



The Voter

October 2021

Calendar

October 6th

Closing the Gap #65:
Gail Bagley on Co-Housing,
noon via Zoom (see right)

October 11th

Indigenous Peoples Day

October 11th

DEI Book Group: *Marcia Boyce reports on Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People by Helen Zia,* noon via Zoom

October 13th

Closing the Gap #66: *Tom Phillips, executive director of Citrus Connection,* noon via Zoom (see right)

October 20th

Closing the Gap #67:
“Adventures in Research—Connecting Returning Citizens to Their Right to Vote,” noon via Zoom (see right)

October 22nd

BOD meeting, noon via Zoom

October 25th

DEI Book Group: *Claire Orologos reports on Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928 by David Wallace Adams,* noon via Zoom

October 27th

Closing the Gap #68:
Emily Crain on SB 90 (see right)

November 2nd

Municipal Election Day

LWV Florida Announces 2022 Legislative Priorities

Having heard from 28 of 29 local Leagues in our state, LWV Florida recently released the 2022 legislative priorities for our lobbyists and members. They are: Numbers 1 and 2—voting and redistricting; number 3—reproductive health and justice; number 4—education; number 5—health care; number 6—natural resources, which includes climate change, sustainability and a zero-carbon Florida, as well as more traditional issues of clean water and air and growth management.

LWV Florida president Cecile Scoon urges all who may be disappointed that the issues you are most passionate about are not included in this top list to “continue to work on the issues that are most important” to you, and reassures everyone that if additional critical issues arise during the session, LWV Florida “will get involved in the appropriate ways.”

PLEASE NOTE: October 22nd Luncheon Postponed

Due to unforeseen and unexpected circumstances we must postpone our planned October 22nd in-person event featuring lunch and speaker LWV US VP Jessica Lowe-Minor! Watch this space for a new date and time!

Closing the Gap Lineup for October

Weekly presentations continue, hosted by Speakers Bureau chair **Trudy Corry Rankin**. On **October 6th**, LWV Polk member **Gail Bagley** will speak on “Cohousing: Power in Community.” Gail is a Founding Neighbor of Harwood Village and has a long-abiding interest in cohousing. Brought to us by our Healthcare Action Team, **Tom Phillips** of the Citrus Connection (aka Polk Transit Authority) will speak to us on the challenges and successes of Polk County Transportation on **October 13th**. On **October 20th**, LWV Polk’s Returning Citizens Rights Restoration Team will sponsor a seminar on the challenges faced in ensuring that returning citizens (former felons who met all obligations) can exercise their right to vote. Lastly, **Emily Crain, JD** of our LWV Polk board of directors and attorney at GrayRobinson, will update us on **October 27th** on Florida’s SB 90, the 2021 voter suppression bill which the League and other organizations are challenging in court.

Table of Contents

Board Meeting News.....	2
Voter Registration Deadline Imminent.....	2
Action Alley	3
IM Larry Hardaway.....	3
Spotlight on a Board Member.....	4
The Classifieds	4

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

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Florida
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the U.S.

Overheard at the Last Board Meeting

Co-president **Vicki Lowe** thanked all LWV Polk members who submitted their rankings for LWV Florida's 2022 legislative priorities (see lead article on the front page).

LWV Polk media guru **Jerry Weeks** previewed the new "members only" page which will soon be available at www.lwvpolk.org. This easy-to-use feature will be a wonderful resource, with recordings of our Closing the Gap presentations, a long list of DEI and antiracism resources, opt-in member contact information, and other information to come in future. Jerry and former LWV Polk president **Jessie Gomez** have contributed hours of work to developing this new member benefit.

Healthcare chair **Paula Mims** presented a proposed program her team has explored, Monitors for Moms, in the context of their study of the gross disparities by race in maternal and infant healthcare outcomes. A relatively small investment would purchase an initial 50 monitors which would be distributed by selected Polk County OBGYN health care providers to mothers at risk for developing high blood pressure during pregnancy. The moms would report their readings to their health care providers regularly, who in turn would report the statistics gathered to an agency studying the results. No other entity in Polk County is currently in a position to engage in a project like this, and our county would serve as a pilot for this potentially life-saving study. LWV Palm Beach County is leading the way in its area, and the March of Dimes is prepared to collaborate with LWV Polk on the project.

Voter services chair **Jiwa Farrell** explained plans to reach out to voters without relying on in-person gatherings. Complicating our situation, LWV Florida is participating in a lawsuit against a number of entities including all supervisors of elections in the state, over the provisions of SB 90, the voter suppression bill passed during the 2021 legislative session. At present, we cannot rely on our local supervisor for supplies of promotional and registration materials (although we can rely on SOE's publicly published information--see below), on advice of counsel. Thus, the committee asks for funding to participate in outreach programs such as the use of Every Door Direct Mail (EDDM), a service of the US Post Office, which lends itself to reaching out to residents of zip codes that we know have a low voter turnout. As a point of information, LWV Florida president Cecile Scoon has clarified that SB 90 covers all persons wishing to carry out third-party voter registrations, whether operating under the auspices of the League of Women Voters or another organization, or not. It's more critical than ever that League members be certified under the League to register voters.

DEI chair **Katy Pace Byrd** will attend a 14-hour training sponsored by LWV Florida for local leagues and led by the Racial Equity Institute.

Voter Registration Deadline!

