



**Calendar**

**May 5<sup>th</sup>**

*No Closing the Gap presentation*

**May 10<sup>th</sup>**

*DEI Book Discussion: Chapters 7-Conclusion of **Just Medicine**, noon via Zoom*

**May 12<sup>th</sup>**

**Closing the Gap #51:** *Suzanne Mills-Wemm on Native American perspectives, noon via Zoom*

**May 14<sup>th</sup>**

*Deadline for submission of BOD meeting agenda items*

**May 19<sup>th</sup>**

**Closing the Gap #52:** *Steve Bissonette on VISTE, noon via Zoom*

**May 21<sup>st</sup>**

*BOD meeting, noon via Zoom*

**May 24<sup>th</sup>**

*DEI Book Group: In-person social*

**May 26<sup>th</sup>**

**Closing the Gap #53:** *Pichaya Poy Winichakul on voting rights in Florida, noon via Zoom*

**May 31<sup>st</sup>**

*Memorial Day*

**June 2nd**

**Closing the Gap #54:** *Community conversation on the future of Closing the Gap, noon via Zoom*

**What the Future Holds for LWV**

The speaker at LWV Polk’s April 28<sup>th</sup> annual meeting, **Jessica Lowe-Minor**, of the LWV US board of directors, delivered a very informative look at where the League has been in recent years, where we are now, and where we are headed. In 2018, the LWV US and LWV state and local chapters across the country engaged in self-scrutiny, study of the social and political environment, and had hard conversations about our future on the eve of our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020. The resulting *Transformation Roadmap* is available here: <https://www.lwv.org/league-management/policies-guidelines/transformation-roadmap>

Going forward, the objectives of the roadmap are being pursued vigorously, including focusing strategic goals more sharply in regard to the *Campaign for Making Democracy Work*®, creating a much more diverse and inclusive organizational culture and membership, enhancing LWV’s effectiveness by focusing on the core mission at all levels, and creating a more seamless organization. Along the way, better use of technology (some of which was forced by the pandemic) and increased implementation of nonprofit best practices including fundraising and membership growth, will be important to LWV’s success. Lowe-Minor has seen the past three years’ efforts begin to pay off, and cited the national increase in membership as one piece of evidence—from 46,000 in 2010, to 73,000 now.

Lowe-Minor feels the LWV is “perfectly positioned to talk about fair election procedures that will allow everyone entitled to vote.” In regard to these and other issues, Lowe-Minor suggested that the best way to advocate to local elected officials is to always be present and “take notes,” and to reach out to officials based on LWV’s extensive knowledge, expertise, and nonpartisanship.

**Ready to Sign Up?**

On page 3 of *The Voter*, you will find a column showing LWV Polk’s currently constituted committees and action teams. These groups accomplished a great deal last year in spite of the pandemic, and are now focused on moving ahead into 2021-22. **To get involved in your favorite issue, contact the chair or co-chair directly at his or her email address!**

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**2021-2022  
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*\*Terms end in 2023; all others  
end in 2022.*

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of Polk County  
League of Women Voters of  
Florida  
League of Women Voters of  
the U.S.

**Co-Presidents' Message**

*Dear LWV Polk Members,*

What a great annual meeting we had! For those of you who were not able to attend, the recording is available at [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oORTHchiNw3INUN\\_U7MXoV4nYpodcjsG/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oORTHchiNw3INUN_U7MXoV4nYpodcjsG/view?usp=sharing). We encourage you to watch! Thanks to all who worked so hard to put this meeting together, too many folks to mention individually. However, a special shout out goes to **Andy Crossfield**, who ably hosted our meeting on Zoom, and to **Jerry Weeks**, who created a great video about our activities over this past very challenging year.

We also want to recognize outgoing secretary **Barbara Wallace**, who has served so efficiently and capably, and outgoing board member **Eileen Swiler** who has accumulated years of dedicated service on our board. We are grateful that Eileen remains as chair of the reproductive health and justice team. We wish to welcome **Ivette Herrera-Singh** as secretary, and **Bobbie Boatright Harris** as a board member, both of whom may be known to some of you from the DEI book discussion group. We also want to acknowledge the above-and-beyond contribution of **Trudy Corry Rankin** in mounting 50 Closing the Gap presentations during the past year.

We are off to a running start on 2021-2022! Of course, a main focus now must be election rights and redistricting, following the priorities and guidance of LWV Florida. Among other issues also of great importance are natural resources, the expansion of Medicaid, and reproductive health and justice. We are planning an upcoming Zoom meeting with **Jessica Lowe-Minor** to spotlight and enhance our committee work over the coming year.

