



Upcoming Events

May BOD Meeting TBD
Annual Meeting TBD

May 1st
Law Day; International Workers Day

May 5th
Cinco de Mayo

May 6th
Zoominar: Farmworkers in the Pandemic; National Nurses Week Begins

May 7th
*National Day of Prayer
National Day of Reason*

May 8th
National Child Care Provider Appreciation Day

May 13th
Zoominar TBD

May 25th
Memorial Day Holiday

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What Happens to My LWV Polk Dues Payment?

LWV Polk dues payments are coming in, so if you have not already, send your payment by check 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. Thanks to all!

LWV Polk membership chair **Linda Donaldson** has written an explanation of where our chapter dues go for the new welcome brochure she is preparing. Here is that information:

*For each individual payment of \$60, the national portion is \$36.00 and the state portion is \$15.00. Thus only \$9 remains with our local chapter. In the case of a household membership (an additional member in the same family), the amount for the extra person is \$30.00 (a total dues amount of \$90). The national portion of that is \$16.00, the state portion is \$7.50, and **LWV Polk retains \$6.50.***

***Why should this be?** Nationally, numerous laws including cumbersome voter registration requirements and mandates that purge voter rolls are challenged in courts. On a state level, LWVFL has fought gerrymandering and more recently joined in defending former felons' restored voting rights. The state League also contracts with a professional lobbying team to promote our interests to legislators and keep us informed about legislative actions. (See this session's legislative brief on p. 6.) Both LWVUS and LWVFL have paid staff and provide many resources to local leagues. All local leagues are volunteer groups and responsible for their own budgets. In short, your dues dollars have a positive impact far beyond Polk County.*

By the way, all extra funds generated by our Susan B. Anthony and other higher membership levels remain with us at LWV Polk County.

A Message from the LWV Polk Board of Directors

In a normal year, the board would now be preparing for our annual meeting. Of course, 2020 will be remembered as anything but normal. The LWV Polk board is now working on how best to include our membership in a virtual annual meeting, required of all chapters in order to approve new officers and a budget. While challenging, the task is nothing compared to those changes we are all facing every day. The work of LWV is important, and especially in this election year, we pledge to each of you that the mission will go on, your voice will be respected and the work of 100 years will endure. We thank you for your continued support of the LWV Polk and for your understanding as we work through the year ahead.

2019-2020

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SPOTLIGHT ON 2020

August 18th

Primary Election for other offices
Deadline to register July 20

November 3rd

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>

Editor's Note

Why a "Mega Issue" for the May newsletter? "Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures (Benét J. Wilson)." I have learned so much from the many wonderful Zoom presentations we've shared. Providing summaries of these Zoominars has felt useful, and it's my hope that those who haven't attended so far will feel inspired to give Zoom a try for as long as we continue to have these meetings. I also hope that you feel, as I do, much better armed than a month ago with information and new ways of action needed to see us through this critical year. Finally, I hope that you too feel more connected than ever to our local chapter as well as to our state organization. **A Table of Contents on p. 1 will help you navigate this newsletter.**

Grateful thanks to **Barbara Wallace**, who has graciously provided her notes from some of the recent Zoominars. Her notes have informed several articles about these meetings. Barbara also provided the summary of May 1st's "Lunch and Learn" with Craig Latimer. (See p. 7.) Much appreciated, Barbara!

Thanks also to **Ann Weeks**, whose extremely useful condensation of state law on the workings of county canvassing boards will stand us in good stead moving forward. (See p. 5.) Timely contribution, Ann!

Last but not least, thanks go to **Jim Byrd** for his assistance with the newsletter since September 2019. He keeps the boxes straight, helps import graphics and photos, and provides useful tutorials whenever asked!

A final observation: As I reviewed **Trudy Rankin's** recording of **Julie Hussey's** presentation via Zoom (see p. 4), I was struck by the talents, skills, and strengths of this wonderful group of folks. I'm so glad Julie asked each person at the meeting to share his or her superpowers! LWV Polk--a super organization, indeed!

Vote by Mail Information & Deadlines

QUESTION: **When** may a voter request a vote by mail ballot?

ANSWER: Deadline for request must be made **no later than 5:00 p.m. on the 10th day before the election.**

QUESTION: **How** may a person request a vote-by-mail ballot?

ANSWER: [There are three different ways.]

