



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

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***** Happy 90th Birthday to the League *****



Supreme Court Decision

The recent decision in *Citizens United v. FEC* has created a new constitutional right for corporations to spend unlimited amounts of money to support or oppose candidates. This throws out the protections against corporate and union spending in elections that have served our democracy for nearly a century.

The Supreme Court ruling has given the green light for corporations to now intervene directly in elections taking the power away from average voters. **Corruption could skyrocket out of control** – now that the Court has allowed unlimited corporate and union expenditures.

Through our 90-year history, the League has fought to ensure that voters are at the center of our political process. Now we must work harder than ever before to elevate citizen voices above those of special interests and corporations.

Calendar

- Friday, January 1: **New Years Day**
- Tuesday, January 26: **Special Election Day**

- Wednesday, February 10, 5:00 pm
Ben Walker, FDOT, Bartow Library
- Sunday, February 14: **League's 90th Birthday**
- Monday, February 15: **Presidents Day**

- March: **Women's History Month**
- Tuesday, March 2, 1:00 pm
LWV Polk County BOARD Meeting
Location TBA - Call or check website
- March 22-24: **Legislative Seminar, Tallahassee**

The League of Women Voters of Polk County



Jan/Feb 2010
Volume 10, Issue 1

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Today's Quote

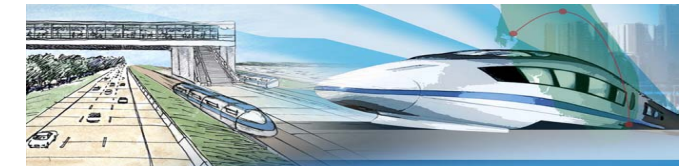
"We simply can't build the economy of the future on the transportation networks of the past."

Ray LaHood

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.



Word of the Month: "INTERMODAL"

Is it ...plane, train, boat, car,?????

Learn about INTERMODAL...the latest Transportation Word of Florida's Future. As transportation develops in this new brave world, getting around will take some planning. That is why The League of Women Voters of Polk County has invited **Ben Walker** - Intermodal Systems Development Manager of Florida Transportation District One to speak on INTERMODAL Transportation.



When: Wednesday, February 10
5:00 p.m.

Where: Bartow Public Library
2150 S. Broadway Ave.
Bartow, Florida

District One is composed of 12 counties. Ben is responsible for all federal, state, seaport, transit and intermodal grant funds for the 12 counties in District One. This recently formed department is a combination of planning, public transportation, and the department's liaisons which reflects the department's focus on success for all modes of transportation.

**Don't miss the high speed rail as it departs
Let's learn more about INTERMODAL and what it means to the people of Florida and Polk County!**

Legislative Delegation Meetings

This winter in the counties around the state of Florida, the legislative delegation of our elected representatives and senators were meeting with their constituents.

Our own Joan Verret traveled around the state with the RN's attending these hearings to promote the passage of Florida Hospital Patient Protection Act of 2010. Some of the important ideas of this bill were highlighted by Libby Devlin during the LWV Health Panel in October.

At the Polk Legislative hearing in Bartow, held December 21, 2009, all of the Polk delegation was present except for Kelli Stargel. One question asked by a County Commissioner was about funding and if use of transportation funds to further state rail projects would affect money available from the state for local road needs.

The reply was that not only would available state money likely be affected but local money that might have been available for joint ventures would likely be committed to pay the local share of rail operating costs. For more info:

<http://www.theledger.com/article/20091221/news/912215064>

Representatives from towns, non-profit organizations, local higher education institutions among others presented to the delegation, there was even provided an opportunity for those not on the Agenda to speak.



History Tid-Bit: RIGHT TO VOTE

Early Suffragettes like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were abolitionists as well as suffragettes. According to historian Doris Weatherford, when Stanton went as a delegate to the World Congress Against Slavery, she was not allowed to be seated because she was a woman. When the 15th Amendment was passed in 1870, women rejoiced thinking they too would be able to vote. But it didn't happen. In a Supreme Court Case Virginia Minor v. the Supervisor of Elections in St. Louis, the court ruled that Congress didn't intend to include women with the passage of the 15th Amendment which said no citizen shall be denied the right to vote based on race or human condition.

It took until 1920, (another 50 years) when the 19th Amendment was passed to grant women the right to vote.

It's been 90 years, let us celebrate and remember the persistence of those who never gave up hope that all citizens would have the right to vote.



CONGRATULATIONS: To League member Edie Yates for her convincing win in the Lakeland City Commission election of January 26. Third time was the charm.

Citizen Soldiers - Florida National Guard



In January, ceremonies were held around the State as the **Florida National Guard** prepared for their largest deployment since World War II. The 53rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team will be in route to Kuwait and Iraq after training at Ft. Hood, Texas.

Senator Bill Nelson spoke at the ceremony held in Lakeland where he praised the Guard and thanked them for their service in protecting our country. He reminded us that as early as 2001 The Florida National Guard was in Iraq and that now they would be there last as troops draw down.