*In League,  
Vicki Lowe & Sandy Sheets*

**Closing the Gap Lineup for May/June**

On May 12th, **Suzanne Mills-Wemm** will share Native American perspectives on the Keystone Pipeline, the response—or lack thereof—to Covid in her communities, and other issues. It may be helpful to watch a video at [www.spiritofthewater.org](http://www.spiritofthewater.org) before Mills-Wemm's presentation. On May 19th, we will hear from **Steve Bissonette**, director of Volunteers in Service to the Elderly (VISTE). On May 26th, **Pichaya Poy Winichakul**, staff attorney with the voting rights practice group of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), will discuss the current voting rights situation in Florida. And on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, **Trudy Corry Rankin** will facilitate a community conversation on the future of Closing the Gap.

## Committees & Action Teams

**Education**, Bobbie Boatright Harris, see page 2

**Gun safety**, 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 (2022)**, to be named

**Outreach and Social Media**, Linda Donaldson, see above

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

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

**Voter registration**, Jiwa Farrell, see page 2



## The Coming Florida Redistricting Battle

As unfortunate as the results of the Florida Legislature's session just ended are, it's time to arm ourselves for the redrawing of our federal congressional districts as well as our state legislative districts. An undercount of Florida's Hispanic population may have led to Florida's receiving one additional member of the US House of Representatives instead of two as had been expected. So said **Ellen Friedin**, CEO and General Counsel of FairDistricts Now in a Lunch & Learn presentation in late April. After sharing the history of the years-long legal battle over redistricting following the 2010 census, finally resulting in more compact districts with cities and counties remaining whole, Friedin reported that she anticipates another battle in 2022.

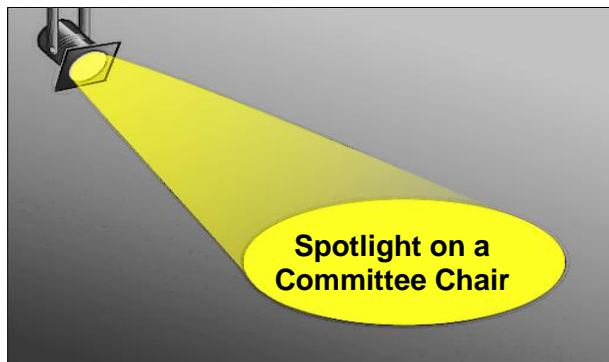
No Florida Senate or House public hearings have been held during this year immediately following the census, as has been customary. The Legislature remains mute on tentative plans for the 2022 redistricting process, an ominous sign. Asked if the LWV FL should be pushing in future for an independent commission to control redistricting, Friedin responded that minorities are suspicious of such commissions because minority representation is not guaranteed as it is on legislative committees.

## Overheard at the Last Board Meeting

The board of LWV Polk convened ten business days before April 28<sup>th</sup>'s LWV Polk annual meeting. In addition to wrapping up final arrangements for the meeting, the board appointed an *ad hoc* committee to review and recommend policies on several issues that have arisen: how better to demonstrate our nonpartisanship as an organization and clarify our policy that the president is the sole person authorized to speak on behalf of our organization; paying stipends for invited speakers going forward; promoting volunteer opportunities with other community groups. **Terry Laretta** will chair this committee, and **Charlene Bennett**, **Karen Freedman**, and **Vicki Lowe** will also serve.

Approval of wording for a disclaimer to be posted at the LWV Polk website along with our antiracist/DEI resource list (350+ items) is pending. Looking ahead, LWV Florida's state convention will be held via Zoom on June 4-5. Here's the call: <https://lwwfl.org/2021conventioncall/>

LWV Polk has been invited to participate in Winter Haven's **Juneteenth Celebration**, which promises to be a well-attended community event with numerous organizations and vendors represented. This may be an opportunity to have our first "tabling" event in a year!



Intended to strengthen member familiarity with the current leadership of our organization, this new feature continues this month. We're proud to showcase LWV Polk past president and longtime Speakers Bureau chair, **Trudy Corry Rankin**:

I have been a proud member of the League since 1987. I remember this specifically because it was one of the first commitments that I made in returning from living in Latin America. I had been learning a lot about the governments of the countries in the region, and came to respect being a part of a democracy even more. I remember being affected by listening to the National Anthem in ways that I had never been. It has taken me years to understand how the League functions, but now I understand the integrity of the organization. Since the spring of 2020, I have contributed to the League through the "Closing the Gap" gatherings of the Speaker's Bureau.

I am also a wife and mother, and work professionally in healthcare, specifically with a 40-year private practice in mental health. I teach, consult and meet with others to support their wholistic self-care. I was born and raised in the Dakotas and have been in Florida much longer than I ever expected to be!

## The Classifieds

### Welcome New Members!

Sandi Opalinski  
Natalie Nicholson  
Cynthia Phoa  
Veysel Dokur

### Wanted: Committee/Action Team Updates

Our LWV Polk "Voter" readers want to know what you are up to! Send your news to [byrdkp@gmail.com](mailto:byrdkp@gmail.com)!

### 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 "Spotlight" feature above. Do it now, or you will be called upon! Thank you!

### So They Say . . .

"Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced." -- James Baldwin