



Calendar

December 1st
Closing the Gap #72:
Holiday Reflections, noon via Zoom (see right)

December 8th
Closing the Gap #73: *David Price, noon via Zoom (see right)*

December 10th
Committee reports due to Emily Crain, emily.crain@gray-robinson.com

December 12th
Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

December 15th
Bill of Rights Day
(see page 2)

December 17th
BOD Meeting, noon via Zoom

December 21st
Winter Solstice

December 25th
Christmas Day

December 26th
Kwanzaa Begins

December 31st
New Years Eve



LWV Polk Announced as “High Priority” for EV Campaign
Karen Freedman & Charlene Bennett to serve as EV point persons

LWV Florida’s clean energy committee co-chairs **Mary Dipboye** and **Maxine Connor** have notified LWV Polk co-presidents **Vicki Lowe** and **Sandy Sheets** that our local league has been identified as a “high priority area” for our state organization’s electric vehicle (EV) campaign. The campaign will seek to develop plans for three “asks” of public officials in Polk County designed to expand the use of EVs in our county and its many communities.

Our climate action committee, chaired by **Charlene Bennett** and **Karen Freedman** (with both serving as LWV Polk’s EV point persons for the campaign), will coordinate local efforts with **Dory Larsen** of the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy.

Why a campaign for increased use of EVs? According to Dipboye and Connor, “Florida’s biggest source of GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions is gas powered transportation.” In fact, they go on to explain, “Florida is ground zero for climate change impacts.”

Bennett and Freedman will be reporting back to the LWV Polk board in December on initial meetings with Larsen.

Closing the Gap Lineup for December

On December 1st, host **Trudy Corry Rankin** and **Andy Crossfield** will lead a discussion of blessings received, relationships strengthened, and life lessons learned in 2021, as an opportunity for renewal of your spirit during this holiday season.

On December 8th, **David Price**, CEO of Bok Tower Gardens, will speak on “What I have learned about taking care of the environment in my years of protecting the space of Bok Tower Gardens.”

Closing the Gap will be on a break for the rest of this month, but January 2022 promises a fantastic lineup of programs!

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***Terms end in 2023; all others
end in 2022.**

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on Social Media!**

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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.

Overheard at the Last Board Meeting

The renewal of in-person meetings for LWV Polk County continues to be a subject of intense discussion. An edition of Hot Topics or our annual meeting may be the occasion of our first in-person gathering.

DEI task force members are **Ivette Herrera-Singh, Breezi Hicks, Mary Acevedo, Bobbie Boatwright Harris and Katy Pace Byrd**. The LWV Polk board approved in principle a collaboration with the NAACP-Lakeland to promote a "community read" of Gilbert King's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Devil in the Grove* in January 2022. The events in the book took place in Lake County (bordering Polk County to the north) in 1949.

Eileen Swiler spoke on her own behalf at a Lakeland City Commission meeting on November 15th. The city attorney instructed commission members that since *Roe v. Wade* is still the law of the land, the city may not at this time ban abortion within its borders. The U. S. Supreme Court will begin hearing the case *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* (about the Mississippi state law banning abortion after 15 weeks) on December 1st.

Linda Donaldson reported that a few local leagues have begun offering reduced membership fees to those not able to afford full dues. LWV Florida has suffered a 13% decline in overall membership since January 2019.

Bill of Rights Day, December 15th

The Bill of Rights is the first 10 amendments to the Constitution. When the Framers wrote the Constitution, they did not focus on individual rights. They focused on creating the system and structure of government. Many Americans believed that the Constitution should guarantee the rights of the people, and they wanted a list of all the things a government could not do. They were afraid that a strong government would take away the rights people won in the Revolutionary War.

James Madison, one of the Framers of the Constitution, wrote a list of individual rights and limits on the government. These rights appear in the first 10 amendments, called the Bill of Rights. Some of these rights include freedom of expression, the right to bear arms, freedom from search without warrant, freedom not to be tried twice for the same crime, the right to not testify against yourself, the right to a trial by a jury of your peers, the right to an attorney, and protection against excessive fines and unusual punishments. **The Bill of Rights was ratified on December 15, 1791.** Today, we recognize December 15 as Bill of Rights Day.

Source: <https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/resources-for-educational-programs/bill-of-rights-day>

Committees & Action Teams

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), Bobbie Boatwright Harris and Katy Pace Byrd, see page 2

Education, open

Gun safety, open

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 (2022), Marcia Boyce, msboyce11@gmail.com

Outreach and social media, Linda Donaldson, see above

Reproductive health and justice, Eileen Swiler, seswiler@msn.com

Speakers Bureau, Trudy Rankin, trudycorryrankin@gmail.com

Voter registration, Jiwa Farrell, see page 2

Returning citizens voter registration subcommittee, Andy Crossfield, see page 2

December Events to Celebrate

December holds many festive holidays that lift our spirits. But what about adding some events in women's history to celebrate too? It's not officially women's history month, but perhaps women's history can be marked year-round! Here are just a few December happenings to think about!

