Active Election Year Ahead for LWV

2018 got off to a flying start for LWV-SC with a Meet and Greet for the candidates for the Florida House District 72 seat on Jan. 16. The audience peppered Margaret Good and Alison Foxall with well-thought-out questions, making for a lively discussion. Voter Service at work.

The next evening, Jan. 17, brought a new endeavor for this new year with “Cocktails and Conversation” at the Coolinary Restaurant. In an intimate setting where members could talk among themselves and consider action plans, Sarasota County School Board member Jane Goodwin laid out some of the problems facing our public schools.

On Jan. 22, Ron Turner, Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections, was a fount of information at the January Hot Topics at Marina Jack.

The emphasis in 2018 will be on our member discussion as we consider the LWV-Florida monthly legislative priorities: Education; Gun Safety; Natural Resources, including a second Solar Co-op; Health Care; and Election Law, with a focus on restoring voting rights to non-violent ex-felons.

When League members take action, it will be because we understand the issues. Be one of those willing to work to make this League chapter effective at educating, advocating and voter registration. 2018 promises to be an active election year with races for U.S. Senate, Florida governor and a myriad of local races.

Let’s be ready for it!!!

Our Legislative Priorities: Education

Each year, LWV SRQ prioritizes the legislative issues for which it advocates. In 2018, Education is our top priority. The positions of LWV FL on the issue of education are that we:

- Support adequate funding for public education, and no use of public funds for the expansion of charter schools through a voucher program.
- Support stronger local district control over charter schools that includes greater fiscal management and accountability.
- Support a statewide assessment and accountability system that provides the same data at appropriate intervals to measure student progress for all schools that receive public funds, directly or indirectly.
- Support higher standards for early childhood education, for both staff and programs.
- Support measures to improve district and community collaboration for preschool programs, social services, and after school programs.

Mitzie Fiedler is Chair of our Education Committee. If you’d like to work with us on education issues, contact Millie Headdy at irisone23@comcast.net.
House Candidates Make Their Case at Forum

By Jan Pearce

Two candidates for the Florida House of Representatives District 72 seat drew an engaged audience of 60 voters to the Selby Library on Jan. 16.

Alison Foxall, Libertarian, and Margaret Good, Democrat, stated their positions and responded to a wide range of questions at a candidate forum sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Sarasota County and the American Association of University Women.

Good is a local lawyer in private practice. Foxall, a Sarasota native, owns a marketing and design firm. James Buchanan, the Republican candidate, did not respond to the invitation.

Foxall identified three areas she would address in Tallahassee: excessive business and licensing regulations, breaking up the utility monopoly and ending taxpayer subsidies for sports facilities.

Good's priorities revolved around “making sure our representatives represent us and not the special interests.” Even when the public votes overwhelmingly in favor of certain priorities – like recent constitutional amendments for preservation of public lands and for medical marijuana – “implementation is subpar” and practically nonexistent, she said.

She pointed out that Sarasota has one of the best public school districts in Florida, “but the Legislature is sending our tax dollars to for-profit charter schools with no real oversight or accountability.” While the Legislature is trying to expand privatization, “we need to be investing in public schools,” Good said.

Audience members peppered the candidates with questions, on issues ranging from gun rights to acceptance of federal Medicaid dollars to climate change.

Both candidates agreed communication with voters needs to be improved. Foxall pointed out that “this is what I do as a profession.” She suggested that legislators “need to talk to us, not just with their staff.” She added, “They aren’t responding to us. It’s clear it’s not working.”

Good endorsed the idea of candidate forums, sponsored by groups like the League of Women Voters and AAUW. She pledged that, if elected, her office would set regular hours during which either she or her staff would be available to talk to voters.

New Voter Services Committee Chair

Lee Bosserman recently assumed the position of Voter Services Committee Chair for LWV-SC. Lee earned a bachelor’s in international relations and a master’s in international health from the University of Michigan. She worked in health research and administration in the U.S. for several years, followed by about 10 years of work in the international health field, first in Mexico and then in the Middle East. Lee and her husband moved to Sarasota to raise their family and she eventually developed a secondary career as a grant writing consultant.

January Food for Thought

NAMI - Ending the Silence

Mental illness is the unseen presence and unheard voice in our society and in our fragmented medical system. But it is so common, nearly all of us will develop at least one diagnosable mental disorder in our lives.

And, at any given time, 20 to 25 percent of us will suffer from mental illness severely enough to inhibit our work, our education and/or our relationships. Even more frightening: Most of us will never receive treatment.

This was the message delivered by Pat Mahoney, president of the Sarasota County National Alliance on Mental Illness, at the LWV Food for Thought breakfast Jan. 5.

Even getting information about possible treatment or therapy is difficult, according to Mahoney. Receiving the care you need is an even higher hurdle. NAMI, the largest grassroots organization dedicated to improving the daily lives of people with mental illness, offers support, education, advocacy and research efforts here and elsewhere.

