



Calendar

February 1st

Black History Month begins DEI Book Discussion, noon via Zoom; new book: Caste Contact byrdkp@gmail if you want to join

February 3rd

Closing the Gap: Celebrating Black Culture, noon via Zoom

February 10th

Closing the Gap: Black Gen Xers on Growing Up in Polk County, noon via Zoom

February 12th

Deadline for agenda items, committee reports, motions, action items to be sent to co-presidents

February 15th

201st Anniversary of the Birth of Susan B. Anthony Presidents Day Holiday
DEI Book Discussion, noon via Zoom

February 17th

Closing the Gap: Cooking on the Plantation, noon via Zoom

February 19th

BOD meeting, noon via Zoom

February 21st

New Member Orientation, noon via Zoom

February 24th

Closing the Gap: Dr. Richard Harris and Dr. Kenneth Stephens--The Tension of the Opposites Finds Resolution, noon via Zoom

February 26th

Deadline for newsletter information to byrdkp@gmail.com

LWV Polk Salutes Black History Month

“Black History Month is an annual celebration of achievements by African Americans and a time for recognizing their central role in U.S. history. Also known as African American History Month, the event grew out of “Negro History Week,” the brainchild of noted historian Carter G. Woodson and other prominent African Americans. Since 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month. Other countries around the world, including Canada and the United Kingdom, also devote a month to celebrating Black history.” Source: <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/black-history-month>

A series of programs focusing on Black history will be presented to League members and the public this month. Our Closing the Gap series will feature four presentations as follows: Wednesday, February 3rd will be a repeat performance of last year’s Celebration of Black Culture with Bobbie Boatright Harris, Claudia Slate, Terry Coney, Marcia Boyce, Paula Mims and Katy Pace Byrd, with technical assistance from Jim Byrd. On February 10th’s program, Black “Gen Xers” will discuss growing up in Polk County; and the topic on February 17th will be cooking on the plantation. On February 24th, friends and colleagues Dr. Richard Harris and Dr. Kenneth Stephens—two men with very different experiences regarding racism in the US-- will present a program they have developed to help heal the racial divide, “The Tension of the Opposites Finds Resolution.”

Last but not least, LWV Polk’s DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) discussion group will take up a second book beginning on Monday, February 1st at noon, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Isabel Wilkerson’s recently published *Caste*, a book that the *Chicago Tribune* says “should be at the top of every American’s reading list.” Wilkerson seeks to reframe race within an unacknowledged American caste system not unlike India’s well-known caste system, and traces the links between the two systems.

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2020-2021

LWV Polk Board of Directors

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Eileen Swiler,
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**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-President's Message

Dear LWV Polk Members,

As we move into 2021, we are looking ahead to our **annual meeting** to be held on **April 28th via Zoom**. Your executive committee has already begun planning, and we expect to recruit an exciting and timely speaker. Meanwhile, work is proceeding on the many puzzle pieces that need to fall into place before the meeting: The nominating committee is looking for future board members and officers; our FY 2021-22 budget is being developed; committee chairs are taking a look at their programs with an eye to updating if needed; and soon we will be sending you the annual request to renew your membership.

We have also recently determined that we wish to have a tree planted in memory of former LWV Polk president Edie Yates Henderson. Edie touched many, many lives in our community, and her son, Todd Baylis, has expressed his gratitude for our desire to honor his mother in this way. We will be asking our members for voluntary contributions to this League effort very soon. And we will make plans to mark the tree planting and installation of an appropriate plaque as arrangements with the City of Lakeland are completed.

As Natalie Alexich and the nominating committee continue with their task, we will be looking for both new leadership for the board (see below) and also for some committees that have been without chairs and inactive during 2020. Please read Linda Donaldson's article on page 4 asking you to consider becoming a committee chair or co-chair. Linda chairs two of our committees, so who better to convince you that **you** have what it takes?! LWV Polk needs your talent, ideas and energy to continue to carry out our mission of educating and empowering voters!

Sandy Sheets

The Nominating Committee Needs Your Help!

This year's nominating committee, chaired by **Natalie Alexich (nalexich@aol.com)**, has begun its recruiting process for new officers, board members, and next year's nominating committee members to lead LWV Polk beginning at the conclusion of our annual meeting in April 2021. **Jiwa Farrell (jwfarrell2011@gmail.com)** and **Ann Weeks (bonaire37@yahoo.com)** round out the committee.

The committee's plan of action includes contacting current board members and officers to determine their willingness to serve another term. Those of you currently serving in officer and board positions could help by proactively contacting one of the committee members if you have not already been contacted. The committee will also be seeking additional nominations from among eligible members (i.e., those whose dues payments are current). **Your input to the nominating committee must be received no later than March 1st!** Thank you!

