The League of Women Voters of Florida has 5 Education priorities for this session. They are:

- Restore district authorization to levy 2.0 mills for capital outlay funding for school facilities construction and renovation.
- Increase operational funding to pre-2008 levels so that districts may increase the school day and curriculum choices.
- Revise the sole focus of the state accountability system from test scores to measures that more accurately reflect districts' progress in raising student achievement, meet the needs of diverse students and improve access to high quality academic and career programs for all students.
- Improve fiscal and operational oversight of charter schools by increasing transparency in student admission and retention data, ensuring the independence of charter boards from charter management companies and providing guidelines to reduce self-dealing opportunities in real estate transactions and other charter services.
- Eliminate the growth of corporate-tax credit scholarships to private schools and require private schools currently receiving

these scholarships to participate in the state accountability system.

Paula Dockery, Syndicated Columnist in Florida Today on December 31st wrote that as a concerned voter she would be watching what the Legislature was doing this year. "Educating our children is an important responsibility. Please value and prioritize our public schools. Treat teachers like the professionals they are and allow them more autonomy to teach.

Get rid of Common Core, reduce the volume of high stakes standardized testing – which will save the state hundreds of millions of dollars and reduce state bureaucracy by returning control to the local elected school boards.

Support school choice but with the caveat that all schools receiving tax dollars are held to the same rules, regulations and requirements. Private choice and charter schools should be funded after our public schools are given the resources needed for instruction, transportation and facilities. "

Part of the 2015-2016 Program of Work for the Space Coast Education Committee covers these topics. We will be watching, advocating, and hoping for positive results.



Florida Solar

Lorraine Koss – Chair

Want to Go Solar?

Join the Spacecoast Solar Co-Op.

Neighbors in Brevard County have formed a solar co-op to save money, reduce our carbon footprint, and make going solar easier, while building a network of solar supporters. Co-op members work with the support of FL SUN as they go solar.

By going solar together as a group, the co-op gets a huge discount through its bulk purchasing power. The group has used a competitive bidding process and has selected **Brevard Solar** to install systems on members' homes.

Each participant signs his or her own contract at the group discount. FL SUN works with participants to educate them about solar and acts as a consumer advocate throughout the process.

Join the co-op at our website

www.flsun.org/spacecoast (no commitment until the individual contract is signed) and/or join us for an information meeting:

Saturday, January 28th at Ted Moorehead Lagoon House at 10:00am

Saturday, February 25th at Rockledge Gardens at 2:00pm

Contact: Angela DeMonbreun, FL SUN Program Director (angela@flsun.org)



Health Committee

Jo Shim & Connie Dobrin Co-Chairs

Children's Dental Health Month

National Children's Dental Health Month (NCDHM) began as a one-day event in Cleveland, Ohio, on February 3, 1941. The American Dental Association held the first national observance of Children's Dental Health Day on February 8, 1949. The single day observance became a week-long event in 1955. In 1981, the program was extended to a month-long observance. Many dental offices and dental associations hold events in February to increase awareness of the importance of children's oral health.

"Oral Health in America" published in 2000, was the first ever report by the Surgeon General's office that addressed oral health. Dr. Koop asserted that you are not healthy without a healthy mouth.

According to the 2007 Report by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention (the most current report to date), cavities have increased for toddlers and preschoolers. For children ages two to five, 70% of the cavities are found in 8% of the population. Early childhood caries (ECC) is disproportionately concentrated among socially disadvantaged children. An estimated 5% of children under the age of six, roughly 300,000 U.S. children, experience significant levels of ECC; an additional 15%, roughly 1.5 million U.S. children, experience lesser levels of ECC. Children between the ages of two and five who have not visited a dentist with the past 12 months are more likely to have caries in their primary teeth. 50% of all children have NEVER visited a dentist. Mexican-American children ages two to five are more likely than their non-Hispanic black and non-Hispanic white peers to suffer from tooth decay.

The [American Academy of Pediatrics](http://www.aap.org) has cited tooth decay as the number one chronic disease afflicting children. Fifty-nine percent of kids between 12 and 19 have at least one cavity, and poor and minority children are disproportionately affected, according to [a study by the American Academy of Pediatrics](#).