- **Call** Election Headquarters at (863) 534-5888
- **Fill Out Request** [online] [click here](#)
- **Stop by** Election Headquarters at 250 South Broadway Ave., Bartow, Florida 33830, or our Operations Center at 70 Florida Citrus Blvd., Winter Haven, Florida 33880

For the August primary election, the deadline to request a mail-in ballot is by 5 pm on Saturday, August 8th, 2020. For the November general election, the deadline to request a mail-in ballot is by 5 pm on Saturday, October 24th, 2020.

NOTE: Both Supervisor of Elections (SOE) of Polk County Lori Edwards and the SOEs of Florida recommend voting by mail this year, and SOE Edwards recommends that requests for mail-in ballots be made as soon as possible, starting **now**.

Source: <https://www.polkelections.com/m/Voter-Services/Vote-by-Mail-FAQ#q1>

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

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

Education, open

Gun violence prevention, Leander Aulisio, oyaji_lee@msn.com

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Census, Mary Lee Duncan, MLDMJKHPNS@aol.com

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**Connect with us on Facebook!**

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

**League of Women Voters of Florida**

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

**Barbara Overton, LWV FL Committee Chair, on the Census**

The normal season for a census, always officially kicked off on April 1<sup>st</sup>, will stretch longer this year because of the pandemic, with results due to the president April 2021 rather than December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020. “Much work has already been accomplished, and many have already participated, but participation rates are down significantly compared to previous censuses,” Overton said in a Zoominar on April 15th.

People should understand that every person not counted represents a loss of federal dollars to their states. Politically, persons not counted cause states not to have appropriate representation in the U. S. Congress. State and local districts are allocated relying on these data as well.

Leaguers can help by dispelling census myths when presented with an opportunity, or even seek out such opportunities. Counters to census misinformation include:

- The choice of Hispanic ethnicity was added at the request of the Hispanic community
- U. S. citizenship and immigrant status are NOT included as a question on the 2020 Census form
- You don’t actually need that “unique” code (your address is what is key) to complete the census online or by phone
- The official census form does not ask for social security numbers, income, pin codes, or passwords (any form containing such queries is fraudulent)
- The U. S. Census data are held with an extremely high level of encryption
- Personal information is protected by **federal law for 72 years**

*Continued on p. 5*

**Solar Energy and Energy Efficiency**

On April 22<sup>nd</sup>, Earth Day, Karen Freedman presented a Zoominar on one of her favorite subjects: solar energy and energy efficiency. She began by citing her environmental heroes young and old, from Greta Thunberg to Jane Fonda. Locally, she mentioned **Rick Garrity**, who got a solar co-op going here, **Bill Foege**, current chair of our climate action committee, **Charlene Bennett**, and **John Wing** for their work on LWV Polk’s environmental action committee and in the community. She’s found a silver lining in the COVID-19 pandemic: less pollution in air and noise, improved air quality and in the climate generally with fewer cars on our roads.

In an excellent PowerPoint she’s developed, Freedman provided a basic course on the forces at work, both natural and human-made sources of CO<sub>2</sub>, a primary greenhouse gas. The wide-ranging consequences of climate change include “sunny day flooding”—a phenomenon which has finally awakened Florida legislators to the reality of climate change. Many of the 25 most vulnerable cities in the U. S. are located in Florida. Digging down into sea level rise and the pros and cons of our many sources of energy, Karen emphasized our need for sources of energy both **clean** and **renewable**.

*Continued on p. 6*

## Connecting with LWV Florida!

If you have not set up your own account (free, of course) at [www.lwvfl.org](http://www.lwvfl.org), you are missing out! Your membership in LWV Polk does not automatically translate into your receiving **The Florida Voter** newsletter and other information from our state organization (although you do automatically receive LWV Polk's own *The Voter* newsletter). In addition to a highly informative column by state president **Patti Brigham**, the state newsletter features the latest word on the League's urgent recommendations and immediately needed actions, notices of upcoming "Lunch and Learn" Zoom meetings (every Friday at 1 pm-see below) and statewide issue teleconferences, as well as links to state and national coverage of LWV FL and its issues.

The most recent issue of **The Florida Voter** provided an update on the trial about SB 7066 that began April 27<sup>th</sup>. (This Florida Senate bill "improperly implemented Amendment 4.") The trial has yet to conclude, but for those of us following this critical issue, any news is welcome.

