



Upcoming Events

April 15th

Zoom Meeting with Barbara Overton, 2:30 pm (see p. 3)

April 22nd

Earth Day

April 22nd

Zoom Meeting with Karen Freedman (see p. 4)

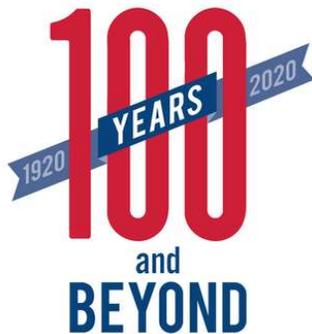
April 23rd

Ramadan begins

April 29th

Zoom Meeting with Julie Hussey (see p. 4)

May BOD Meeting TBD
Annual Meeting TBD



Your League Membership Is More Important Than Ever

LWV Polk membership chair **Linda Donaldson** reports that since January 1st, 53 members have joined for the first time or renewed for FY 2020-2021 (our year runs from April 1st to March 31st). With our membership last year numbering about 135, we have a long way to go! If you have already joined or renewed your membership for the new year, it's deeply appreciated. (If not, please see more about that below!)

Even with our annual meeting plans suspended for now, LWV's work to ensure the right to vote on the part of all citizens seems more important than ever in the time of COVID-19. Recent Zoom presentations by LWVFL president Patti Brigham and Polk County Supervisor of Elections Lori Edwards have made this reality painfully clear. (See p. 2.)

Linda plans to prepare an LWV Polk directory to be distributed to all members electronically once she has received more new/renewed memberships. A new "opt out" check-off box on the membership form will allow sharing of contact information—for League member use only—for those who would like to be in touch with each other apart from meetings planned by our organization. Members participating in the Zoom meetings thus far have noticed how much spirits their spirits have been lifted by just checking in with each other at the meetings as well as individually. Linda has reached out by phone to our life member, **Beverly Sidenstick** of Winter Haven, who is well and appreciated the contact. She is proud of her LWV membership and of her daughter, who serves as a poll worker. Look for a profile of Beverly in our next newsletter!

Linda also participated in a recent statewide call-in meeting with state membership chair **Betty Haynes**. *Thanks to Linda for all she continues to do to maintain our chapter!*

LWV Polk Annual Dues for 2020-2021

Annual dues were payable as of April 1st, but have been slow to trickle in. We know everyone is with us in spirit, but in this strange situation, we are still working and some LWV Polk expenses continue. Members remain in good standing for a short time, but must be removed from our rolls eventually if not paid. Please, if you have not already, send your payment by check (\$60 individual, \$90 household) to PO Box 934, Lakeland, FL 33802-0934, or take care of it by credit card at www.lwvpolk.org/join-renew-or-donate.html.

The LWV's centennial year may seem to have gotten off to a sluggish start, thanks to the pandemic, but we hope that you will still consider paying your dues at the Susan B. Anthony level (\$100), in honor of one of our most esteemed foremothers. We also offer the Carrie Chapman Catt membership at \$250, and the Lois Cowles Harrison membership at \$500. Remember, those increased amounts remain with our local organization, and we promise to put your dollars to good use! Next newsletter: "What Happens to My LWV Polk dues payment?" Thank you!

**2019-2020
LWV Polk Board of
Directors and
Committee Chairs**

President, open

Vice president, Andy
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usandy@aol.com

Secretary, Barbara Wallace,
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Treasurer, Terry Lauretta,
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**SPOTLIGHT ON 2020**

**August 18<sup>th</sup>**

Primary Election for other offices  
**Deadline to register July 20**

**November 3<sup>rd</sup>**

General Election  
**Deadline to register October 5**

**Source:**

<https://dos.myflorida.com/elections/for-voters/election-dates/>

**Polk SOE FAQs for mail-in  
ballots**

<https://www.polkelections.com/m/Voter-Services/Vote-by-Mail-FAQ>

**LWV FL President Patti Brigham on Zoom (April 1<sup>st</sup>):  
“Good News on Amendment 4”**

Senior judge for the US District Court, Eleventh Circuit, Robert Hinkle has denied the request of lawyers representing Governor DeSantis for an *en banc* hearing (i.e., before the full panel of judges). Further, he ordered, the state shall abide by an already issued order by a three-judge panel that a central data base be set up so that returning citizens can more easily determine their financial obligations. The next hearing will occur on Monday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, at which time Brigham is hopeful that Judge Hinkle will rule that Governor DeSantis cannot institute his “pay to play” scheme to deny returning citizens their right to vote. Appeals are definitely possible, however.

