



Calendar

June 4th
Equal Ground Legislative Debrief, 6-8:30 pm at The Well, 114 East Parker Street, Lakeland (SEE RIGHT)

June 11th
Virtual Candidate Forum for 10th & 13th Florida Circuit Court Judges (trial courts), noon, <https://tinyurl.com/ffhzhxn>

June 13th-20th
Polk Pride Week

June 14th
Flag Day

June 19th
Juneteenth

June 20th
Pride in the Park, 9 am-2 pm, Munn Park, 201 East Main Street, Lakeland

June 21st
Father's Day; Summer Solstice

June 24th
Membership Meeting via Zoom, 5 pm

June 25th
Board Orientation, 5 pm, The Well

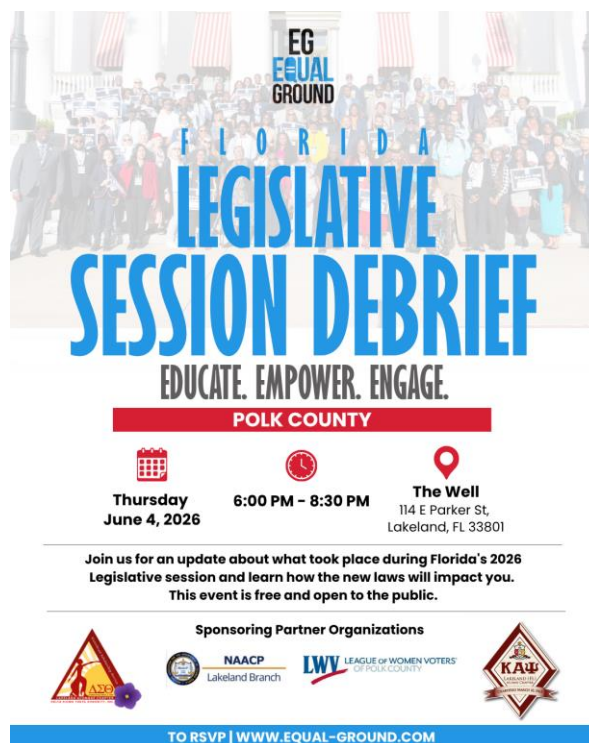
June 27th
Coffee & Conversation, 10 am-noon, Panera Bread, 137 Landings Boulevard, Winter Haven

July 4th
Independence Day

July 11th
LWV Florida Biennial Council of Leaders, 10 am-4:30 pm at Rollins College—Register Now! (contact president@lwvpolk.org)
\$50 registration fee stipends available from LWV Polk County

Presidents' Message

We are excited to follow up on our highly successful annual meeting in May by starting a new year of education, advocacy and events. Upcoming in the immediate future is our June 4th Equal Ground Legislative Debrief, for which we are happy to serve as a co-sponsor. Here's hoping you will all register to attend asap: <https://www.mobilize.us/equalground/event/939738/>



EG EQUAL GROUND

FLORIDA LEGISLATIVE SESSION DEBRIEF

EDUCATE. EMPOWER. ENGAGE.

POLK COUNTY

Thursday June 4, 2026 **6:00 PM - 8:30 PM** **The Well**
114 E Parker St, Lakeland, FL 33801

Join us for an update about what took place during Florida's 2026 Legislative session and learn how the new laws will impact you. This event is free and open to the public.

Sponsoring Partner Organizations

TO RSVP | WWW.EQUAL-GROUND.COM

June is packed with other LWV Polk County events, including virtual candidate forums for circuit court judge candidates (**see page two**), a general membership meeting on Zoom, the restart of our monthly Coffee & Conversation in Winter Haven, and an orientation for our new board.

Also, don't forget to register **now** for July's state Council of Leaders! (**SEE LEFT**)
In League,
Pat Denham & Jo Shim

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**2026-2027
LWV Polk Officers &
Directors**

Co-Presidents: Jo Shim,
president@lwvpolk.org; Pat
Denham, president@
lwvpolk.org

Co-Vice Presidents: Kristen
Carlson, Ashley Haynie

Secretary: Donna Daniels,
secretary@lwvpolk.org

Treasurer: Katy Pace Byrd,
treasurer@lwvpolk.org

Directors:
Litreace Coppit
Jen Cordova
Jacquelynn Maxey*
Michael Murray*

**Terms end in 2028; all others
end in 2027.*

*All officers and board
members may be contacted
at their personal email
addresses, available in the
members only area of our
website, lwvpolk.org.*

**Follow Us
on Social Media!**

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The League of Women Voters
of Polk County

League of Women Voters of
Florida

League of Women Voters of the
US

Instagram
lwvpolk



Upcoming Judicial Candidate Forums

LWV Polk County is very pleased to team up with the Tampa Bay Trial Lawyers Association (TBTLA) and the Leagues of Hillsborough and Pasco Counties, North Pinellas County, St. Petersburg Area, as well as the Hillsborough County Bar Association to sponsor two virtual candidate forums on June 11th and June 18th, both at noon via Zoom.