LWV FL's "Lunch and Learn" Zoominars have proven extremely popular, with well over 200 Leaguers tuning in every Friday. At the first of the state League's Zoom meetings, operations manager **Regina Sheridan** provided a tutorial on Zoom use, and links to her tutorials are still available at

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ySU7gZBu1QuY6haZ1w3U4bjAebQ-pV6>

If you have questions, send them to Regina at [info@lwvfl.org](mailto:info@lwvfl.org).

Also during that first Zoominar, state communications manager **Blake Summerlin** shared graphics that the state and national Leagues have prepared for the campaign to encourage voting by mail and requesting your mail-in ballot ASAP.

**Lisa Calleja**, LWV FL executive director, displayed the League's new purple t-shirt recognizing the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the LWV. The t-shirts were promoted in the April 19<sup>th</sup> edition of **The Florida Voter** and are available for purchase here: <https://www.lwvfl.org/product/i-believe-in-women-t-shirt/>. A lively Q & A session followed.

## Julie Hussey: Defending Democracy for All the People

Hussey began her Zoom presentation to LWV Polk on April 29<sup>th</sup> by introducing herself and describing her experience with the League of Women Voters. A member of LWV since 1992, Hussey has witnessed change in the League over the decades, rebounding from a time when the League found itself sidelined by media takeover of hosting presidential debates and without more current positions on issues like the environment and education.

In her state of South Carolina, a move to disallow third-party voter registration sparked disillusionment, but ultimately a resurgence. Hussey's service with LWV includes work in the trenches, then going on to become Charleston, SC chapter president, South Carolina state co-president, LWV national board member (representing Florida and several other states), and LWV Education Fund board member. Her terms on the national boards are coming to an end, but her work on the issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and democracy for all will continue.

Separating the terms equality and equity is an important first step. Equality implies benefits to everyone in a fair manner, but involves identical criteria for all, for example for voter registration. Achieving true equity, on the other hand, requires that we ask ourselves how we might create environments needed for different groups of potential voters to become registered, empowered voters. To improve voter turnout or increase voter registration in various populations (different in regard to age, ethnicities, and income levels), individual and systemic barriers to access must be identified and removed. For example, Zoominar attendee **Randy Barnes** of the Polk County Voter's League reported that the young people he speaks with have little trust that their votes will be meaningful in our electoral college system, and that he hopes to build bridges between his organization and LWV Polk.

*Continued on p. 7*

## County Canvassing Boards 101 by Ann Weeks

What is canvassing? Here's a definition specific to the canvassing of votes in an election: "to examine in detail . . . : (votes) officially for authenticity."

[Source: <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&q=canvass+verb+definition>]

In Florida, "The county canvassing board shall be composed of the supervisor of elections; a county court judge, who shall act as chair; and the chair of the board of county commissioners." This law, Statute Title IX, Chapter 102, Section 102.141, designates several areas of responsibility for canvassing boards.

Responsibilities of a canvassing board (condensed for ease of understanding) are:

1. County canvassing boards shall meet in a building accessible to the public in the county where the election occurred.
2. County canvassing boards shall meet at a time and place to be designated by the supervisor of elections to publicly canvass the absent electors' ballots by votes-by-mail and provisional ballots.
3. Public notice of the time and place where the canvassing will meet for vote-by-mail ballots and provisional ballots must be given 48 hours before the meeting.
4. These public notices are to be published on the county supervisor of election's website and one or more newspapers in that county.

The statute contains additional provisions and may be read here in its entirety:

<https://www.flsenate.gov/Laws/Statutes/2018/102.141>

### Overton on the 2020 Census, continued from p. 3

Difficulties counting certain groups do exist; for example, very young children, very elderly people, snowbirds, the disabled, minorities, renters, low income people, folks who distrust government, rural dwellers, non-English speakers, various types of short-term residents. The good news is that special efforts are made by the Census to count these kinds of populations.

Other ways that LWV members can help are disseminating information in the form of flyers, social media postings, links to 2020 Census web site, and help numbers on all our own publications (see p. 8). Letters to the editor are an excellent way to urge that residents complete the 2020 Census if they've not done so already.