Lieutenant Governor of Florida, Jeff Kottcamp, also participated in the send off activities at Lakeland Civic Center. Different Officials were attending ceremonies around the State from cities such as Tallahassee, Ocala, Miami, and others. Twenty-five hundred citizen soldiers will leave Florida for the Middle East.

Around our nation, different State National Guard Units are in rotation in and out of the war.

Please keep the men and women of the National Guard and their families in your hearts.

Video link of Ceremony:

<http://www.theledger.com/article/20100108/VIDEO/1082022&template=video>



TRANSPORTATION NOTES

Transportation has dominated much of the news in Florida, especially Rail ...commuter-rail which by design has many stops every few miles along its route - *Sun-Rail* for Orlando which the Florida Legislature called a special session for in December and *Tri-Rail* in South Florida. *High Speed Rail or Bullet Train* traveling at speeds of 120 mph connects major cities by train. There are Federal Transportation Dollars being sought to help fund the construction of a High Speed Rail along the I-4 corridor from Tampa to Lakeland, to Orlando.

President Obama's visit to Tampa on Jan. 28th was a positive signal about that funding. Florida already has in place the High Speed Rail Authority created by Florida Legislature which did much of the research for high speed rail although funding has been an issue in recent years. The Florida Department of Transportation has put up a website www.floridahighspeedrail.org/ for more information.

As Floridians, we need to understand the impact of transportation decisions. We have asked Ben Walker of Florida Department of Transportation District One to present information so that we may become more informed. The newly formed department that he heads is focused on public transportation and planning. See page 1.

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President's Message:

This is going to prove to be an exciting year.!!!

The New Year- 2010- has the League of Women Voters celebrating our 90th year and the passage of the 19th Amendment.

A celebration is planned in Tallahassee March 22-24 hosted by the Florida LWV as part of the Florida Legislative Seminar. You are encouraged to attend and meet with other league members from around the state. (Please see information on page 5.) This will be a very special event that you don't want to miss.

Thank You to all our members who participated in the Zoomerang Survey on Transportation.

Please see the information on page 1 on our upcoming event with Ben Walker of FL DOT who is going to enlighten us on INTERMODAL Transportation.

*In League,
Mary Jo Jarrett*

P.S. The National League has a 2010 Survey on Democracy they would like for you take. Make your voice heard by taking the survey @ lwv.org



Hear Ye Hear Ye News from Membership Committee

Welcome to new member:

Karen Brady
4437 Waterford Drive
Lake Wales, FL 33859

Take a moment and give her a welcome.

Best Wishes

Best Wishes for Retirement go to LWV member Buddy Fletcher, who served as the first (and continuously) elected Mayor of Lakeland since 1992.

A big Thank You from the members of the League of Women Voters of Polk County for your service and commitment to the community of Lakeland.

Redistricting Amendments On The Ballot !

This is an historic chance to vote to stop politicians from rigging districts.

Thank You to Jerry Weeks for heading up our local effort on FairDistricts. I hope many of you will volunteer to spread the word as to how this will help our representative democracy work for all Florida citizens

Former Governor and U.S. Senator Bob Graham said "Florida's legislators are choosing their voters instead of voters choosing their representatives. There are presently no rules to stop this self protection plan. And when this happens, the voters don't have a real choice! These amendments will change that."

With voter approval in November, Amendments 5 and 6 will establish constitutional rules that will prohibit politicians from designing districts to favor themselves or their parties; require them to make the districts compact and community based; and make it impossible for legislators to draw districts to diminish the ability of minority voters to elect representatives.

2010 Legislative Seminar
"Celebrate and Advocate"
\$99
Early Bird Price

The 2010 Legislative Seminar will be held March 22-24 in Tallahassee.

Monday, March 22

- 5 PM - **Cocktails at the Capitol** - Festivities begin atop the Capitol with champagne and a panoramic view of Tallahassee

Tuesday, March 23

- 7:30 AM - Enjoy **breakfast in the historic Governor's Club**. Listen to key legislators from both political parties address League priorities.
- 9:30 AM - Receive a **proclamation from Governor Crist** and the Cabinet in the Cabinet Room highlighting our historical achievements.
- 10 AM - A visit to and **recognition from the floor of the House and/or Senate** session.
- Noon to 5 PM - Work in committees OR with legislators.
- 5 PM - The Paradigm in Tallahassee - **Hot Topics Debate Dinner: "Amendment 4 - Growth Management or Voter Mismanagement?"**
- 8 PM - Little League Meetings, Big League Issues

Wednesday, March 24 - Exhausted, but exhilarated. Head home.

Special 90-Year Anniversary Registration Fee ONLY \$99 - If you register before March 1. Fee includes all seminar materials and all activities, including reception/dinners on March 22 & 23, breakfast on March 23. Make hotel reservations directly by calling the Hilton Garden Inn at 1-850-893-8300. Mention the LWVF Group. Room rate is \$132.05 + tax per night, single or double occupancy.

Register and Make Reservations by at LWVFLA.org website.