

Calendar

September 7th
Labor Day

September 9th
*Brown Bag Lunch with the League, 11 am at The Well, 114 East Parker Street, Lakeland
(See page 3.)*

September 11th
Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) and High Holy Days begin, concluding with Yom Kippur on September 20-21

September 15th
First Day of National Hispanic Heritage Month

September 15th
National Voter Registration Day

September 17th
*Constitution Day
Hot Topic: Proposed Florida Constitutional Amendments, 5:30 pm at The Well*

September 21st
Clean Energy Action Team Meeting via Zoom at 3 pm

September 22nd
Autumnal Equinox

September 26th
Coffee & Conversation, 10 am at Panera Bread, 137 Landings Boulevard, Winter Haven

September 28th
Board Meeting, 5 pm at The Well

Presidents' Message

Welcome to September! It's time to buckle up and hold on as the general election campaign season is now in full swing. First, thank you to all the volunteers who made our school board candidate forum in July a success as well as the August 20th Polk County Public Schools tax referendum program. (See photos on page 5.)

Let's also give a shout out to the League members who attended the Day of Action on August 8th and completed over 300 postcards which were sent to voters in a low turnout precinct reminding them to vote in the primary election.

Please continue supporting our monthly Hot Topic events as we present a program on September 17th addressing the proposed constitutional amendments appearing on the November ballot. Your fellow League members have been working across the county to educate voters and increase voter turnout in November.

Thank you to the members of our Speakers Bureau who have made multiple presentations across the county and to our voter services action team who have literally been "sweating it" out to engage voters this summer.

But we need everyone! While we will be offering you opportunities to join us at Get Out the Vote (GOTV) events, please remember you have the opportunity daily to interact with your family members, neighbors, grandchildren, colleagues, shopkeepers and others to remind them of the importance of voting.

It will take all of us to increase voter turnout this election season. As a reminder, it takes both large and small interactions to effect change.

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, vice-
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Secretary: Donna Daniels,
secretary@lwvpolk.org

Treasurer: Katy Pace Byrd,
treasurer@lwvpolk.org

Directors:
Litrece Coppit
Jen Cordova
Micah Jarrett
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

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Florida

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US

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**Back to School on Science?
Florida's Future Voters May Not Understand the Impacts of Climate
Change on our State**
by the LWV Polk County Clean Energy & Climate Action Team

As many of our readers will know, Florida has a set of K-12 educational standards designed to assure that all students receive the same academic content and high level of expectations, and teachers' daily lesson plans must include documentation of exactly which Sunshine State Standards guide each lesson's activities.

What some may *not* know is that in preparation for the upcoming science textbook adoption cycle, the Florida Department of Education has already begun contacting publishers to request specially-altered editions of textbooks that better align with state standards. Such requests are permitted, but Florida is doing it a little backwards—securing promises for altered texts *before actually updating the standards*. In fact, the state has only recently begun quietly updating its science standards for the first time since 2008.

According to Jessica Meszaros and Katie Worth of the WUSF/Hechinger Report, in the summer of 2024 the Florida Department of Education started asking publishers to weaken or omit textbook references to climate change, and especially to downplay human-induced causes and fossil fuel's role in climate change.

With the ever-increasing intensity and frequency of extreme weather events, the need to understand our changing climate and its causes and options for remediation is more important than ever. Because Florida is a peninsula, with a longer coastline than any other contiguous state, we are far more susceptible to the effects of climate change, including coastal flooding, storm surges and sea level rise.

By promoting inaccurate and false information about climate science, the Florida Department of Education is short-changing our students and endangering the future of our state. Our young people are inheriting a huge and accelerating timebomb. If they are not armed with scientific facts, they will be unable to find the willpower, support and resources to create solutions.

Source: <https://www.wusf.org/education/2026-08-20/florida-challenging-climate-change-textbooks-quietly-updating-science-standards>

Book Corner

The September Forbidden Florida Read is none other than the Holy Bible, challenged in 63 of 67 counties, banned in 0 counties. The initiator of these challenges, Broward County activist Timothy "Chaz" Stevens, has long focused on separation of church and state. According to Isabella J. "Izzy" Miletic of LWV of Tallahassee, "Stevens' objections to the Bible echoed many of the same arguments commonly used by book banners, citing concerns about 'age appropriateness,' 'bestiality and rape,' 'wokeness,' and 'socio-emotional learning.' But Stevens is clear about his anti-book banning position: 'Let's be honest — banning books is never a good idea, but what's fair is fair . . .'" To learn more about book banning in our state and those advocating against it, visit <https://forbiddenfloridareads.com/the-holy-bible/>.

General Election Ahead!

Deadline to register: Monday, October 5, 2026
Deadline to request VBM: Thursday, October 22, 2026
Election Day: Tuesday, November 3, 2026

Issue Action Teams

Clean Energy & Climate,
Karen Freedman,
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Education, Linda Donaldson,
education@lwvpolk.org

Gun Violence Prevention,
Mike Murray,
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Healthcare, Paula Mims,
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**Reproductive Health &
Justice,** Jen Cordova,
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Immigration, open,
immigration@lwvpolk.org

Natural Resources, open,
naturalresources@lwvpolk.org

**Voter Education & Voter
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Organizational Teams

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Membership, Linda Donaldson,
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Nominating (2027), Vicki
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Speakers Bureau, Kristen
Carlson,
speakerrequest@lwvpolk.org

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

Action Alley

With our issue action teams relatively quiet in the month of August—while vigorous work on getting out the vote certainly continued—it seems like a good time to check into some important September dates. Historically speaking, there's been a lot of action in September!