Overton spoke briefly regarding census response goals in Florida. An interactive map, with instructions on how to use it, is available at <https://2020census.gov/en/response-rates.html>. Significant work remains to be done to equal or better Florida's 2010 response rate of 74%.

Overton fielded questions from 20+ attendees at this April 15<sup>th</sup> LWV Polk Zoominar, moderated by **Trudy Rankin**, with questions including how to convince college-age people that the Census is important and what help is available for mentally challenged people. In terms of non-English speakers, LWV Polk has distributed Spanish-language flyers. As a conclusion to this Zoom meeting, attendees brainstormed ideas to get the word out: from chalking census reminders on the sidewalk; reaching out to three-five folks you know and asking each of them to reach out similarly; or using newsletters of other organizations to which we belong (if allowed). President of the LWV of Hillsborough County **Idelia Phillips**, our guest for this seminar, suggested that churches might be a very valuable way to reach people.

## State End-of-Session Legislative Briefing

Led by Jeff Sharkey, members of the Capital Alliance Group (lobbyists retained by LWV Florida) briefed some 200 League members from across the state on Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup>. (This was part of the Lunch and Learn series of our state LWV.) He stated that although “not all our issues are loved in Tallahassee,” the LWV in general is well thought of. The firm recommends increased targeting of our priorities each session, as well as the adoption of brand-strengthening strategies.

The legislative session ended in March 2020 included legislative approval of a complicated, increased state budget. Good news in this budget on issues of interest to the League included money for teacher and state worker raises, funding for the Everglades and the environment generally, and full funding for the first time in 13 years of the Sadowski Trust Fund for affordable housing.

The governor is purposefully waiting to receive the proposed budget from the legislature because he wants to be able to veto some items in favor of funding other items needed in the current health emergency. However, Senate president Bill Galvano, R-District 21, has said that at \$4 billion, Florida’s reserves should be able to handle these needs with no veto of current allocations. Also, Florida should be receiving \$12 billion from the federal government.

Sharkey provided a rundown of bills prioritized by the League that passed.

- SB 70, Alyssa’s Law, Florida School Panic Alert
- SB 404, Parental Consent Prior to Receiving an Abortion, passed on party lines despite powerful testimony from representatives of LWV FL
- SB 1794, Constitutional Amendments. The LWV and other public interest groups have called upon the governor to veto this bill which puts more obstacles in the way of citizens’ right to amend the state constitution
- SB 1312, Voting Systems. The LWV was very supportive of this bill.

LWV FL supplied a number of bills to the Florida House on issues such as domestic violence, child welfare standards, and education. The Capital Alliance Group team fielded a number of questions regarding legislative actions on the environment, on legislative attempts to curtail “home rule” by cities and counties, the disastrous “roads to ruin” legislation that has already been signed into law by the governor, juvenile justice, and vote-by-mail (no action yet). Asked how LWV can have maximum impact in the next legislative session, Sharkey suggested setting priorities in the fall before the spring sessions, and focus, focus, focus on those priorities.

A complete and detailed wrap-up on the session is available at <https://www.lwvfl.org/capitol-report-2020-legislative-wrap-up/>.

### Freedman on Solar Energy and Energy Efficiency, continued from p. 3

Some such energy sources have the advantage of being considered carbon neutral or allowing the capture of methane; others, like wind and solar, are considered more and more to be the future of responsible energy use. Solar, with many types of applications and uses, enables communities to bounce back more quickly after national disasters. “Florida should be a number one solar and wind state,” Freedman said.

Another way we can all help is to increase our efficiency of energy use. Relatively simple measures like switching to or adding energy efficient (LED) light bulbs, heat pumps, insulation—if used by all—could cut our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 50%. Federal investment tax credits for some such installations have existed, but for residential customers will come to an end in 2022, by a 2017 act of the U. S. Congress.

Freedman concluded by quoting Henry David Thoreau, who wrote in 1860, “What is the use of a house if you haven’t got a tolerable planet to put it on?” If you would like to join the climate action team, contact Karen or Bill (e-mails listed elsewhere in this newsletter).

## Craig Latimer's Florida Elections Update By Barbara Wallace

Guest speaker at May 1<sup>st</sup>'s LWV FL Lunch and Learn was **Craig Latimer**, supervisor of elections for Hillsborough County and incoming president of the Florida Supervisors of Elections (FSE) speaking on Florida election procedures. He discussed current issues in election procedures, and answered questions from some of the more than 250 participants from all over Florida.

