

THE VOTER

April 2017



TREAT YOURSELF TO LUNCH AND CAMARADERIE IN
BEAUTIFUL DOWNTOWN ST. PETE

What a great way to spend an April afternoon!

***Join us to reflect on the past year and look ahead
to strategies to build democracy in the coming months.***

When: Saturday, April 22nd

LWVSPA Annual Meeting Time: 10:30 am (Check-in 10 - 10:30 am)

Where: Regatta Room

Luncheon Time: Noon - 2:00 pm (Check-in 11:30 am - Noon)

Where: Ballroom

Guest Speaker: Pam Goodman, President, League of Women Voters of Florida

Registration Deadline: **Monday, April 17th**

Luncheon Price: \$35.00 per person

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

RESERVATIONS AND ADVANCE PAYMENT REQUIRED

[Click here for more information and to register.](#)

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Take Action: Ways YOU Can
Be Involved in Building Democracy

Gun Safety Action



Gun Safety Group Focusing on 2017 Legislative Session

by Sharon Winters, Gun Safety Action Group Chair

At mid-session in the 2017 Florida legislature, it appears that an expansion of **Stand Your Ground** (SYG) legislation will pass and go to the governor for signature in late April. Related bills, SB1052 and HB677, further expand SYG: one would only need to perceive a threat, rather than be attacked, to claim SYG defense.

Several dangerous bills including campus carry and open carry appear to have died in Senate committee, stopped by Sen. A. Flores (R-Miami), but a number of bills are moving forward. Proactive legislation supported by the FL Coalition & LWVF (expanded background checks and a ban on semi-automatic assault weapons), and several other gun safety measures appear unlikely to make it through committee.

Learn more about gun safety at our new [Gun Safety Action Guide](#). You'll find the results of our study of a range of gun issues including impact on public health, campus carry, legislation, impact on society, and more.

[Click here](#) for current status of proposed legislation. Please [contact your state legislators](#) to express your opinion on bills of concern. The time is NOW.

To get involved with the Gun Safety Action Team, please [email me](#).

Voter Service Action

Dear Leaguers,

Please join me in welcoming Stephanie Owens to the LWVSPA Board of Directors, and now, as my partner and co-chair on the LWVSPA Voter Service Action Group (formerly termed committee). She brings considerable knowledge in public and government affairs from her former post in President Obama's administration as well as vast experience as a community liaison. I'm looking forward to working with her and incorporating her many insights and ideas in our work.

Rachael Garafalo, Voter Service Action Group Chair

Voter Service Action Group Call for New Members

by Stephanie Owens, Voter Service Action Group Co-Chair



Whether you've been a League member for years or have recently joined, you know that the League's efforts to make democracy work are effective. The League is a powerful engine for grass roots civic engagement actions that create positive change in our communities. Voter Service is the foundation of the League, with a mission to provide unbiased, factual information for citizens to use in making their own informed decisions on election day. We welcome you to join the Voter Service Action Group and help oversee and coordinate the League's efforts to provide nonpartisan information to voters and promote citizen participation in elections by registering, educating, mobilizing, and protecting voters.

The 2014 weakening of the Voters Rights Act, the recent surge in voter suppression policy and voter intimidation tactics, low voter turnout in local and mid-term elections, and "alt-facts" are all issues that create an elevated need for our Voter Service work and **we need more volunteers to get the job done.**

Key Voter Service projects include:

Voter Guide - publication of an online non-partisan resource to help voters make informed ballot choices by providing candidates' responses to issue-based questions as well as researched pro/con information on local ballot issues.

Candidate Forums - nonpartisan forums for candidates to field voter questions. Voter Registration, GOTV and Voter protection - strategies for registering voters and promoting voter turnout. Special emphasis on groups with historically low turnout and voter protection disenfranchisement.

Voter Education - dissemination of registration and voting information, dates and deadlines; information on changes in election law impacting voters; convening issue forums, discussions and creating materials.

Upcoming St. Petersburg Election: August 2017 Primary and November 2017 General Election.

The next meeting for the Voter Service Action Group is **Wednesday, May 17th from 6:30 - 7:30 pm at the League Office, 233 3rd Street N, St. Pete 33701**. We hope you'll join us. Please [click here](#) or call me at 727-639-1243 to sign up for the committee and to RSVP for the May Meeting. We look forward to seeing you on May 17, 2017.

Florida Constitution Revision Action



Florida's Constitution Revision Commission: We are the watchdogs for fairness, transparency and accountability

The League of Women Voters of Florida is looking for **interested members to participate in a statewide Action Group** to monitor and evaluate the proceedings of the recently appointed Florida Constitution Revision Commission (CRC). In coordination with the LWVF board of directors, the committee will also communicate the League's positions to the commission and represent the League at regional hearings.

Governor Rick Scott, Chief Justice Jorge Labarga, Senate President Joe Negron, and House Speaker Richard Corcoran have separately chosen thirty-six of the thirty-seven people who make up Florida's third CRC, a group that convenes every 20 years. The thirty-seventh Commissioner is Florida's Attorney General, Pam Bondi. This very powerful Commission will make recommendations to amend the state constitution which will be placed directly on the 2018 ballot without judicial or legislative review (though clearly, the Legislature has great influence as evidenced by the appointees).

The League needs to understand and engage in this process, responding to CRC actions when necessary with the full force of our organization. Because so much is at stake (the League's hard fought battle for Fair Districts is a target) and in light of [questions about transparency](#), voters are looking to the League to be their eyes, ears, and voice.

To learn more about the CRC, it's history, current members and their mission, [click here](#), and [here](#). To follow its proceedings, [click here](#).

Please contact [Raechel Garafalo](#) if you are interested in working on this statewide CRC committee.