- In 1870, **Louisa Gardner Swain** of Laramie, Wyoming became the first woman to vote in a US general election.
- In 1893, **New Zealand** became the first self-governing country in the world to grant women the right to vote.
- In 1910, **Alice Stebbins Wells** of Los Angeles, California became the first woman police officer with full arrest powers.
- In 1973, **Billie Jean King** defeated Bobby Riggs in the "Battle of the Sexes" tennis match.
- In 1981, **Sandra Day O'Connor** was sworn in as the first woman US Supreme Court Justice.

And Happy Birthday to the following amazing women:

September 6, 1860—Jane Addams, founder of Hull House in Chicago, first American woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize
September 8, 1945—Esther Seldman Rome, created the Boston Women's Health Book Collective as one of a dozen women who originated the revolutionary women's health guide, *Our Bodies, Ourselves*

September 14, 1830—Emily Edson Briggs, the first woman White House correspondent and first president of the Women's National Press Association in 1882

September 14, 1879—Margaret Higgins Sanger, pioneer in birth control and founder of Planned Parenthood, charged with violating the Comstock Act and distributing contraceptives

September 20, 1899—Anna Lord Strauss, influential president of LWV of the United States 1944-1950, advocated for world peace and the creation of the United Nations

September 23, 1863—Mary Church Terrell, one of the first African American women to earn a college degree, taught at Paul Laurence Dunbar High School in Washington, DC, first African American public high school in the US, first president of the National Association of Colored Women

September 29, 1839—Frances Willard, longtime president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the largest organization of women in the US in the 19th century, helped pass many labor reforms including the eight-hour workday

Sources: AI Overview, nationalwomenshistoryalliance.org, Wikipedia

**New Brown Bag Lunch Every 2nd Wednesday!
Mark Your Calendars, Pack a Lunch, & Join Us for Fun
and Fellowship on September 9th!**

By popular request, LWV Polk is instituting brown bag lunch gatherings on the 2nd Wednesday of every month at The Well, starting at 11:00am. It's a great opportunity to spend time with League friends and make new ones. **Water and dessert will be provided for our inaugural lunch!**

Q & A with Donna Daniels

This month's spotlight is on Donna Daniels, a League member for about a year, currently serving ably as our secretary. Welcome, Donna!

Q: Where do you hail from, and where in Polk County do you live currently?

A: I am originally from and now live in Lakeland.

Q: Please describe your educational background.

A: I graduated from Lakeland High School, then went to the University of South Florida in Tampa where I studied biology and interdisciplinary natural sciences. Later, after working and travelling for a few years, I went to Duke University's Sanford School of Public Policy to study international development.

Q: Tell us about your career and volunteer experiences.

A: No matter where I roam, I find ways to serve my community. At USF, I volunteered on various community service projects with my sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc., and with my church. Then after graduation, I served as an AmeriCorps member for two years, working with communities on the east and west coast of the United States. Later, I joined the Peace Corps and worked as a community development and HIV/AIDS education volunteer in Ghana for two and a half years. When I returned to the U.S. for grad school at Duke, I worked with a substance abuse residential center once a week as part of my fellowship. In between my studies and my fulltime service work, I've served as a literacy tutor for children and adults, a meal prep and delivery volunteer in homeless and elderly communities, a summer camp counselor, and a writer's group leader for an urban grassroots newspaper.

Q: Are you involved with any particular action teams or other League programs since joining LWV of Polk County?

A: I serve on the Voter Services Action Team. Many thanks to Litreace Coppit for recruiting me!

Q: What do you like best about the League?

A: I really appreciate the supportive environment within the League. Thank you all for welcoming me into the group!



The Classifieds

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

**Stephanie Kirnes
Veronica Rountree
Ashley Haynie
Janet Schneider
Mike Murray
Donna Daniels
Elizabeth Engleman
Barbara Scarpa
Litreace Coppit**

Happy Constitution Day!

"We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

It Takes a Village!

Thanks to all contributors to this month's Voter: Pat Denham, Donna Daniels, Karen Freedman, Claudia Slate and Jim Byrd. *The Editor*

HELP WANTED!

Please share your photos from LWV Polk County events, via email or text to newsletter@lwvpolk.org or 863-640-5098. (Email preferred.) Thank you!

A Look Back at August 2026



Above left, Polk County School District officials (from L to R): Jennifer Rouse, chief of staff; Heather Jenkins, chief of operations; and Tracy Collins, chief of schools prepare to deliver an excellent Hot Topic presentation on August 20th on what the school ballot initiative for an increase in the millage rate will mean for Polk County students. Above right, The Well hosted a good-sized audience for the presentation, coordinated for LWV Polk County by the education action team, led by Linda Donaldson, in foreground.



At right, moderator Claudia Slate introduces the speakers. At left, Pat Denham and Jo Shim present certificates to Gioselin Oropeza (yellow sweater) and Ash Gopinath (red shirt) in appreciation for their help with League events and creating social media posts this past summer. Below right: PCSD Superintendent Frederick Heid joined the presentation in progress.



FSC Blast Off—August 25th, 2026



New League member Jennifer Kleman interacts with attendees at Florida Southern College's 2026 Blast Off, an opportunity for students to connect with campus clubs and organizations. Elaine Clemens looks on.



George Jenkins HS junior Madeline Kiley, all smiles with FSC's Moccie, received a certificate for her volunteer service to LWV Polk County over the summer.

Pat Denham gets the League's display table ready for the Blast Off. League members present were encouraged to hear how many students had voted.



Jo Shim, Nancy Simmons and others enjoy Coffee and Conversation in Winter Haven on August 29th.

