



Calendar

April 6th

Municipal Elections

April 7th

Closing the Gap: Susan Gipson on supporting a child in the criminal justice system, noon via Zoom

April 9th

Deadline for submission of BOD meeting agenda items

April 12th

*DEI Book Discussion: Chapters 1-5 of **Just Medicine**, noon via Zoom*

April 14th

Closing the Gap: Carolyn Baldwin on independent, charter, private and public education in Polk County, noon via Zoom

April 16th

BOD meeting, noon via Zoom

April 21st

***Closing the Gap:** Lillian Blessing and Brenda Patterson on the Polk County Library System, noon via Zoom*

April 22nd

Earth Day

April 26th

*DEI Book Discussion: Chapters 6-Conclusion of **Just Medicine**, noon via Zoom*

April 28th

LWV Polk Annual Meeting, 11:30 am via Zoom

LWVUS Vice President Jessica Lowe Minor to Keynote Annual Meeting

Tallahassee-based **Jessica Lowe-Minor** is a passionate voting rights advocate who joined the LWVUS board of directors in 2016. She has extensive nonprofit sector experience and was the executive director of the Institute for Nonprofit Innovation and Excellence in Tallahassee, Florida from 2015-2018.

From 2010-2014, she served as the executive director of the League of Women Voters of Florida. In that role, she supervised the agency's full and part-time staff, facilitated internal and external communications, operationalized strategy, developed systems to establish goals and track deliverables, and represented the League's interests before state and local elected officials, coalition partners, donors and others.

Lowe-Minor's tenure at the Florida League contributed to a significant increase in organizational revenue, membership, and overall visibility. She has also worked as a legislative advocate at the Florida Capitol for a number of women's organizations. Lowe-Minor has a master of arts degree in women's and gender studies from the program in interdisciplinary humanities at Florida State University, and has taught classes at both FSU and Tallahassee Community College. She is also a licensed realtor, the mother of two young daughters, and enjoys hiking, horseback riding, and listening to podcasts.

Source: <https://www.lwv.org/about-us/staff-leadership/jessica-lowe-minor>

Municipal Elections Tuesday, April 6th

Most municipalities in Polk County will hold elections for local officials from 7 am to 7 pm on Tuesday, April 6th. For more information, check city websites and polkelections.com.

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2020-2021

LWV Polk Board of Directors

Co-Presidents, Vicki Lowe, vgl.art@tampabay.rr.com & Sandy Sheets, sandra.sheets@gray-robinson.com

Vice president, Andy Crossfield, usandy@aol.com

Secretary, Barbara Wallace, barbaraw6@gmail.com

Treasurer, Terry Lauretta, terry@cpsgroupcpas.com

Natalie Alexich, nalexich@aol.com

Charlene Bennett, charleneben@earthlink.net

Katy Pace Byrd,* byrdkp@gmail.com

Emily Crain, emily.crain@gray-robinson.com

Jiwa Farrell, jwfarrell2011@gmail.com

Karen Freedman,* kefreedman@hotmail.com

Eileen Swiler, seswiler@msn.com

**Terms end in 2022; all others end in 2021.*

SPOTLIGHT ON 2021 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS Tuesday, April 6th

Bartow, commission seats 1 & 2

Davenport, seats 1 & 2

Dundee, seats 2 & 4

Eagle Lake, seats 2 & 4

Haines city, seat 5

Lake Alfred, seats 3 & 4

Lake Wales, seats 2 & 4

Lakeland (commission district D, special election)

Winter Haven*, seats 4 & 5

**Winter Haven will hold its election on November 2nd, 2021*

Check municipality websites for details.

Co-Presidents' Message

Dear LWV Polk Members,

Thank you again for all your wonderful work over this past year, and welcome to another productive year with LWV Polk!

We want to encourage you to attend our Zoom annual meeting on Wednesday, April 28th. Please sign on early, at 11:30 am. In preparation, please review the materials that have been submitted for your approval: the FY 2021-22 proposed budget; proposed bylaws changes; proposed slate of officers and directors; and the proposed program of LWV Polk. All proposals requiring board approval before submission to the membership were approved at our March 19th board meeting.

As was done last year, for our first annual meeting via Zoom, the annual meeting program booklet for 2021, which includes annual reports from the committees, will be mailed to you. Many thanks to **Andy Crossfield** for his work on compiling this important annual document in the life of our organization.

Many of you have renewed your memberships in the past few months, and we thank you! If you have not yet done that, please remember that you may not vote unless you are current on your dues. See *The Classifieds* for your payment options.

In other matters, the State of Florida legislative season is still underway, and our lobbyists and legislative volunteers in Tallahassee find themselves facing "one bad bill hearing after the next." (*Capitol Report*, March 31, 2021). LWV Florida's utmost priorities are opposing election changes legislation (SB 90; HB7041) that will result in voter suppression, and proposed anti-protest legislation (HB 1, passed March 26th; SB 484). LWV Florida is providing excellent talking points for member use when talking to others about the proposed voter suppression measures

<https://files.constantcontact.com/9e023c2e001/3cfef413-a565-4815-8157-33948e4f85c4.pdf>. Be sure to check out the *Capitol Report* which you should be receiving in your email during the session. *Vicki Lowe & Sandy Sheets*

Closing the Gap Lineup for April

The last session of Closing the Gap this month will be used to conduct our annual meeting, but meanwhile, we have three exciting presentations. On April 7th, **Susan Gipson** will share her experiences supporting her son while he has been in the criminal justice system for many years. On April 14th, educator and retired All Saints Academy head of school **Carolyn Baldwin** will discuss the many options for educating children in Polk County and their implications. On April 21st, we will hear from newly appointed LWV Polk library chair **Lillian Blessing** and fine arts librarian **Brenda Patterson**.