Mahoney, a native of England, is a registered nurse with a master’s in public health who has supervised public health facilities in four European countries. She was accompanied at the Food for Thought by two NAMI clients who briefly recounted their experiences.

Anatole Langdon came to Florida to attend graduate school. While here, he was diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder. Until he came to NAMI, he said, he had never met anyone with the same diagnosis. “Now, there are three of us in my group.”

Robin Fusco was diagnosed with severe depression 28 years ago. After receiving special training as a facilitator, she now leads NAMI’s Connections peer support group, which meets weekly.

NAMI offers a selection of free courses and education for individuals and families from its Sarasota office. More information is available at 941-376-9361 or namisarasotacounty.org.
Floridians’ Broad Support for Second Chances Sends Voting Amendment to 2018 Ballot

The League of Women Voters of Florida congratulates the hundreds of thousands of Floridians committed to grassroots action in succeeding to submit more than 1.1 million petitions and place the Second Chances Voting Restoration amendment on the ballot. “League members have been working diligently and consistently on this issue for years, and we are thrilled that our efforts, and the efforts of so many other dedicated organizations and citizens have achieved this momentous accomplishment,” said Pamela Goodman, president of the League of Women Voters of Florida.

Nearly 1.5 million people in Florida who have served their time and paid their debts to society are permanently excluded from voting. This amendment will make sure Floridians who have paid their debts in full are given the opportunity to have their voices heard. The amendment specifically excludes those individuals who have committed murder or a felony sexual offense.

“Through the hard work of Florida voters and unwavering dedication of a truly grassroots movement, we have reached a historic milestone and have officially placed the Second Chances Voting Restoration Amendment on the ballot,” said Desmond Meade, Chair of Floridians for a Fair Democracy and spokesperson for Second Chances Florida Campaign. “Voters took matters in their own hands to ensure that their fellow Floridians, family members, and friends who’ve made past mistakes, served their time and paid their debts to society are given a second chance and the opportunity to earn back their ability to vote.”

The next step will be to spread the message of Florida For 4, and vote “Yes” on Amendment 4 this November. For more information, visit lwvfl.org. To learn more about the Second Chances Campaign, visit secondchancesfl.org.

January Hot Topics
Elections Update from County Supervisor

Sarasota County Supervisor of Elections Ron Turner was the guest speaker at the regular monthly meeting of the LWV-SC on Jan. 22 at Marina Jack Restaurant in Sarasota.

A self-described “election geek,” Turner set forth to dispel the notion that the County Board of Elections was not actively engaged except just before and after elections.

Reflecting that he had held office for just one year, Turner pointed out that he had already overseen seven elections. He also introduced Rachel Denton, the recently appointed Director of Communications and Voter Outreach.

He called attention to the general election Feb. 13 for the District 72 seat in the Florida House, for which his office mailed out 27,000 vote-by-mail solicitations, about half of which have already been returned. Early voting will be available Feb. 3-10 at Westfield Sarasota Square mall, the County Terrace Building in downtown Sarasota and at the North Sarasota Library, in Newtown. Polling places will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Feb. 13.

In addition, he specifically referred to many local elections scheduled to take place between March and the Aug. 28 statewide primary, as well as the general election for U.S. Senate, governor and Cabinet. Turner noted the recent work of the Constitutional Revision Commission, with a May 10 deadline to submit ballot questions to the Florida secretary of state. He also listed a number of local citizens’ initiatives up for consideration.

Poll workers are needed for the general election cycle through 2018, for which Turner estimates 80 percent of the approximately 400,000 Sarasota County residents are registered. When asked about the implementation of Rank Choice Voting, he noted that the county currently has capability as to software and voting tabulation but is awaiting certification by the state.

Cocktails and Conversations:
The State of Public Education 2018

At the Jan. 17 Cocktails and Conversations, League members and their guests participated in a lively conversation with Jane Goodwin, a Sarasota County School Board member. Goodwin presented key issues that will affect public education in the county in 2018.

The discussion covered topics including the voter-approved millage tax, what the funds have been used for and what will happen if the tax is not renewed; and the county’s commitment to providing modern technology to the students. Also discussed was charter school funding; cutting administrative costs to bring more money to the classrooms; average spending per student in Sarasota County, and how the county rates as compared with other counties in regard to per student spending.

The Cocktails and Conversation was held at the Coolinary Restaurant on Main Street in Sarasota.
Help Wanted!
Your Sarasota League needs someone to help us participate in a statewide push to get our message out on social media. If you are looking to get more involved, this is an easy way to do it!

Contact Carol Hartz at carolfoxhartz@outlook.com if you are interested.

Voter Services a Strong Interest of New Members
LWV SRQ has had a recent surge of new members, with a membership count now exceeding 175. Although our members are interested in a diverse range of issues, an informal look at new member questionnaires shows that Voter Services is a strong interest of new members. As a key Sarasota chapter initiative in an election year, let’s take a closer look at the activities of the Sarasota Voter Services Committee, and how they fit into the LWV mission.