- **December 1, 1955** – **Rosa Parks** refuses to give up her seat on a bus to a white person; her arrest sparks the modern civil rights movement in the US
- **December 5, 1935** – **Mary McLeod Bethune** creates the National Council of Negro Women
- **December 7, 1941** – **Capt. Annie Fox** receives the first Purple Heart awarded to a woman for her service while under attack at Pearl Harbor
- **December 9, 2002** – Award-winning ABC News journalist, **Michele Norris**, becomes the first African American female regular co-host of National Public Radio's news magazine, *All Things Considered*
- **December 10, 1869** – **Wyoming** is the first territory to give women the right to vote
- **December 14, 1961** – **President's Commission on the Status of Women** is established to examine discrimination against women and ways to eliminate it
- **December 14, 1985** – **Wilma Mankiller** is sworn in as principal chief of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma – the first woman in modern history to lead a major Native American tribe
- **December 17, 1993** – **Judith Rodin** is named president of Univ. of Pennsylvania, the first woman to head an Ivy League institution

Source: <https://nationalwomenshistoryalliance.org/events/>

*Calling all committee/action team chairs!
Spread the word about your issues! Send your top three resources for the new feature below to byrdkp@gmail.com!*

So You Want to Know More About . . .

Check out these resources!

Redistricting

1. What is redistricting?

https://ballotpedia.org/State-by-state_redistricting_procedures

2. What do we need to look out for?

<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/redistricting-landscape-2021-22>

3. What Can I do?

<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/redistricting-landscape-2021-22>

DEI

1. LWV US definitions of DEI

<https://www.lwv.org/league-management/dei-resources/defining-diversity-equity-and-inclusion>

2. Holy Post: Race in America

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGUwcs9qJXY>

3. 8 ways to implement D & I in an organization

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/sheilacallaham/2019/08/18/eight-steps-to-start-or-grow-a-diversity-and-inclusion-initiative/?sh=3c1f215f6b17>



LWV Polk board member and climate action committee (CAC) co-chair **Charlene Bennett** is the subject of this month's spotlight! Charlene is retired from the Florida State University System where she taught social work and human services at FSU, USF, and FGCU. Prior to that, she held various positions in human services agencies in Ohio and Florida, also spending seven years in the private practice of psychotherapy and marriage counseling. Charlene is a widow with one daughter and one grandchild who lives in Lake Wales. There she serves on several boards and does her best to remain connected to the community.

Charlene's current primary interests are climate change and environmental issues of all types, separation of church and state, and issues related to aging. Having long admired the League of Women Voters, Charlene joined LWV Polk several years ago and became a board member three years ago. In addition to co-chairing the CAC with Karen Freedman, Charlene has served on the charter school study, the single-use plastics committee, the census committee, and the bylaws revision committee. She's been thrilled to be part of the Solar Co-op Project, two annual solar tours, and the CAC's on-going efforts to influence local governmental agencies' energy policies. She has written more than one document used to contact local governmental units with regard to improving their sustainability commitments.

Charlene states, "It is a pleasure to be associated with a group sporting such a stellar reputation and whose goals are so vital to our democracy and our country's health, perhaps now more than ever!"

The Classifieds

Welcome New Members!

Mary Dwight

Blair Allen

So They Say . . .

"Diversity may be the hardest thing for a society to live with, and perhaps the most dangerous thing for a society to be without."

~William Sloane Coffin, Jr.

The editor wishes to thank all who have submitted story ideas, copy, photos, or made other contributions to the Voter newsletter in 2021. Happy 2022, everyone!



*Lake Morton, Lakeland, Florida
November 11, 2021*



We are gathered here to honor the lives and contributions of Edie Yates and David Henderson, a couple that dearly loved this community. And here, a year and a day after their passing, we dedicate two beautiful trees, to be symbolic of the vibrant lives taken from us much too soon.

The League of Women Voters of Polk County is just one of many organizations that benefited greatly from Edie and David's dedication to serve Lakeland. And along with Lakeland Parks and Rec department, we are privileged to participate in this dedication.

It has been a difficult thing to move past the sorrow we all feel at their sudden loss.

The grief endured by the family and the community who loved them seems too hard to bear. But Edie and David's life, and all they accomplished were much more than an ending that came too soon.

They lived their lives focused firmly on the future, and that is why we are here today. These trees will grow and bloom and spread their welcome shade on hot days for many years to come. They will host families, children playing, and lovers, young and old.

Their carpet of blossoms will beckon to all who pass to stop their fast-paced lives for a while and take a leisurely walk or reflect on the beauty of this place. These trees will remind us all of Edie and David, of lives well lived, of their love of community and their belief to give back in service.



In this corner of town that Edie and David loved most, these trees will continue to serve all who value beauty. And just as Edie and David have done, continue to improve the quality of lives far into the future.

Andy Crossfield