Committees & Action Teams

Education, Bobbie Boatright Harris,
bharris10@tampabay.rr.com

Gun violence prevention, inactive

Healthcare, Paula Mims,
pmmims@aol.com

Immigration, Natalie Alexich,
see page 2

Juvenile justice, Andy Crossfield, see page 2

Libraries, Lillian Blessing,
lillianblessing@gmail.com

Media, Jerry Weeks,
geraldibus1@gmail.com

Membership, Linda Donaldson,
lindajdonaldson@yahoo.com

Natural resources:

Climate action, Charlene Bennett and Karen Freedman, see page 2

Plastics, Sharon Masters,
smasters4549@icloud.com

Nominating-2021, Natalie Alexich, see page 2

Outreach, Linda Donaldson, see above

Speakers Bureau, Trudy Rankin,
trudycorryrankin@gmail.com

Voter services, Jiwa Farrell, see page 2

Women's reproductive health, Eileen Swiler, see page 2

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**LIKE US ON FACEBOOK!**

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

**League of Women Voters of Florida**

## Action Ally

LWV Polk committees and action teams continue to be active during the Florida legislative session (which ends April 30<sup>th</sup>) and beyond. **Sharon Masters** has revived the **plastics action team** with a goal of diminishing use of bags, straws and other single-use products via community outreach. New members to the team are welcome, and LWV Polk members' support is requested for **Senate Bill 594** and **House Bill 6027**, companion bills meant to *stop* "preemptions of local law relating to the regulation of . . . plastic [products]." The bills are now being held in committees, and you can help by contacting the relevant committee chairs, **Senator Jason Brodeur** and **Representative Bob Rommel** as indicated:

Brodeur

850-487-5009 (tel)  
407-752-0258 (text)

Rommel

850-717-5106 (tel)

[bob.rommel@myfloridahouse.gov](mailto:bob.rommel@myfloridahouse.gov)

[jason@jasonbrodeur.com](mailto:jason@jasonbrodeur.com)

**Natalie Alexich** will be reconstituting the **immigration committee** with a mission of conducting legislative and scholarly research, hearing from guest speakers, viewing documentaries and visiting pertinent locations. Research and educational efforts will support voter education and activism. **All interested in joining this committee, contact Natalie!**

LWV Polk's **healthcare action team**, led by **Paula Mims**, has added to its membership and is moving on the committee's identified priorities for the next 12 months: medicaid expansion; mental health needs with emphasis on gaps in care available in Polk County; pre-, peri-, and post-natal maternal and infant health, with emphasis on women of color and women in poverty. The team will welcome **Dr. Sharetta Jones Remikie**, director of maternal child health for the March of Dimes on **April 2 at 2:30 pm via Zoom**. All are welcome. Contact Paula for more information.

The newly reformed LWV Polk **outreach committee** (formerly the voter outreach committee), led by **Linda Donaldson**, will assist with community engagement on healthcare issues, and speakers bureau chair **Trudy Rankin** will contribute her expertise to efforts on the healthcare team's mental health focus.

**Karen Freedman** of the **climate action committee** submits the following ideas for awareness and action in this area with a DEI slant: urban farm and gardening ordinances designed to encourage locally grown health produce and tree planting and urban green spaces; Solar United Neighbors 30 Million Solar Homes Campaign (<https://www.solarunitedneighbors.org/>); the Solar and Energy Loan Fund, <https://solarenergyloanfund.org/>.

The **DEI discussion group** will take up *Just Medicine: A Cure for Racial Inequality in American Health* on April 12. Contact [byrdkp@gmail.com](mailto:byrdkp@gmail.com) for more information. Other books are in the pipeline as the group seeks to continue its educational process, broadening the subject matter to be considered to include the experiences and issues of indigenous peoples, Latinx populations, and members of the Asian-American community.



Intended to strengthen member familiarity with the current leadership of our organization, this new feature makes its debut this month. The newsletter editor offers to go first, to get herself out of the way!

Native North Carolinian **Katy Pace Byrd** has spent the better part of her adult life in Georgia and Florida, with about 20 years' residence in each state, Savannah in Georgia, and Tallahassee and Lakeland in Florida. Her bachelor's degree in English and graduate level coursework in writing and rhetoric, completed in her forties, and her wide experience working with both businesses and non-profits in many capacities (both paid and unpaid) combine to make her a Jill-of-all-trades.

Favorite pursuits include writing and editing of all kinds (except fiction!) and expanding her awareness on many subjects. The latter has led her to take an intense interest in the DEI efforts of LWV Polk. She will begin the second year of a two-year term on the board of LWV Polk, produces our monthly newsletter *The Voter*, and since June 2020 has hosted our DEI book discussion group. In her free time, Katy continues her weekly studio art lessons, serves as a docent at the Polk Museum of Art, and helps care for the five dogs she shares with her spouse, retired college professor and administrator Jim Byrd, who is also a League member.

## The Classifieds

### Welcome New Members!

**Melissa Tyrone**

**Kris Fitzgerald**

### Annual Dues Now Payable

By check to PO Box 934,  
Lakeland, FL 33802, or  
online at [lwvpolk.org](http://lwvpolk.org).  
Please consider renewing  
at the Susan B. Anthony  
level.

### WANTED-Board Member Bios

Send two paragraphs about yourself to [nalexich@aol.com](mailto:nalexich@aol.com) or [byrdkp@gmail.com](mailto:byrdkp@gmail.com) for the feature above. Do it now, or you will be called upon! Thank you!

### So They Say . . .

"I'd like to be remembered as a person who wanted to be free and wanted other people to be also free." -- Rosa Parks