



Calendar

March 1st

DEI Book Discussion

March 3rd

Closing the Gap: Diane Dimperio

March 8th

International Women’s Day (see page 3)

March 10th

Closing the Gap: Risdon Slate

March 12th

Deadline for submission of BOD Meeting Agenda Items

March 15th

DEI Book Discussion

March 17th

St. Patrick’s Day
Closing the Gap: Paula Mims

March 19th

BOD meeting, noon via Zoom

March 22nd

PCPS Spring Break Begins

March 24th

Closing the Gap: Trudy Corry Rankin and Morgan Whitaker Smith

March 26th

Deadline for newsletter information to byrdkp@gmail.com

March 27th

Passover Begins

March 28th

Palm Sunday

March 29th

DEI Book Discussion-new book to be chosen, noon via Zoom

March 31

Closing the Gap: Alice Koehler

Closing the Gap to Focus on Health and Mental Health

Leading off on **March 3rd** will be **Diane Dimperio**, who has spent 35 years developing and managing health care programs with a number of entities in Alachua County including the UF College of Public Health and Health Professions. She is now a consultant and chairs the LWV FL’s healthcare action team. She will speak on the state league’s current positions. On **March 10th**, **Risdon Slate**, PhD, professor of criminology at Florida Southern College will present “From Deinstitutionalization/Criminalization of Mental Illness to Decriminalization via Medicaid Expansion.” Ris has been an advocate, trainer, speaker and consultant on a number of mental health and criminology initiatives at the local, state and federal level, and remains committed to de-stigmatizing mental illness.

On **March 17th**, LWV Polk past president and new healthcare committee chair **Paula Mims** and her committee will present LWV Polk’s positions on healthcare and the committee’s focuses going forward. Closing the Gap coordinator, LWV Polk past president and Speakers Bureau chair **Trudy Corry Rankin**, EdD, LMHC, 40-year counseling practitioner and host of this series, will join **Morgan Whitaker Smith**, LMHC, program manager of Peace River Center’s community action team (CAT) to speak to us about mental health care in Polk County on **March 24th**. **The fifth Wednesday in March (the 31st)** will bring us **Alice Koehler**, president and CEO of nonprofit Lakeland Volunteers in Medicine (LVIM). Alice will speak from her perspective of leading a large multi-specialty health care facility that provides high-quality, free medical, dental and mental health care to the working uninsured of Polk County, including her views on Medicaid expansion.

All Closing the Gap programs take place on Wednesdays at noon via Zoom. Contact Trudy at trudycorryrankin@gmail.com if you need a Zoom link.

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2020-2021

LWV Polk Board of Directors

Co-Presidents, Vicki Lowe, vgl.art@tampabay.rr.com & Sandy Sheets, sandra.sheets@gray-robinson.com

Vice president, Andy Crossfield, usandy@aol.com

Secretary, Barbara Wallace, barbaraw6@gmail.com

Treasurer, Terry Lauretta, terry@cpsgroupcpas.com

Natalie Alexich, nalexich@aol.com

Charlene Bennett, charleneben@earthlink.net

Katy Pace Byrd*, byrdkp@gmail.com

Emily Crain, emily.crain@gray-robinson.com

Jiwa Farrell, jwfarrell2011@gmail.com

Karen Freedman*, kefreedman@hotmail.com

Eileen Swiler, seswiler@msn.com

**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-Presidents' Message

Dear LWV Polk Members,

So much has been accomplished by our LWV Polk members this past year, in spite of our very challenging circumstances. You donned masks and socially distanced, rapidly acquired Zoom skills, and continued with meetings, GOTV efforts, issue studies and DEI efforts. In short, you are to be congratulated for carrying out our mission of making democracy work!

We stand in appreciation of all of you, but want to recognize a few members in particular:

Trudy Corry Rankin for acting swiftly after the shutdown in spring 2020 to create her weekly Zoom meetings—now known as Closing the Gap--as a way of remaining connected to each other and to our community during the pandemic, especially in the absence of our monthly Hot Topics in-person programs.

Linda Donaldson for taking on the roadside sign project as well as leading the meme-creating effort for our social media GOTV efforts. As well as continuing to serve as our membership chair, Linda is now proposing to keep going in this vein as a outreach chair, along with her group.

Natalie Alexich, Ann Weeks, and Jiwa Farrell for not only recruiting members to serve as officers and board members for a new year of service beginning upon their election at our **annual meeting on April 28th** (mark your calendars now!), but also taking on the additional challenge of filling some long-vacant committee chairs, although the nominating committee is not required to do this. (Check the updated list of committees and chairs on page 3!)

Katy Pace Byrd and the DEI book discussion group, which led to a seminar series and a presentation celebrating Black culture, which has now been seen by both seminar series and Closing the Gap attendees, as well as LWV FL "Lunch and Learn" attendees. A DEI/Antiracism resource list (with 300+ items) should be appearing on our website this coming month.