FSE and individual county supervisors of elections (SOEs) encourage not only vote-by-mail but also online registration. To register by mail, you must provide your driver's license number or state ID number, or your social security number. SOEs across Florida promote voter registration by going to high schools, citizenship ceremonies, and Hispanic centers, and work with many organizations like LWV to register new voters. Florida is now part of ERIC, a national database of people who have moved or died. Registering online is available to all in Florida but requests for vote-by-mail ballots are made to your county SOE. Hillsborough County is promoting vote-by-mail with fliers at restaurants and in school lunches distributed during the stay-at-home orders.

Completed ballots can be mailed or dropped off at early voting sites or county election offices. It is legal to deliver a ballot for a neighbor but not to submit multiple such ballots. There are special procedures for collecting ballots at nursing homes. Ballots must be received by 7 pm on election day to be counted. In response to several questions about ballots received after the deadline, Latimer reiterated that by law ballots must be received by election day except for overseas military or civilians whose ballots will be counted if they are received within 10 days after the election.

*Continued on p. 8*

### Hussey on Defending Democracy, continued from p. 4

Hussey stressed that understanding local voting processes in detail can be very important. Using data from the ACLU, Hussey reported that LWV Polk might consider the higher rate of rejections of mail-in ballots from different racial and age groups. Conversations with the Polk SOE might help us to nail down the factors in rejection of mail-in ballots. **Ann Weeks** suggested we also pay close attention to the Polk County Elections Canvassing Board, the three-person body that accepts or rejects all mail-in ballots. Ann has prepared information for us on how canvassing boards work. (See p. 5.)

**Trudy Rankin** proposed some bridge-building might be accomplished among the Polk County Voter's League, LWV Polk, and the NAACP by having small groups participate in reading and discussing some of the materials on Julie Hussey's list of recommended resources (shown below). Several participants are interested in studying American University professor and best-selling author Ibram X. Kendi's 2019 book, ***How to Be an Antiracist***.



Great  
resources

- **The LWV.org Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Guide** - <https://www.lwv.org/league-management/diversity-equity-inclusion/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-guide>
- "Scene on Radio" podcast – seasons on Whiteness and Democracy (and masculinity)
- **White Fragility** by Robin D'Angelo
- **How to be an Anti-Racist** by Ibram X. Kendi
- "In the Thick" from Futuro Media
- The Racial Equity Institute from Greensboro – featured in "Scene on Radio" intensive multi-day trainings
- Talk's by Heather Hackman

## Latimer on Florida Elections, continued from p. 7

Ballots can be rejected if signatures do not match signatures on file. Participants asked several questions about signatures. Signatures may be matched from several sources. Most common is the driver's license signature. A voter can always update his or her signature. Signatures can only be rejected by the county canvassing board. If a signature is rejected, the voter is contacted and has until the Thursday after the election to provide identification and "remedy the ballot."

Additional questions and answers included:

- **Can voters be removed from the rolls if they don't vote?** If a registered voter does not vote in a general election, a series of three postcards is sent to the address before making the voter inactive. After two election cycles of not voting a voter becomes ineligible to vote from that address.
- **When and how are mail-in ballots counted?** Latimer stated that **all** ballots are counted by stand-alone machines. Mail-in ballots and early ballots are counted as they are received, and are the first ballots tabulated on election day. There have been no problems with cyber interference, and voter registration rolls and all election equipment are monitored by the FBI.
- **What's the latest on ex-felons ability to vote in the coming elections?** Latimer said the supervisors are waiting for a final decision from the courts, and he definitely hopes that SOEs will not be required to determine whether a voter has outstanding fines or fees!

## The Classifieds

# www.2020census.gov

Important phone numbers for responding to the census [source:  
<https://2020census.gov/en/ways-to-respond/responding-by-phone.html>]

English 844-330-2020  
Mandarin 844-391-2020  
Vietnamese 844-461-2020  
Russian 844-417-2020  
Tagalog 844-478-2020  
French 844-494-2020  
Portuguese 844-474-2020

Spanish 844-468-2020  
Cantonese 844-398-2020  
Korean 844-392-2020  
Arabic 844-416-2020  
Polish 844-479-2020  
Haitian Creole 844-477-2020  
Japanese 844-460-2020

