



**Calendar**

**January 15<sup>th</sup>**

*Committee reports due to co-presidents*

**January 17<sup>th</sup>**

*Voter Outreach Committee meeting, 2 pm via Zoom*

**January 18<sup>th</sup>**

*Martin Luther King, Jr. Day DEI book group, noon via Zoom; for link email byrdkp@gmail.com*

**January 20<sup>th</sup>**

*Inauguration Day*

**January 22<sup>nd</sup>**

*BOD meeting, noon via Zoom*

**January 25<sup>th</sup>**

*Newsletter suggestions and articles due to editor, byrdkp@gmail.com*

**January 27<sup>th</sup>**

*Closing the Gap: Dr. Sylvia Blackmon-Roberts, noon via Zoom*

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**Statement from the League of Women Voters of the United States**

A year we thought would never come to an end is now over. And by the time you read this, half of the first month of the new year will have gone by. Sadly, the first days of this year were marked by events many of us never imagined witnessing in our lifetimes, including a lawless assault on the U. S. Capitol. In response to an unprecedented event, our 100-year-old organization, **the League of Women Voters of the United States, issued an unprecedented statement on January 7, 2021:**

*“Donald Trump must be immediately removed as President of the United States of America and banned from running for federal office ever again. The sitting president was the instigator of Wednesday’s domestic terrorist attack on the U.S. Capitol that left five Americans dead and many more injured. He commanded an army of insurrectionists to forcefully overturn our free and fair elections in an effort to maintain power. These are the actions of a tyrannical despot, and they are in direct opposition to American democracy.”*

Source: <https://www.lwv.org/newsroom/press-releases/league-women-voters-united-states-calls-immediate-removal-president-donald>

**Whither Now, LWV?**

Quoting from the LWV US statement above: *“These are the actions of a tyrannical despot, and they are in direct opposition to American democracy.”* American Democracy. Our form of government has existed, theoretically, since 1776 with the Declaration of Independence, or 1788 with the ratification of our Constitution, or 1789, when George Washington became our first president. But historian Harry Rubenstein points to Washington’s Farewell Address, published September 19, 1796 as the true birth and first test of our democracy. What Washington wrote, and what Washington did in peacefully giving up power, set up the fundamental principles of what our country should look like, and how our leaders should behave.

Source: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/the-real-birth-of-american-democracy-83232825/>

*Continued on page 2*

**2020-2021  
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**\*Terms end in 2022; all  
others end in 2021.**

**Whither Now? (continued)**

On January 6, 2021, the League's mission—"empowering voters; defending democracy"—was as fundamentally threatened as the principle of the peaceful transfer of power. As such, the current president is completely deserving of the League's repudiation of his acts. LWV US and LWV Florida remain completely committed to our mission, and so must we of LWV Polk also be. We are looking ahead to 2021 and 2022 with specific goals and plans, among them clearly articulated legislative priorities for the Florida legislative session beginning in March, focusing on **four areas**:

1. **election law reform** including automatic voter registration and other streamlining of the registration process, and continuation for support for returning citizens' voter registration
2. **natural resources** including the disproportionate negative impact of "proximity to industrial pollution and poor air quality" on lower income and minority communities (quoted, "2021 Legislative Priorities," attachment in email from Lisa Calleja, (former) executive director, LWVFL)
3. **health care** including a much-needed expansion of Medicaid eligibility and continuation of protection of women's reproductive rights
4. **education** including "adequate funding" for additional expenses due to COVID-19 and opposition to using public dollars for private school vouchers (ditto)

We know what we have to do. Let's do it! LWV Polk has a structure of committees and action teams that you can immediately plug into. In particular, given our legislative priorities as set out by LWV Florida, our voter services and voter outreach teams, our health committee, our education committee, and our natural resources action teams need newly committed and energized members and leaders. Many resources are available to you at the local, state and national levels.

The League of Women Voters helped create the largest national voter turn-out in history in 2020 in the face of unprecedented voter suppression attempts. **If we can do that, we can surely continue to tackle the issues before us now!**

*The Editor*

**Committees & Action Teams**

**Education**, chair open

**Gun violence prevention**, chair open

**Healthcare**, chair open

**Immigration**, chair open

**Juvenile justice**, Andy Crossfield, see page 2

**Libraries**, chair open

**Media**, Jerry Weeks, geraldibus1@gmail.com

**Membership**, Linda Donaldson, lindajdonaldson@yahoo.com

**Natural resources:**

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

**Nominating** (for 2021), Natalie Alexich, see page 2

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

**Voter outreach**, Linda Donaldson, see above

**Voter services**, open

**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 and community pages)

**League of Women Voters of Florida**

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

**Closing the Gap Volunteer Needed!**

**Trudy Corry Rankin**, remarkable host of our Closing the Gap series on Wednesdays, is requesting some help. Specifically, someone could 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 would be a great way to extend the reach of these valuable programs. Contact [trudyorryrankin@gmail.com](mailto:trudyorryrankin@gmail.com). Thank you!