The first, on **Thursday the 11th**, will include all circuit court judicial candidates for the 10th and 13th circuits, which include Hardee, Highlands, **Polk** and Hillsborough Counties. The forum on Thursday the 18th includes candidates for the 6th judicial circuit court, which includes Pasco and Pinellas Counties.

The forums are scheduled to last 1 ½ hours, and will consist of brief opening remarks from the sponsors, candidate vision statements, and guided discussion and questions from the audience.

To receive the link to attend either forum free of charge, register at <https://www.tbtl.us/events/>. Continuing education credits for lawyers appear to be available. For more information, contact Meg Huntley of the TBTLA by sending her a message *via* the registration website.

Join Our Speakers Bureau!

LWV Polk County's Speakers Bureau is a longtime staple of our community outreach, providing LWV Florida-authored presentations to civic and community organizations. This is your chance to educate and advocate on an issue about which you are passionate! Prior knowledge not required! Guidance and mentorship will be provided! Contact Ben or Kristen at speakerrequest@lwvpolk.org. *(See bonus page for photos from our latest presentation.)*

Book Corner

*"Banned in 29 school districts [including Polk County], **Forever ... by Judy Blume is one of Florida's most banned books. The young adult novel sparked immediate controversy for its depiction of teenage sexuality. The story follows Katherine, an eighteen-year-old high school senior, as she navigates her first serious relationship with her boyfriend.**"* From <https://forbiddenfloridareads.com/>, by Isabella J. "Izzy" Miletic of the League of Women Voters of Tallahassee: To learn more, visit the website. Izzy is an undergraduate student at Florida State University who hopes to obtain both law and library science graduate degrees.

Primaries and Elections Ahead!

Primary Elections

Deadline to register: July 20, 2026

Deadline to request VBM: August 6, 2026

Election Day: Tuesday, August 18, 2026

General Election

Deadline to register: October 5, 2026

Deadline to request VBM: October 22, 2026

Election Day: Tuesday, November 3, 2026

Source: polkelections.gov

Issue Action Teams

Clean Energy & Climate,
Karen Freedman,
naturalsolar@lwvpolk.org

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion,
open, DEI@lwvpolk.org

Education, Linda Donaldson,
education@lwvpolk.org

Gun Violence Prevention,
Mike Murray,
gunsafety@lwvpolk.org

Healthcare, Paula Mims,
healthcare@lwvpolk.org
Reproductive Health & Justice, Jen Cordova,
reproductivehealth@lwvpolk.org

Immigration, open,
immigration@lwvpolk.org

Natural Resources, open,
naturalresources@lwvpolk.org

Voter Education & Voter Services, Heather Bradman & Litreace Coppit,
voterservices@lwvpolk.org

Organizational Teams

Communications, Ben Graffam,
communications@lwvpolk.org
Speakers Bureau,
speakerrequest@lwvpolk.org
Voter Newsletter,
newsletter@lwvpolk.org
Webmaster,
webmaster@lwvpolk.org

Membership, Linda Donaldson,
membership@lwvpolk.org

Nominating (2027), Vicki Wuertz,
nominatingcommittee@lwvpolk.org

For general information,
contact info@lwvpolk.org.
Thank you!

Action Alley

Our dynamic **Healthcare Action Team** has been busy! Chair **Paula Mims** and team member **Jean Baker** served on the Community Health Assessment team with our county health department, and subsequently on its committee to address access to healthcare. Paula represents LWV of Polk County on the Safe Sleep Task Force as well.

Thus, our league continues to be represented along with other major stakeholders in healthcare and health education in our county, including numerous other organizations and advocacy groups. In addition, the success of our Moms with Monitors (MWM) program has been recognized in a highly meaningful way: The Polk County Health Department has expanded the provision of blood pressure monitors to *all patients with chronic diseases* who would benefit from such monitoring, in addition to at-risk pregnant mothers.

Previous study by league members who were part of the DEI Book Club from 2020 to 2024 resulted in our recognition that women of color are three times more likely to experience complications or death during pregnancy and the postpartum period than their white counterparts. Members of the book group carried this knowledge into the work of the revitalized healthcare action team which established our partnership with the Polk County Department of Health.

In **Voter Services Team (VS)** news, volunteers staffed a table at the HBCU Jump-Off at Denison Middle School in Winter Haven, awarding LWV Polk's HBCU Scholarship to rising 1st year Howard University student **Neriah Dunkley**. (*See pictures on page 5.*)

VS co-chairs **Heather Bradman** and **Litreace Coppit** are encouraging all who interact with voters this year to emphasize the importance of a valid Florida driver's license or state ID, either of which can be obtained at Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicle offices. New state voter registration procedures go into effect on January 1, 2027!

The **Education Action Team** is seeking a volunteer to join **Carole Essy** in observing the June 9th school board meeting, 5-7 pm, and has been busy developing education-related Vote411 questions. The team will meet again on June 18th at 7 pm.

Thanks for Your Amazing Generosity!