Planned LWV FL activities have been canceled or postponed, with some webinars being put together in their stead. Our national LWV may well hold its annual meeting remotely, but Brigham encouraged our local chapter to try to forge ahead with handling our annual business as best we can during this “stay home” time period, within the parameters of our local chapter’s bylaws. It may be possible to hold our own annual meeting virtually, she suggested.

From regular conversations with the president of the Florida Supervisors of Elections (SOEs), she anticipates a huge increase in voting by mail, which the League now supports, and urges all of us to request our mail-in ballots sooner rather than later. This will help pressure state officials to set up additional voting centers to lessen the number of polling places and poll workers needed, and support League calls for an extension of early voting.

**Polk County SOE Lori Edwards on Zoom: “Thanks to Our  
Community Superheroes!”**

In a full briefing to League members by Zoom on Wednesday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, our most well-attended meeting yet, Lori Edwards briefed everyone on the many challenges her office faced for the presidential primary in March, 2019 changes in Florida election laws, and asked for our help in spreading several messages: First, citizens should check their voter registration information, particularly party affiliation, before elections, as Florida is a closed primary state. Second, voting by mail is the best way to vote in our current situation. Third, echoing Patti Brigham, request your mail-in ballot early!

In regard to the presidential primary, Edwards’ office coped with the loss of polling places at the last minute and no-show poll workers afraid to pull duty in light of the emerging pandemic, notification of all voters of replacement polling locations for some 10 to 12 precincts, last minute training of new poll workers, and short staffing at her own office and warehouse.

Edwards credited community superheroes for saving the day, with churches opening their doors as new polling locations, teachers who agreed to serve as poll workers (with schools having just been shut down), and some seasoned poll workers who pulled extra duty.

*(continued on p. 3)*

**Additional Committee and  
Action Team Chairs**

**Natural resources:**

**Climate action**, Bill  
Foege,  
wfoege@tampabay.rr.com  
**Banning plastic bags &  
straws in Polk County**,  
Sharon Masters, see  
above

**Juvenile justice**, Andy  
Crossfield, see above

**Voter registration**, Larry  
Rankin, lallenr@gmail.com

**Women’s reproductive  
health**, Eileen Swiler, see  
above

**Speakers Bureau**, Trudy  
Rankin,  
trudycorryrankin@gmail.com

**Healthcare**, Catherine Price,  
catprice2199@gmail.com

**Immigration**, Ivelisse De La  
Fe, ivelisse3@gmail.com

**Education**, open

**Gun violence prevention**,  
Leander Aulisio,  
oyaji\_lee@msn.com

**Libraries**, Lillian Blessing,  
lillianblessing@gmail.com

**Census**, Mary Lee Duncan,  
MLDMJKHPNS@aol.com

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

**League of Women Voters of  
Florida**

**League of Women Voters of  
the U.S.**

**SOE Lori Edwards on Zoom**  
*(continued from p. 2)*

Having pulled off the primary, Edwards and her counterparts in other Florida counties developed several recommendations for state officials in regard to the upcoming August and November elections, chief among them that both elections should be conducted in an identical manner to avoid adding to voter confusion. Also, the SOEs agreed that early voting days and additional voting locations are needed (also echoing the League’s stance). She is not sure that the recommendations will prevail, as she foresees that any or all of the governor, the state legislature, and the U. S. Congress will become involved. New elections laws may well result.

The most recently passed election laws increase the minimum distance that campaigners must stay away from polling place doors, increase the number of days prior to elections that mail-in ballots must be requested, and add requests for voter contact information on the outsides of mail-in ballot envelopes. For voters, filling in the contact information is optional. “Cures” of outer envelope signatures now must be completed the Thursday after election day (rather than the Monday before). Edwards was not in favor of several of these new provisions, but was pleased to report that Florida will soon be joining the national non-profit that is owned and run by member states, the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC). ERIC compares multiple national and state databases to identify inaccurate registrations, so that local SOEs can work to update those by making name and address changes, or removal. Private information of individual voters is protected.