Monday, October 4th is the deadline to register to vote in November 2nd municipal elections! Residents in the cities of Fort Meade, Lakeland and Winter Haven who are not already registered to vote, but wish to vote in the November 2nd municipal elections must do so on or before Monday, October 4th. Voter registration forms are available for pick up at many convenient locations throughout the county including city halls, libraries, and chambers of commerce, or they may be completed online at PolkElections.gov. For more information, call the Elections Office at (863) 534-5888.
Source: Office of Polk County Supervisor of Elections

Committees & Action Teams

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

DEI, Katy Pace Byrd, see page 2

Education, Bobbie Boatwright Harris, see page 2

Gun safety, open (see right)

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

Nominating-2022, Marcia Boyce, msboyce11@gmail.com

Outreach and social media, Linda Donaldson, see above

Plastics, Sharon Masters, smasters4549@icloud.com

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

Speakers Bureau, Trudy Rankin, trudyconryrankin@gmail.com

Voter services, Jiwa Farrell, see page 2



Action Alley

In addition to the committee and action team goings-on reported on page 2 (“Overheard at the Last Board Meeting”), many additional activities continue to take place.

Bobbie Boatwright Harris, education committee chair, has engaged with masking issues in the public schools by sending a letter on behalf of LWV Polk to school board members, as authorized by our co-presidents. Bobbie has also monitored the September public forums held by Polk County Schools Superintendent Frederick Heid, who expressed his objective to get community feedback about “ways to improve our school system.”

Climate action committee co-chair **Karen Freedman** reported that the notebooks on sustainable practices submitted to members of the Polk County Commission were well-received. The committee continues to hold semi-monthly meetings to work on local, state and global climate and sustainability issues and coordinate efforts with LWV Florida and LWV US. Committee members collaborated with LWV Florida’s clean energy & EV outreach committees to plan three webinars presented in September. Committee members also recently attended two LWV US wildfire committee meetings, and will present a talk on the State of Florida Forest Service’s very successful prescribed-burn program, a model for forest fire prevention, at the next wildfire committee meeting on October 22nd.

A chair for our gun safety committee is still needed. LWV Florida’s gun safety positions are clearly explained here: <https://lwvfl.org/issues/gun-reform/>, with a state committee on gun safety available to help get you started.

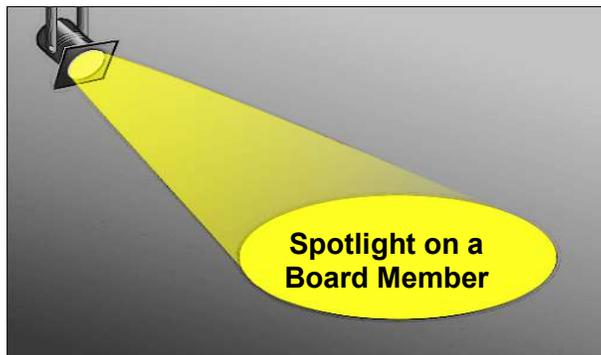
The DEI book discussion group celebrated Hispanic Heritage month by reading and discussing two books: ***My Broken Language***, by Quiara Alegría Hudes; and ***Once Upon a Quinceañera*** by Julia Alvarez. Between them, the two books provided an amazing window into the Latinx immigrant experience, both highs and lows. Both books are recommended, as is Alvarez’s novel, ***In the Time of Butterflies***.

In Memory of Larry Hardaway

In an unusual gesture, the League of Women Voters of Florida has honored the late Larry D. Hardaway, Polk County native and longtime LWV Polk member, with a donation to the GiveWell Community Foundation. Cecile Scoon, civil rights lawyer and president of the Florida League stated, “He was a wonderful person.” Larry was longtime president of the Polk County Voters League and a lifelong worker in the cause of civil rights.

After a distinguished academic and professional career, he leaves behind beloved family and friends, and a community that is the better for his many contributions. His obituary in the Lakeland Ledger can be read here:

<https://www.theledger.com/story/news/local/2021/09/17/memorial-larry-hardaway-set-oct-1-lakeland/8382367002>



One of our newer board members, **Bobbie Boatwright Harris**, has come to LWV Polk by way of a lifetime of social and political activism, her education as an historian, and our very own DEI book group. In addition to board service, Bobbie also chairs our education committee. A native of South Carolina, Bobbie moved to New Jersey with her family as a girl, and earned her undergraduate degree at Rutgers-New Brunswick in labor studies and her master's degree in US history from Monmouth University. Her masters work focused on 19th century African American women, and her doctoral work at Rutgers on African American women and sharecropping (Bobbie describes herself as "almost ABD").

Bobbie began a lifetime of involvement in the political process with an NAACP-sponsored letter-writing campaign for high school students to write to New Jersey's senators, and continued over the course of years working in the trenches of multiple election campaigns, advocating for homeless women, service in first one and then the other of the two major political parties, all the way through to the 2020 presidential campaign here in Polk County. Former LWV Polk secretary **Barbara Wallace** brought Bobbie to the DEI book discussion group, and we have taken full advantage of her experience as a retired teacher of history at the post-secondary level, most recently at Hillsborough Community College. Most notably, Bobbie led us in a six-week seminar series, "Black Experience in US History," where we read primary sources and discussed events that many in the class were learning about for the first time. We are so glad that Bobbie has come our way!

The Classifieds

Welcome New Member!

Tim Sizemore

So They Say . . .

"There's no such thing as a vote that doesn't matter."

~Barack Obama

"Someone struggled for your right to vote. Use it."

~Susan B. Anthony

"Voting is not only our right—it is our power."

~Loung Ung

Wanted: Readers

Learn about the DEI Work Plan for all Florida Leagues.

<https://lwvfl.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Florida-Diversity-Equity-and-Inclusion-Work-Plan-20210417.pdf>

Wanted: C the G "Sponsors"!

As Trudy Rankin schedules the Closing the Gap weekly programs, she welcomes committees' suggestions and scheduling assistance for community speakers. Contact her at trudycorryrankin@gmail.com