The mission of the League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, is to encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in government, work to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influence public policy through education and advocacy. In Sarasota, the VSC supports the mission by:

- Reaching out to our community with voter registration drives.
- Publishing voter guides on candidates and issues.
- Arranging for public interaction with candidates at forums and meet-and-greets.

These activities are the “heart and soul” of the Sarasota LWV, and take the talent and energy of many members. If you are gifted at engaging the public, or more behind-the-scenes efforts like event planning or computer work, your help is needed for the 2018 general election!

Please contact Voter Services Chair Lee Bosserman at llbosserman@gmail.com and make a difference.

Spotlight on the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact in Florida

The League of Women Voters of Florida believes that the president of the United States should be elected as is every other local, state and national public official—by popular vote. Enacting the bipartisan National Popular Vote Interstate Compact will ensure that every Floridian’s vote counts—and counts equally—in national elections. States that enact the Compact pledge to award their electoral votes to the candidate that wins the national popular vote.

We oppose the “winner-take-all rule” and the inequities in the Electoral College formula that make the votes of millions of Americans—and Floridians—meaningless. We advocate for using the provisions of the U.S. Constitution that give states exclusive control over instructing their electors and that encourage states to enter into interstate compacts. Electing the president by popular vote has received support from conservatives to liberals and the majority of American voters, including Floridians.

We are interested in educating voters and legislators about NPVIC and its significance to Florida and in having legislation heard, considered, voted on and passed in the Florida Legislature by 2020 so that the voices of Floridians are just as important as the votes of every other American in all future presidential elections.

Spotlight On Natural Resources in Florida
The League of Women Voters of Florida supports state legislation for energy conservation and greater use of renewable sources like solar energy. The League supports policies that promote conservation of fresh water and its availability for environmental, public, agricultural, industrial, and mining uses on a priority basis. LWVFL also supports legislation to ban oil and gas drilling off Florida’s coast, as well as funding for public transportation.

Key issues include:

- Fund Florida Forever of the Water and Land Legacy Act/Protect our state parks.
- Ban “fracking” in Florida.
- Restore and protect our water and aquifers.
- Promote renewable energy and sustainability.

The League of Women Voters operates on three tiers to effectively engage with voters and government at all levels:

- National: www.lwv.org
- State: www.lwvfl.org
- Local: www.lwvsrq.org
MEMBERSHIP DUES

Your dues help the League fulfill its mission of working on important local, state and national issues and engaging people in our democratic process. Please take time now to commit and get involved!

Check annual membership level:

____ Individual $60       ____ Susan B. Anthony $100
____ Household (2) $90    ____ Student $25

Your additional donation is appreciated:

Operating Fund $__________
(not tax deductible—make check payable to LWV)

Education Fund $__________
(tax deductible—make check payable to LWV Education Fund)

Total amount enclosed $__________

Name(s): ___________________________________________________

Address: ___________________________________________________

City/State/Zip _____________________________________________

Phone:________________________ Email: __________________________

___ Please do not include this information in the membership directory

Take Action...Make things happen...Recommit...Renew!
Please circle topics that interest you:

Voter Service  Transportation  Natural Resource
Local Government  Education  Health Care
Observer Corps  Hospitality/Events  Membership
Fundraising  Publicity  Juvenile Justice
Nominating Committee  Gun Safety

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IN MEMORIAM

Sadly, LWV-SC lost a long-standing devoted member. Virginia Tarika passed away on January 13, 2018. We send her family and friends our condolences.

Carol Rescigno, LWV SRQ member and president of the Sarasota County chapter of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, speaks at a Dec. 14 candlelight vigil for victims of gun violence.

The vigil was held five years after the Sandy Hook massacre. Pat Allen, a member of the LWV SRQ Gun Safety Committee, participated in planning the event.
Citizens showing leadership in climate change issues
Dale White, Herald-Tribune

With President Donald Trump withdrawing the United States from the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement, Congress still pondering legislation but not acting and Florida Gov. Rick Scott banning state environmental regulators from even using terms such as “global warming,” concerned citizens say they cannot wait for leadership on the climate change issue to come from the top. In their recent book “Climate of Hope,” former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Carl Pope, former national executive director of the Sierra Club, say that leadership has to rise from the grassroots.

Read full article:
http://gatehousenews.com/risingseas/grassroots/site/heraldtribune.com/

Join Us in Tallahassee for our Legislative Summit!
Only a few weeks left!

Advocacy and Action:
League Legislative Summit 2018

Our members from all around the state will converge on the Capitol and advocate for our issues. Meet with your legislators, learn how to lobby, meet with fellow like-minded Leaguers, and help make a difference at Legislative Summit. It’s only possible with your participation!

Tuesday, February 6, 2018 at 1 PM through Wednesday, February 7, 2018 at 8 PM
REGISTER: www.lwvfl.org