Committees & Action Teams

Education, inactive

Gun violence prevention, inactive

Healthcare, Paula Mims, pmmims@aol.com

Immigration, inactive

Juvenile justice, Andy Crossfield, see page 2

Libraries, inactive

Media, Jerry Weeks, geraldibus1@gmail.com

Membership, Linda Donaldson, lindajdonaldson@yahoo.com

Natural resources:

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

Banning plastic bags & straws in Polk County, Sharon Masters, smasters4549@icloud.com

Nominating-2021, Natalie Alexich, see page 2

Speakers Bureau, Trudy Rankin, trudycorryrankin@gmail.com

Voter outreach, Linda Donaldson, see above

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 (group & community pages)

League of Women Voters of Florida

League of Women Voters of the U.S.

## LWV's Voter Services: Looking Back, Looking Ahead

Thanks and kudos to **Larry Rankin** for his years of service as chair of LWV Polk's voter services. Voter services includes anything from actually registered people to vote, to educating the public as to registration and vote-by-mail deadlines, to providing non-partisan information on issues that will be on the ballot. In carrying out these responsibilities, LWV Polk works closely with the office of the Supervisor of Elections.

In a recent report on 2020 activities to the board of directors, Larry pointed to the great challenge of registering voters without face-to-face contact. Traditionally, Larry and his trained volunteer registrars have staffed tables at various events and circulated among event attendees with their clipboards to register interested citizens. With such activities not possible during the pandemic, the committee got creative, collaborating with voter services teams from other community organizations, distributing flyers to people in food distribution lines in a safe manner, phone-banking, participating in a safe, "Closing the Books" parade sponsored by the SOE on the last day of voter registration before the general election, and participating in the nationwide Election Protection effort (866-OUR-VOTE) on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020.

Thanks also to **Jiwa Farrell** who has volunteered to take over LWV Polk's voter services efforts. Larry is orienting her to her new responsibilities. **She would very much like to find a co-chair as our efforts continue in 2021 and beyond!** According to Larry, one goal that remains a League priority going forward is "full inclusion of returning citizens" in the franchise. Contact Jiwa at [jwfarrell2011@gmail.com](mailto:jwfarrell2011@gmail.com) if you want to help coordinate a core function of the League.

## Closing the Gap Volunteer Needed!

**Trudy Corry Rankin**, remarkable host of our Closing the Gap series on Wednesdays, is requesting some help. Specifically, you can contribute to LWV Polk's educational mission by indexing and maintaining the recordings of the Zoom sessions (of which we've now had about 40 since Spring 2019!).

In addition, that work completed, this person could make the various recordings available to our members on request. It's a wonderful collection of diverse speakers on important local topics and resources. And although an average of around 25-30 people have attended the sessions live on Zoom, this will be a great way to extend the reach of these valuable programs. Contact [trudycorryrankin@gmail.com](mailto:trudycorryrankin@gmail.com). Thank you!

**Becoming an LWV Polk Committee Chair “101”  
By Linda Donaldson**

**Have you thought about serving on, or even leading, one of LWV Polk’s committees?**

Several key committees are without chairs at the moment, including education, gun safety, immigration, and libraries. (Kudos to **Paula Mims**, who has recently volunteered to chair the healthcare committee!) We know our members are motivated, capable, and willing to work on issues you care about! Even if you don’t feel that you are a natural leader, your passion for one of our issues is more than enough!

**We have ideas and tools to help you take on this challenge! In case you are asking yourself what we mean by that, here’s a list!**

- Find a co-chair to bounce ideas off of and help with planning your committee’s projects
- Attend LWV Polk’s one-hour monthly board meetings (currently being held on Zoom)
- Former chairs may be available to orient you
- **Of great value:** Chairs of committees across all League chapters in Florida conduct monthly calls with each other. All you need to do is contact the state chair for your committee and ask to be included on the call. It’s a great way to find out what other Leagues are doing, and you can get a lot of ideas just by listening! If you want to get your feet wet before committing, try listening to the next statewide education committee co-chairs’ call by **contacting** Lisa Yurkin, [YurSunny@comcast.com](mailto:YurSunny@comcast.com) or Dr. Kathi Gundlach, [pgundlach@aol.com](mailto:pgundlach@aol.com), date TBA.

**Where will your committee members come from?** Regular calls for volunteers go out via League email, our monthly *Voter* newsletter, and our Facebook page. We are a relatively small local league, and it’s okay to limit your scope to fit our size and resources. Thank you!

## The Classifieds

**Welcome New Member!**

Bobbie Boatwright Harris

**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 membership level!

**Budget Requests Due by  
March 1st**

Committee and action team chairs should submit requests for inclusion in FY 2021-22 to [emily.crain@gray-robinson.com](mailto:emily.crain@gray-robinson.com)

**Duly Noted**

**Congratulations** to both former Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice **Peggy Ann Quince**, who has joined the LWV Florida board of directors, and to LWV Florida 1<sup>st</sup> vice president **Cecile Scoon**, who has received the Florida Bar President’s Award for pro bono service. Scoon is responsible for creating a training program for lawyers across Florida on how to assist returning citizens to register to vote.