Edwards ably fielded a number of questions, commenting in particular that she has no power to postpone or otherwise change election dates—and in fact believes that having “immutable” election dates is a good thing. She also has concerns about online voter registration web sites, such as LWV’s vote411.org (although she is not familiar with ours specifically). She would favor instituting open primaries in Florida (which LWV favors), perhaps by starting with allowing voters with no party affiliation to choose which party’s ballot to use in order to participate in a particular primary.

**Upcoming LWV Home Happenings—Seminars by Zoom!**

On **April 15<sup>th</sup>**, we’ll be joined by **Barbara Overton**, LWV Florida census committee chair, who hails from LWV Miami-Dade County. She spoke to the Miami Beach Democratic Club on April 7<sup>th</sup> on “the census, including why it’s important, who gets counted, and how census takers are adjusting to covid-19.” (source: youtube) This will be a great and timely follow-up to the *Lakeland Ledger’s* April 9<sup>th</sup> lead article on what’s happening with the census in Polk County, featuring quotes from LWV Polk’s census committee chair, **Mary Lee Duncan** (“Census proceeds despite COVID-19”).

*(continued on p.4)*

## Upcoming Zoom Meeting Topics (continued from p. 3)

On **April 22<sup>nd</sup>**, one of our own solar energy experts **Karen Freedman** will make a presentation on the subject, "Clean & Renewable Energy Sources and Energy Efficiency." Karen's seminar promises to be broad-ranging in covering everything from what different terms like alternative, clean, and renewable energy actually mean, and how they differ from each other, to the critical importance of energy *efficiency* in fighting the rise of CO<sub>2</sub>, to the future and diversity of electrified modes of transportation, to what we ourselves can do to mitigate the effects of climate change. She'll also give a nod to this special day, which is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day. This presentation was to have been our Hot Topic on April 7<sup>th</sup>, which was canceled due to COVID-19.

On **April 29<sup>th</sup>**, South Carolinian **Julie Hussey**, longtime League member, local president, state co-president, and current national LWV board member will join us. She was to have provided the key note speech at our annual meeting.

Speakers bureau chair and moderator **Trudy Rankin**, who has done a superb job of scheduling these programs and educating all of us on how to participate in a Zoom meeting, will kick off these get-togethers promptly at 2:30 pm on all the Wednesdays left in April. All LWV Polk members will receive an invitation via e-mail a day or two prior to each Wednesday's session which will allow you to "join the meeting" at zoom.com. You don't have to have a Zoom account in order to be part of the meeting, and you will have an opportunity to ask questions.

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Zoom Meeting Etiquette for Attendees [Source: <https://www.technology.pitt.edu/blog/zoom-tips>]

- **[Mute your microphone](#)**
To help keep background noise to a minimum, make sure you mute your microphone when you are not speaking.
- **Be mindful of background noise**
When your microphone is not muted, avoid activities that could create additional noise, such as shuffling papers.
- **Position your camera properly**
If you choose to use a web camera, be sure it is in a stable position and focused at eye level, if possible. Doing so helps create a more direct sense of engagement with other participants.
- **Limit distractions**
You can make it easier to focus on the meeting by turning off notifications, closing or minimizing running apps, and muting your smartphone.
- **Avoid multi-tasking**
You'll retain the discussion better if you refrain from replying to emails or text messages during the meeting and wait to work on that PowerPoint presentation until after the meeting ends.

The Classifieds

WANTED: Newsletter Ideas for the Pandemic

With League face-to-face activities absent for the time being, ways to enliven our continuing discourse are welcome! Contact newsletter editor Katy Pace Byrd at byrdkp@gmail.com with your great ideas for newsletter articles!

WANTED: Zoom Meeting Ideas!

Gatherings for Hot Topics can't happen these days, but the sky is the limit for Zoom meetings and seminars, with webinars also a possibility. What should we be talking about these days? Who would be an interesting and timely speaker or presenter? Contact LWV Polk by e-mailing LWVPOLKFL@gmail.com.