Most oral diseases are preventable if good self care habits are practiced including food choices, brushing, fluorides, pit and fissure sealants, and re-mineralization products. Unfortunately, poor children and their families often do not possess adequate health literacy to obtain preventive information or services. Finding providers that accept Medicaid as insurance is another challenge. In Brevard County, long waiting lists exist at community health clinics and dental offices that accept Medicaid. Until reimbursements increase for Medicaid (less than half the reimbursement of private insurers), the problem will continue. Public health programs to

provide sealants at school based programs have been successful in preventing tooth decay, however there is no program in Brevard County. The newly formed Brevard County United Way Health Literacy project is advocating for a dental sealant program. Some states and other countries are addressing the problem by licensing a mid-level practitioners. Minnesota, Vermont, and Maine have led this movement. The mid-level practitioner is a Registered Dental Hygienist with advanced training. Dental Therapists are employed in other countries to serve remote areas and have been very successful in reducing dental caries in children. Dental Hygienists have long been advocates for preventive oral health and have much to offer if licensing boards allow them to access underserved populations.

The Smile Angel Foundation and the Brevard County Dental Hygiene Association are working diligently to improve health literacy and advocate for better services for those insured by Medicaid. The Smile Angel Foundation has placed back to school oral care kits in each public school for the last three years and makes several classroom presentations particularly in the month of February. The Foundation has been successful in providing care to several indigent individuals through funding and partnership with dentists. The most recent case is a child who was being bullied for the appearance of her malocclusion and had difficulty eating with the severe over bite. Please visit the Smile Angel Foundation website to see how you can help in our mission. <http://smileangelusa.org/> We will be offering a Space Coast LWV Timely Topic discussion on Children's Dental Health Challenges scheduled for February 23rd in meeting room 2 at Brevard Central Library in Cocoa from 5:30 - 7:00 pm. This presentation is free and open to the general public - dental friendly refreshments will be available.

References:

http://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/disease/dental_caries.html

http://www.mychildrensteeth.org/assets/2/7/EC_Cstats.pdf

<http://www.ada.org/en/public-programs/national-childrens-dental-health-month/>

<https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/DataStatistics/SurgeonGeneral/Documents/hck1ocv.@www.surgeon.fullrpt.pdf>

Linda Meeuwenberg, RDH, MA, MA
Professor Emeritus, Ferris State University,
Department of Nursing and Dental Hygiene
www.lindapda.com



Natural Resources Susan Little – Chair

Everglades Dolphins have Highest Mercury Level on Earth

by Maureen Rupe

The Treasure Coast Palm (www.TCPalm.com) reported in a 12/26/16 story by Tyler Treadway, updated on January 3rd, that a study published by Florida International University (FIU) in the Scientific Journal "Environmental Pollution," showed that the Bottleneck Dolphins in the Everglades have the highest mercury levels ever recorded. The story referenced that the 11 parts per million average in this study can be compared to having a pinch of salt in 20 pounds of potato chips. I'm not sure I'd use something that isn't harmful as a good comparison considering the World Health Organization on their website considers Mercury "...as one of the top ten chemicals or groups of chemicals of major public health concern." They also say that "Exposure to mercury – even small amounts – may cause serious health problems, and is a threat to the development of the child in utero and early in life." "Mercury may have toxic effects on the nervous, digestive and immune systems, and on lungs, kidneys, skin and eyes."

The Treasure Coast Palm story stated "Dolphins are a sentinel species," Schaefer said. "High levels of mercury in dolphins shows that there are high levels of mercury in animals throughout the food chain." As dolphins eat many smaller fish and crustaceans, their levels of mercury show how mercury levels are climbing in all species in that area. Adam Schaefer is a Harbor Branch research professor who studies diseases in wildlife at Florida Atlantic University. This article referenced a Florida Atlantic University study that was published by Treasure Coast Palm in 2015 concerning the Indian River Lagoon. The Nov 30, 2015 Treasure Coast Palm article by Conrad deFiebre, titled "High mercury levels found in IRL dolphins may help pinpoint human health hazards," The 2015 article related it to our residents by stating "Florida residents are known to eat 10 times as much seafood as the U.S. average, and the Indian River area may have more mercury exposure than anywhere else in the state," Harbor Branch reports. Mercury enters the atmosphere from industrial metal production, waste incineration, coal-fired power plants and even volcanic eruptions worldwide. But more seems to accumulate in South Florida because of heavier rainfall and biochemical characteristics of the region's waterways that speed conversion of inorganic mercury to methylmercury that builds up in animal and human tissue. "Florida's a big dumping ground for mercury," Schaefer said. "Much like dolphins, who eat a steady

diet of striped mullet and silver perch, area residents who consumed lots of local snapper, sea trout, cobia and grouper showed the highest levels of mercury in Harbor Branch analysis of hair samples."

