



Calendar

May 2nd

LWV Polk County Annual Meeting

May 5th

Cinco de Mayo

May 10th

Mother's Day

May 13th

Deadline for action team and financial reports for next week's BOD meeting to president@lwvpolk.org

May 18th

BOD meeting, 5 pm at The Well, 114 East Parker Street, Lakeland; Zoom option available (contact president@lwvpolk.org)

May 20th

Statewide Clean Energy Action Team call, 5 pm via Zoom (contact cleanenergy@lwvpolk.org for details)

May 21st

Education Action Team meeting, 7 pm via Zoom (contact education@lwvpolk.org)

May 25th

Memorial Day

June 4th

Equal Ground Legislative Debrief, 6-8:30 pm at The Well

June 11th

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

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

2026 Annual Meeting a Success!

Seventy members and friends of the League of Women Voters of Polk County met at Grasslands Country Club in Lakeland on May 2nd to conduct business, visit with longtime friends, and talk seriously about the current state of voting rights.

Highlighting the meeting were remarks by **Jessica Lowe-Minor**, youngest president of the League of Women Voters of Florida ever elected. Lowe-Minor discussed three events occurring within the previous week, all adverse to voting rights:

- SCOTUS decision on Louisiana v. Callais allowing partisan redistricting but not redistricting based on demographic information from the US Census
- Florida midcycle partisan redistricting passed on the heels of the Louisiana decision
- A ruling by the 11th Circuit of the US Court of Appeals upholding 2025 legislation with strict penalties and unnecessary requirements for petition gatherers for state constitutional amendment proposals.

Lowe-Minor encouraged League members and friends to “be positive and proactive,” and attend to the good work of conducting free and fair local elections, specifically by serving as paid poll workers with the local SOE, and volunteering as poll monitors.

LWV Polk County president **Jo Shim** stated that the goals set by the board of directors for this past year were met, and offered a positive message of gratitude and hope. These remarks combined to leave LWV Polk County members uplifted and ready to work!

In other business, members approved the FY 2026-2027 budget, and elected **Jo Shim** and **Pat Denham** as co-presidents, **Kristen Carlson** and **Ashley Haynie** as co-vice presidents, **Donna Daniels** as secretary, and **Jacquelynne Maxey** and **Michael Murray** to two-year terms as directors. **Litreace Coppit**, **Jen Cordova** and **Katy Pace Byrd** continue in the second year of their terms as directors and treasurer. **Vicki Wuertz** and **Chandra Frederick** were elected to the 2027 nominating committee, with a third member to be appointed by and from the board.

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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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Florida

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Celebrating Earth Month 2026

LWV Polk County clean energy action team chair **Karen Freedman** spearheaded two wonderful observances during April: Bok Tower Gardens Student Earth Day on April 17th and the Munn Park DEEM (Drive Electric Earth Month) Show, April 25th.

At the Bok Tower event, Karen reported that more than 400 students (kindergarten through 4th grade) learned how important trees are to our ecosystem, and about their vital role in protecting our climate. "Students enjoyed 'I Love Trees' games, crafts and educational displays, including counting tree rings to find their birth years."

Thanks to LWV Polk County volunteers **Jean Baker, Linda Donaldson, and Heather Bradman** for helping to prepare the day's activities, and to collaborating organizations, the Polk Clean Energy Alliance, Lakeland Democrats, and of course, Bok Tower Gardens! What a great display of community spirit!

See photos, courtesy of Karen, on page 5!

Bringing Floridians Together

Another initiative mentioned by LWV Florida **Jessica Lowe-Minor** in her remarks to our annual meeting on May 2nd is a project to foster among our residents a better ability to find common ground and speak civilly to each other, even when we disagree.

As part of that initiative, LWV members are encouraged to participate in America's Potluck on July 5th. According to LWV Florida, this will be "an opportunity for neighbors to join with one another to share a fun, communal meal, creating a sense of connection and belonging, as well as fostering interactions among people from all walks of life."

For more information about America's Potluck go to <https://america250.utah.gov/americaspotluck/>
Let's put hyper-partisan politics in our rearview mirror!

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

Next Month:

*The Presidents' Message returns.
Also: HBCU Jump-Off, New Board Member
Spotlights, and the Book Corner.*

Issue Action Teams

Clean Energy & Climate,
Karen Freedman,
cleanenergy@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

The recently revitalized **education action team**, currently coordinated by **Linda Donaldson**, has been attending Polk County School Board meetings and monitoring the board's twice monthly work sessions. Interested participants have included LWV Polk members **Carole Essy, Karen Freedman, Ashley Haynie, Beatty Raymond, and Sarah Fortney**.

Private school vouchers and charter schools are two issues of great concern, with LWV Polk County members having a longtime and abiding interest in both. Team members will be reviewing that history.