Thank you to all who donated to MWM and to our RCMA Community Baby Shower at our annual meeting! We raised over \$1,000 for new blood pressure monitors, and collected many diapers, gift cards and baby items for our migrant friends!

It's never too late to participate! Feel free to text me directly at 863-258-1988 to coordinate an RCMA drop-off, contribute to MWM online at www.lwvpolk.org, or send a check to PO Box 934, Lakeland, 33802-0934.
– *Paula Mims*

Q & A with Pat Denham

New LWV of Polk County Co-President Pat Denham has been a member of the league for two years, having known several members of the league for years and finally deciding to jump in with both feet. She's been deeply involved with the Voter Services Action Team, thanks to **Sue Schultz**, and says she's learned a lot and greatly enjoyed getting to know more dedicated League members. But let's have Patty (as longtime friends associated with her spouse Mike, professor of Florida history at FSC, call her) speak for herself!

Q: What is your educational and community background?

A: I was born and raised in Fort Lauderdale and graduated from the University of Central Florida with a BS in medical records administration. After working for ten years at several hospitals as director or assistant director of health information management at Florida hospitals both large and small, I followed my spouse to Tallahassee, and then Georgia and South Carolina before arriving in Lakeland in 1991.

In the late 1990s, I decided to make a career change. I earned a master's degree in library science from the University of South Florida and then worked in the public school system as a media specialist for twenty years. Meanwhile, I spent years volunteering with various churches, PTAs, and band and orchestra parents' groups. I've been volunteering at Lakeland Regional Medical Center for the past nine years.



Q: What do you like best about the League?

A: I like that the League is a non-partisan organization, and strongly support the emphasis on voter education and voter registration!

The Classifieds

**Welcome & Thank You,
New & Returning Members!**

**Betty Martin
Pauline Phillips
Beth Landa
Sarah Fortney
Terry Lauretta
Kelly Kautz
Mary Martine-Scheiner
Judy Cleaves**

HELP WANTED!

If you like to write, have some word processing skills, and want to provide a valuable service to your League, we've got a great volunteer spot for you: Editor of our monthly Voter newsletter! Training and support available. Contact Katy or Ben at newsletter@lwvpolk.org!

It Takes a Village!

Thanks to all contributors to this month's Voter: **Paula Mims, Kristen Carlson, Ben Graffam, Heather Bradman, Litreace Coppit, Celena Clark, Pat Denham, Jo Shim, and Linda Donaldson.**

The Editor

So They Say . . .

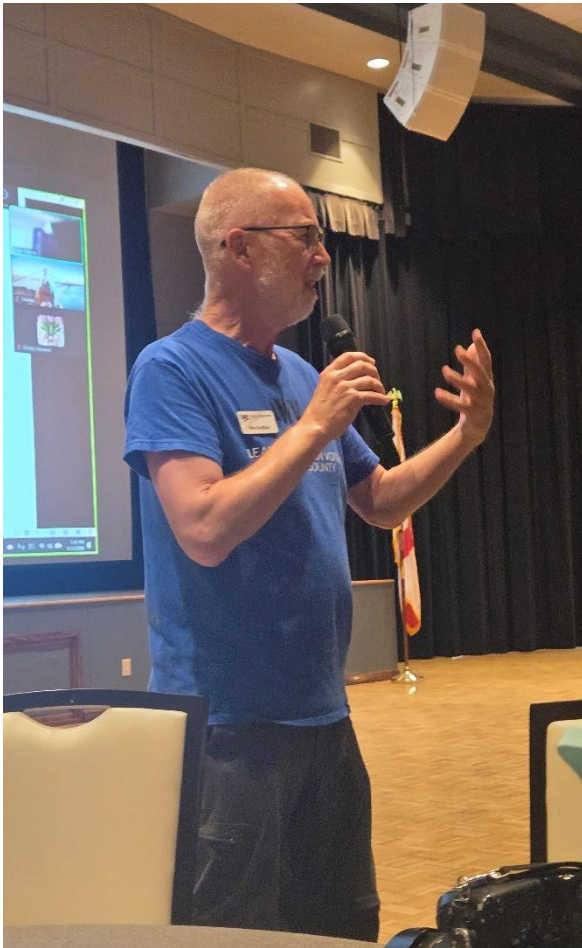
"Voting is the expression of our commitment to ourselves, one another, this country, and this world." -- **Sharon Salzberg**

Next Month: Q & A with Jackye Maxey and a look ahead to Red, White & KABOOM! on Friday, July 3rd and other July events including candidate forums.

HBCU Jump-Off & Speakers Bureau Presentation



Our volunteers had a great time at the HBCU Jump-Off in April. L to R: Carol Steinhoff, Litreace Coppit, Pat Denham, Celena Clark. Photos courtesy of Celena's daughter.



Communications Action Team chair Ben Graffam delivered LWV of Florida's PowerPoint on redistricting to the Solivita Democratic Club of Poinciana on May 13th. The presentation was well received by about 50 attendees. Photos courtesy of Kristen Carlson, who assisted Ben.