We are completing the work needed to put together our annual meeting booklet and agenda, and are delighted to report that we have found a dynamic speaker, **Jessica Lowe Minor** of the national board the League of Women Voters. Among other things, she is a past executive director of the League of Women Voters of Florida. We will spotlight her in next month's newsletter, but meanwhile here is a link to her biography: <https://www.lwv.org/about-us/staff-leadership/jessica-lowe-minor>

Don't forget to pay your annual dues! (See your options in The Classifieds.) Continue to take care of yourselves, and we look forward to seeing you at the annual meeting!

Vicki Lowe & Sandy Sheets

Committees & Action Teams

Education, Bobbie Boatright Harris,
bharris10@tampabay.rr.com

Gun violence prevention, 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

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

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's New Emphasis on DEI: A Short History

The League of Women Voters of the US is actually a little late to the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) "party," one of a number of facts that must be acknowledged as part of the process of moving forward.

It is well known that early Black suffragists were not treated equally by their White sisters. Ida B. Wells famously pushed her way to the front of a suffragist parade after she and other Black activists had been told to walk at the back. She also challenged her White colleagues in a failed attempt to get them to speak out against lynching. Sadly, she is the only Black suffragist whose name is widely known. But a recent book by the LWVUS' first Black president, Dr. Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins, *The Untold Story of Women of Color in the League of Women Voters*, published last year, does much to correct that and charts in detail the evolution of League attitudes from its founding to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of existence, 1920-2020. Now, the work continues as the national League elected Dr. Deborah Turner as its second Black president in 2020. Dr. Turner chaired the national board's DEI committee and recently contributed to the national League's blog post (see the link below).

Another landmark moment occurred in 2020, when the LWV US elevated DEI to the level of **policy**, a thing heretofore codified only for our nonpartisan stance.--*Katy Pace Byrd*

Sources: <https://www.lwv.org/about-us/staff-leadership/deborah-turner>  
<https://www.lwv.org/blog/celebrating-black-women-who-helped-pave-way-more-black-women-politics>  
<https://www.lwv.org/league-management/bylaws/bylaws-and-certificate-incorporation>

## International Women's Day

"An International Women's Conference was organized in August 1910, by Clara Zetkin, a German suffragist and leader in the Women's Office. Zetkin proposed a special Women's Day to be organized annually and International Women's Day was honored the following year in Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland, with more than one million attending the rallies. . . . When the internet became more commonplace, feminism and the fight against gender inequality experienced a resurgence. Now we celebrate International Women's Day each year as we push continuously with the hope of creating a completely equal society."

Source: <https://nationaltoday.com/international-womens-day/#history>

## Overheard at the Last Board Meeting

On February 19<sup>th</sup>, the board convened to consider the usual business of LWV Polk, as well as to check progress toward plans for our annual meeting. In this world of Zoom, the annual meeting will be held in that manner, at noon on **Wednesday, April 28<sup>th</sup>**. Members may begin signing on at 11:45 am. All materials required to go out to the membership (proposed budget, proposed bylaws amendments, and proposed nominees for board and officer positions) will be emailed at least one month prior to the meeting, and the annual meeting booklet (to include a roster of members) prepared by **Andy Crossfield** will be mailed before the date of the meeting.

If you haven't done this already, and are an officer or board member, please send a two-paragraph bio of yourself to nominating committee chair Natalie Alexich. You will all be introducing yourselves to the membership at the annual meeting. Newsletter editor Katy Pace Byrd is commissioned to begin spotlighting a board member or committee chair once each month. In addition, Emily Crain requests all committee chairs to submit brief annual reports for inclusion in the annual meeting booklet. LWV Polk program positions, as articulated in the 2020 annual meeting booklet ("Local Program" beginning on page 7), should also be reviewed and any proposed changes or additions should be submitted to Sandra Sheets and Vicki Lowe by March 12<sup>th</sup> for consideration at the March 19<sup>th</sup> board meeting.

The climate action team, led by **Charlene Bennett** and **Karen Freedman**, has continued to push forward, most lately supporting retraining for workers displaced by Lakeland Electric's Unit 3 shutdown. The great work of recruiting leadership for all committees that have been inactive has been accomplished (with only one appointment still pending). Let the rejuvenation begin!

Members are welcome to attend board meetings, held the third Friday of every month. Email Andy Crossfield at [usandy@aol.com](mailto:usandy@aol.com) or Jerry Weeks at [geraldibus1@gmail.com](mailto:geraldibus1@gmail.com) for the link.

## The Classifieds

### Welcome New Member!

Vicki Roy

### Annual Dues Now Payable

By check to PO Box 934,  
Lakeland, FL 33802, or  
online at [lwvpolk.org](http://lwvpolk.org).

### Women's History Month

"Since many of the women's suffrage centennial celebrations originally scheduled for 2020 were curtailed, the National Women's History Alliance is extending the annual theme for 2021 to 'Valiant Women of the Vote: Refusing to Be Silenced.'" Source: [www.womenshistory.org](http://www.womenshistory.org)

### So They Say . . .

"There are two kinds of restrictions upon human liberty -- the restraint of law and that of custom. No written law has ever been more binding than unwritten custom supported by public opinion." -- Carrie Chapman Catt

### Duly Noted

Congratulations and special appreciation to new committee chairs Bobbie Boatright Harris, Paula Mims, Natalie Alexich and Lillian Blessing!