The Everglades FIU study also may tie some of the mercury increase to agricultural runoff. They found that "... mercury levels were much lower in dolphins in the Keys, which don't have agricultural runoff." The article pointed out that mercury sources have been both by natural and unnatural means such as coal fired power plants, but as how each plays a role in the process and increased accumulations in South and East Florida, the members of the FIU research team from FIU, the University of Liège in Belgium, the University of Gronigen in the Netherlands and the Tropical Dolphin Research Foundation, want to expand the study to other species such as sharks, alligators, and other species to see how they are contaminated by mercury.

Reference:

<http://www.tcpalm.com/story/news/local/indian-river-lagoon/health/2016/12/26/mercury-dolphins-indian-river-lagoon/94998896/>

<http://archive.tcpalm.com/news/indian-river-lagoon/health/high-mercury-levels-found-in-irl-dolphins-may-help-pinpoint-human-health-hazards-25c91679-5f53-3864--359076111.html/>

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs361/en/>

Welcome To Our New Members

Nate Domin
Susan Chyczewski
Mary Jessica Sibayan
Nancy Marks
Deborah Vincett
Claire Klein
Jennifer Wood
Alice Filteau

This month we have eight new members to add to your membership book that you received in late August. Addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses of new members will be sent to you by e-mail.



International Relations

Joyce Calese – Chair

February through May we will be meeting twice a month to study and discuss the 8 topics in the 2017 Great Decisions Book published by the Foreign Policy Association. The 8 topics of this year are: **The Future of Europe, Trade and Politics, Conflict in the South China Sea, Saudi Arabia in Transition, U.S. Foreign Policy and Petroleum, Latin America's Political Pendulum, Prospects for Afghanistan and Pakistan and Nuclear Security.**

February meetings are: Tuesday, February 14 and Tuesday, February 28 at the Satellite Beach Library from 1 p.m. to 3 pm. **The February 14th topic is Trade and Politics led by Martha Bradshaw and the February 28th topic is The Future of Europe led by Jane Wilson.** We invite you to join us.

The United Nations has a new Secretary-General as of January 1, 2017. He is António Guterres and will be serving a 5 year term. He is a Portuguese politician and diplomat who served as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees from 2005 to 2015. He was the Prime Minister of Portugal from 1995 to 2002. He is the ninth Secretary-General of the United Nations. On October 5th the 15 member United Nations Security Council agreed to nominate Guterres and he was formally elected by the United Nations General Assembly on October 13, 2016. This was the first time candidates for Secretary-General had to present their platform in public hearings in the United Nations General Assembly. He emerged as a strong candidate. Earlier it was thought that the choice might be a woman.

The League of Women Voters is so involved in domestic issues that many people are not aware that a commitment to international cooperation is deeply rooted in League history.

In 1945, at the UN Charter Conference, the League of Women Voters was invited by President Harry Truman to serve as a consultant to the U.S. delegation. The League was active in educating the public about the advantages of having a United Nations.

Eventually the United Nations became a reality and The League has continued its presence at the United Nations through its **one official and two alternate observers.**



Open Primaries (continued from Page 2)

If you answered yes to any of these, you will want your league to participate in the Primary Study and Consensus.

Our initial study objective was to evaluate the current primary system in Florida to determine whether it is a hindrance to voter turnout.

During the 21 months of our study, we have reviewed different types of primaries across the country; have interviewed stakeholders, millennial voters, other state leagues and a myriad of experts to determine if a change in our primary system would engage more voters.

We have developed the following Consensus Statements for all participating Leagues:

1. The current primary system in Florida hinders voter turnout. **Agree/Disagree/No Opinion**
2. NPAs (No Party Affiliation) and minor party voters deserve an opportunity to vote in all primary elections. **Agree/Disagree/No Opinion**
3. The primary system that would best serve the voters of Florida is one of the following: **Closed/ Open to Unaffiliated/ Open/ Top Two/Instant Voter Runoff. Vote for your top three.**
4. The best election system for the Presidential Preference Primary (PPP) would be which of the following: **Closed, Open, Top Two, Instant Runoff Voting Choose one.**
5. LWVF supports establishing threshold criteria for write-in candidates to minimize political manipulation. **Agree/Disagree/No Opinion**
6. Alone or in combination there are other factors that may improve voter turnout
 - a. LWVF supports automatic registration of eligible voters at age 18 by an appropriate government agency. **Agree/Disagree/No Opinion**
 - b. LWVF supports exclusive vote by mail. **Agree/Disagree/ No Opinion**
 - c. LWVF supports making general election voting portable within the county similar to early voting. **Agree/Disagree/No Opinion**
 - d. LWVF supports statewide Election Day (same day) Registration. **Agree/Disagree/No Opinion**

We will be sending out the entire Study Kit which will include all the necessary and relevant data to enable local leagues to come to consensus. We are requesting that your League make time to schedule a Consensus Meeting in February. We would like to present our conclusions to the LWVF Convention meeting in June."

