



# VOTER

A monthly publication of the League of Women Voters of Polk County, P.O. Box 934, Lakeland, FL 33802

*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.*

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## THOUGHT FOR INDEPENDENCE DAY

*"The American  
Revolution was a  
beginning, not a  
consummation."*

~ Woodrow Wilson



## President's Message

### Freedom of Information

This Independence Day marks 43 years since the landmark Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) was signed into law – yet Americans still believe that our government is secretive.

FOIA established your right to access government records and to know what our government is doing – both its successes and failures. Exercising your right to know allows you to contribute to our government and hold government accountable. From food and transportation safety to the use and disposal of chemicals, FOIA has enabled the public to not only ensure the health of our democracy, but also ensure our own well-being.

FOIA and Florida's Sunshine Law are only as good as we demand that they be. For decades, members of the League of Women Voters have acted as government watchdogs at the federal, state and local levels -- observing government meetings, conducting document audits and empowering citizens, but more work needs to be done.

The key to a healthy, open government is public participation. This FOIA anniversary, exercise your right to know by seeking records, attending a government meeting, or adding your voice to the public discussion.

Mary Jo Jarrett, President  
LWV of Polk County



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## NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETS TELEPHONICALLY



(from left) Mary Thomas, Mary Jo Jarrett, Jerry Weeks,  
Ann Weeks (on phone), Joan Verret and Sue Schultz



Mary and Mary Jo



Joan, Don (Guest Chef), Sue, Mary, and Mary Jo

The newly elected Board of Directors met over lunch on June 13. The Board discussed routine administrative matters and plans for the upcoming year. Topics that were discussed for possible future events include SWFMD Changes, Health Reform, Changes in Education and the League's 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday next year.

# WASHINGTON DC: NATIONAL R.N. DAY OF ACTION



I was honored to be among over 500 RNs (Registered Nurses), representing 250,000 nurses from all over our country May 12-14. The five largest RN organizations and unions were there. I am a member of the National Nurses Organizing Committee (NNOC). We were there to educate the members of the House and Senate and their staffs on two issues: 1 - Ratios, Rights and Representation and 2 - Single Payer Health Care.

**1. RN-to-Patient Ratios.** RN Ratio legislation started in California several years ago. It mandates, for example, that hospitals staff with 1 RN to 2 patients AT ALL TIMES in critical care, intensive care, labor\delivery, and post anesthesia units. No covering four while one person goes to lunch. Other examples are 1:4 in pediatrics and ER, 1:5 Med/Surgery. Since this legislation went into effect in CA, there is no RN shortage. RNs returned to nursing. The norm has been that a large percentage leaves within 3 years of entering the field due to frustration of being unable to give their patients the care they need. It is cost effective: one example is hospitals spend about \$42,000 to replace each general medical/surgical unit RN and \$64,000 to replace each specialty RN.

**Rights:** The RN has the professional obligation and therefore the right to act as the patient's advocate.

**Protection:** There is a need to protect nurses when they report unsafe conditions.

**2. Single Payer Health Care.** Single payer, basically Medicare for everyone, is a much better known topic.

On Tues, after a meeting of the 27 nurses from Florida, we gathered for a reception at Union Station to network with our peers from around the US and to be greeted by RN leaders, members of Congress including Dennis Kucinich, and several other legislators.

On Wed, Sen. Barbara Boxer, after introducing the National Nursing Reform and Patient Advocacy Act (S 1031), addressed us. Rep. Jan

Schakowsky, IL, introduced similar legislation in the House. Following several hours of speakers addressing the issues, we prepared to March to Capitol Hill. We were led by a Dixie Land Band with much singing and chanting. We wore red scrubs and chanted:

**Everywhere we go- people want to know - who we are  
We are the nurses - the mighty, mighty nurses  
Fighting for our patients - fighting for our rights**

At the end of the march we were addressed by Dr. Carol Ritter (representing the 50% of doctors who support single payer), and Sen. Bernie Sanders, Rep. John Conyers, Rep. Sheila Jackson and Rep. Eric Massa.

Mimi Kennedy and Tim Carpenter represented those who had been arrested on the previous Mon. at Sen. Baucus' Senate Finance Committee meeting on health care reform. Those invited to present information to the committee represented only pharmaceutical companies, insurance companies and CEOs. When MDs and RNs stood up and spoke of single payer they were arrested. As each one was led away another took their place until the meeting was called off. Someone reported hearing a committee member say "how many of them are there?"

Another interesting speaker was "Dr. B.J. Hunnicutt" from MASH fame. A delicious box lunch was served as we listened to the speakers. We then divided into our congressional and senate districts. The nurses from Florida were assigned to 11 congressmen and 1 senator. The group I was in met with an aide at Sen. Bill Nelson's office.

We were free in the evening. I met with two of my Franciscan friends who live in DC. They are always fascinated to hear what is happening in Florida.

I have really become passionate about these issues. On May 20, Libby Devlin the organizer for NNOC and I met with Robin Adams from The Ledger to discuss the issues that led to "The Day of Action." Robin is interviewing several other people and will write an article in the near future.

*By Joan Verret*



*The League of Women Voters of Polk County* **VOTER**

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**\*\*\* HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY - July 4 \*\*\***



## Donation Received

Bonnie Cochard, daughter of Ann Books, recently made a donation to the League of Women Voters of Polk County.

Bonnie wrote: "Please accept this check in honor of my mom, Ann Books (of Bartow, Fla). The league has meant so much to her for so many years. I would like to support her in what she loves. Thank you."

Ann Books has been a longtime member and former President of the LWV Polk.



## Calendar

Wednesday, July 1: Canada Day

Saturday, July 4: Independence Day

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Tuesday, August 11, 1:00 pm  
LWV Polk County BOARD Meeting  
United Way, Highland City  
(bag lunch)

Friday, August 25: Women's Equality Day  
19th Amendment passes!  
Women get the vote!