A bill introduced in the 2025 legislative session to provide more oversight and accountability for taxpayer-funded private school vouchers passed in the Florida Senate but not the House. Former teacher and school board member Sarah Fortney has observed that charter schools are not all equal, with McKeel Academy being an example of a correctly set up and run charter. *See the calendar for this team's next Zoom meeting.*

Linda Donaldson also continues to serve as LWV Polk County's **membership** chair, and has reported that LWV Florida is currently engaged in a membership drive focused on "lapsed" members. (LWV Polk County counts 75+ former members who have drifted away, for whatever reason.) The state league will be providing a toolkit to be used in conjunction with local efforts to extend personal invitations to former members to rejoin. Former members already know the League and understand our mission.

Seeking Voter Newsletter Editor

Do you like to write?

Do you want to learn more about the League?

Do you like paying attention to the details?

Do you have 8-10 hours available per month?

Do you have skills with Word or some other word-processing software?

If your answer to all these questions is "Yes," then this job might be for you! The *Voter* newsletter existed in the format you see here for several years, and more recently in a Mailchimp format. Either template can be provided to you, along with any guidance needed. But you will definitely be able to make the newsletter your own, using some other format if you prefer.

You can also create interesting and appealing articles about current issues before the League, voting rights history, the US Constitution, fun facts about civics, and board and member bios. Contact Ben or Katy at newsletter@lwvpolk.org for more info or answers to your questions about this important service to the members of LWV Polk County.

In Memory of Dr. Sharon Kay Masters

Sharon Kay Masters, Ph.D., Florida Southern College professor emeritus of sociology, who along with her husband the late Bill Fogue, was a longtime LWV of Polk County member and environmental activist, died on April 7, 2026. A native New Yorker, Sharon also carried her passion for the environment to her work as a board member of our regional Soil and Water District and a Sierra Club member, and was a longtime opponent of single use plastics.

Former FSC colleague Lisa Carter recalled that Sharon “loved her pets, was passionate about social issues such as voting rights and civic engagement, and created the women’s studies minor at FSC,” where she had taught since the late 1980s. Former FSC colleague and fellow League member Claudia Slate echoed Lisa’s comments: “A valued sociology colleague at Florida Southern College, Sharon was deeply committed to educating students about women’s studies; she not only taught with passion but . . . published in the field. An ardent vegetarian, she loved her pets dearly—among them Saba, her parrot, and Rodolfo, her Yorkie. We will miss her fearless voice, her steadfast convictions, and the loyalty of her friendship.” Fellow LWV member and friend Andy Crossfield remembers Sharon for “her conviction to justice, and her refreshing quirkiness,” as well as for long telephone conversations in which Sharon demonstrated her wide-ranging curiosity.

A celebration of Sharon’s life will be held on Friday, May 22nd, 5-7 pm at 1474 Longoak Dr. South, Lakeland.

Newly elected LWV Polk County
Board of Directors, April 18, 2017.
L to R: Sharon Masters, Andy
Crossfield, MC Pruitt, Tracy
Kimbrough, Trudy Rankin, Eileen
Swiler, Jerry Weeks, Debra Wright,
Vicki Lowe. Courtesy of *The Ledger*.



The Classifieds

Welcome & Thank You New & Returning Members!

Haley Tonge
James Micah Jarrett
Brenda Reddout
Lori Edwards
Stevie Buck
Nancy M. Simmons
Ann Suich
Marilyn Randolph
Vicki Wuertz
Connie Durrence
Jennell Thornton
Joan Steele
Mary Kay Langford
Carol Steinhoff
Beatty Raymond
Jean Baker
Susan Mcphail-Taylor
Heather Bradman
Eileen Smith
Terry Wells
Eileen & Stuart Swiler
Marissa Mason

Welcome & Thank You, Cont.

Conni Shelnut
Kristen Carlson
Vicki Lowe
Carole & John Essy
April Vita
Jen Cordova
Linda Donaldson
Cindy Sternlicht
Shelley Swenson
Julie Hart
Lynn Paredes-Manfredi
Pat Denham
Chandra Frederick
Nancy Futch
James Byrd
Charlene Bennett

So They Say . . .

“If they don’t give you a seat
at the table, bring a folding
chair.” —Shirley Chisholm

Bok Tower Student Earth Day & Munn Park DEEM (Drive Electric Earth Month)



Bok Tower Gardens in Lake Wales provided a beautiful environment for students and volunteers.



DEEM at Munn Park: Twelve electric vehicles—ten different makes and models—were shown to a diverse crowd of attendees by LWV Polk County members Jo Shim, Heather Bradman, Mike Murray and Karen Freedman.

Annual Meeting 2026



As always, LWV Polk County members were generous donors to RCMA as well as Moms With Monitors.

Photos courtesy of Heather Bradman and Jim Byrd.