Background for a Consensus meeting is found in The Study and Action 2015-2017. This is a Guide to Public Policy Positions for League of Women Voters of Florida.

"When a program is adopted that includes an issue for study, members first research the issue.

(continued on Page 7)



Open Primaries (continued from Page 6)

Background material on all sides of the issue, a bibliography and consensus questions are furnished by a state study committee as approved by the State Board. These questions, when answered by the membership, may establish a statewide consensus. Consensus by group discussion is the technique most often used in the League for reaching member agreement. It is a process whereby members participate in a group discussion of an issue. The consensus reached by members through group discussion is not a simple majority, nor is it unanimity; rather it is the overall sense of the group as expressed through the exchange of ideas and opinions, whether in a membership meeting or a series of membership or unit meetings.

The State Board evaluates the conclusions of the local Leagues. Wherever the State Board determines there is substantial agreement (or consensus), a formal LWVF position is adopted."

As soon as more information is available League members will be given information on the Open Primary Study so they can become educated and participate in the consensus meeting.



Board Bytes

- \$1600 was donated through gift cards at the December Holiday Luncheon for the homeless students in Brevard County. Dr. Sally Shinn, Homeless Liaison for Brevard Public Schools spoke at the December Holiday luncheon. These gift cards will make a big difference at difficult times for these children. Many thanks for your kind generosity!
- Furthermore, League members Linda Scales (along with daughters Jessica and Katrina), Krista Soboh, Jo Shim and Laverne Bruffey all assisted in the raising of \$4,500 at the Macy's Gift Wrapping Fundraiser that will benefit those same BPS students. Other groups that contributed to the success of this fundraiser are members of Cocoa High School's National Honor Society and SAC committee, BPS Parent Ambassador Team, and the BPS homeless liaison Sally Shinn.
- 13 schools are registered to participate in the Recycling Awards program this year. There are 8 elementary, 4 middle schools and 1 high school.
- Chair of Recycling, Marcia Booth has submitted a recommendation to the Brevard County Board of County Commissioners to eliminate *styrofoam* from public places. Hopefully there will be interest to form a task force group to educate and advocate this issue. Contact Marcia , Marcia@recyclebrevard.org if you are interested.
- Linda Meeuwenberg, Professor Emeritus of Department of Nursing and Dental Hygiene at Ferris State University in Michigan and Sherryl Worst, Founder of Smile Angel Foundation to advocate for National Children's Dental Health Month will be leading the February Timely Topics. Learn more about the disparity of oral health literacy, access to dental care, and why we should take action to improve these statistics.

February Calendar - ~Members are welcome at all meetings~

Thursday, February 2nd Local Government Committee -Suntree Library at 10:15 to Noon.

Friday, February 3rd Politicos on Parade - Luncheon and Fashion Show at Suntree Country Club at 11:30 a.m.

Tuesday, February 7th Board Meeting - Large Room at Suntree Library at 5:30 p.m.

Tuesday, February 14th International Relations Meeting at Satellite Beach Library 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Monday, February 20th Health Committee Meeting at Suntree Library at 6 p.m.

Thursday, February 23rd Local Government Committee - Suntree Library at 10:15 to Noon.

Tuesday, February 28th International Relations Meeting at Satellite Beach Library 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

(As additional dates of Committee Meetings are known they will be posted on the member's calendar on the website.)

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Men Are Welcome to Join LWV!

PLEASE CHECK YOUR INTERESTS

- Education
- Fund Raising/Finance
- Health Issues
- Hospitality/Events
- International Relations Study Group
- Justice
- Legislative Action
- Local Government/Observer Corps
- Membership
- Natural Resources
- Publicity & Public Relations
- Recycling
- Social Media/Facebook
- Speaker's Bureau
- Telephone Committee
- Voter Service
- The Voter (monthly newsletter)
- Website
- Women's Issues

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please complete the information below and return with your check made payable to
League of Women Voters of the Space Coast

Mail to: LWV Space Coast
6629 Canal Road
Melbourne Village, FL 32904

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____

Zip _____

E-Mail Address _____

Phone _____

New Member _____ Returning Member _____

ANNUAL DUES

- \$60.00 for Individual Membership
- \$85.00 for Household Membership
- \$25.00 for Student Membership