Reproductive Rights Action

Keeping an Eye on the Legislature's Moves on Reproductive Rights

The new LWVSPA Reproductive Rights Action Group will meet on Tuesday, April 18 at 7:00 pm at the home of League member Annie Miller. Please contact chair [Amy Weintraub](#) to join our group or to obtain Annie's home address.

We continue to monitor and mount opposition to HB 696/SB 1130, a problematic bill making its way through the Florida Legislature which makes permanent a state program that refers women to so-called crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs), often run by organizations opposed to abortion--not medical professionals.

Please see our [Action Page](#) for the latest.

Education Action

Education Group Prepares for State and Local Action

by Robin Jones, Education Group Chair



The League of Women Voters has long been a fierce supporter of public education as the foundation of democracy. Our Florida Constitution [Article IX, Section 1(a)] requires the state to operate a "uniform, efficient, safe, secure, and high quality system of free public schools." But in recent months the very existence of such a system seems to be in question.

Prompted by the 2015 Pulitzer winning *Tampa Bay Times* series, "[Failure Factories](#)," LWVSPA formed an Education Committee to monitor the school district's response to problems outlined in the series. That group is now expanding to study four education issues which underlie the local challenges.

The issues are: (1) school funding, both capital and operational, (2) student testing and student and teacher assessments, (3) charter schools and tax-credit scholarships, and (4) the achievement gap and the south St. Petersburg schools.

In the upcoming months, we will gather state and local data on each of these issues. Later in the year, we'll use our findings to mount an educational campaign to increase awareness among citizens and engage in advocacy work aligned with LWVF legislative priorities during the 2018 legislative session.

If you want to join us in this important endeavor, please [email me](#).

Immigration Action

Immigration Continues to Capture Headlines

by Karen Coale, LWVSPA Immigration Co-Chair and LWVF Immigration Co-Chair

The LWVSPA Immigration Action Group is working very hard to help you understand the issues in the midst of a barrage of "fake" news and to provide tools for you to take action. Building on last fall's educational campaign, one subgroup has drafted a FACT sheet on **Due Process** and is preparing another on **Refugees**. The first is of concern due to the Administration's announcements to significantly increase deportations, and the latter continues to be misunderstood.

The **Executive Order** subgroup follows the status of related court cases. Our assessment is that we have a sound judicial system. On the other hand, the Administration has requested \$3B and then an additional \$13B to extend the wall, add personnel, and construct deportation centers. Look for the **LWVSPA's**

Weekly Action Alert on which will have scripts, contact info, etc., for our US Representatives and Senators.

Though immigration law is federal law and thus in the domain of the U.S. Congress, this has not deterred Florida legislators from filing bills that impact the undocumented. The "Rule of Law Adherence Act" (HB607) targets "Sanctuary Cities," and was featured in this week's LWVSPA Weekly Action Alert. If you have not yet taken action, please [read the Alert](#) and do so now. Your voice DOES make a difference.

On April 28th and 29th, the **Sunscreen Film Festival** will be presenting two films and panel discussions about immigrants. The LWVSPA is a co-sponsor for these events. [See details below](#). There is much to be done. Join us, become informed, and make a difference! For more information or to pass along your questions, please email me at immigration@lwwspa.org.

League Co-Sponsors Sunscreen Film Festival Special Immigration Program

The **Sunscreen Film Festival**, the longest running mainstream film festival in Tampa Bay presents a special Immigration Program as part of the 12th Annual Sunscreen Film Festival, co-sponsored by Courtyard by Marriott St. Petersburg Downtown, **The League of Women Voters of the St. Petersburg Area**, and Yakzan Law PLLC.



Two award-winning feature documentary films, [Who Is Dayani Cristal?](#) (Friday night 4/28 @6:30 pm) and [After Spring](#) (Sunday afternoon 4/30 @3:05 pm) will provide audiences with a very intimate and personal look into lives of migrants from Central America and Syria. Both films are being screened at [American Stage Theatre](#) in downtown St. Pete.

Migration has from the beginning of our civilization been a constant and formative part of our global human existence. Through that constant, the stage on which migration plays out has born witness to continuous change as borders shift, disappear, reform, and become hostile, welcome, or apathetic as perceived allies and enemies shift.

Under this ever changing current are the human stories. Who are the people that cross these borders and why do they come? What these films reveal are human beings no different from us, who share the same desire for happiness, freedom, security, and the ability to provide for themselves and their families. When viewed through this lens, does it change how we perceive the act of immigration?

Admission to each film is \$10 per person. Tickets at the door or [in advance](#).

Campaign Finance Advocacy Training

Become a Citizen Activist to Get Dark Money Out of Politics

If you believe individual citizens are far more important than money, this is the event for you. Without a move to reform the way campaigns are funded, the power of the individual voter will be lost to well-funded interests.

At this interactive workshop, gain and hone the skills you need to become a citizen activist for eliminating super PACs' control over campaigns and our elected official.

- effective communications styles

- birddogging techniques
- using social media and traditional media to advance a social justice cause

Presented by **Fired Up Pinellas** and the **League of Women Voters of the St. Pete Area**.

REGISTER NOW

Friday, 4/12, 6:30 - 9:30 pm
Allendale United Methodist Church
3803 Haines Rd N, St. Petersburg 33703

The American Way of Poverty: How the Other Half Still Lives



Born in England, Author/journalist Sasha Abramsky (seven books to date) studied at Balliol College, Oxford, and at Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in New York City. Currently living in Sacramento, he teaches in the U.C. Davis writing program, while also a fellow at the NYC-based Demos think tank.

Sasha created ***Voices of Poverty: A Narrative of America's Poor***, which provided the material for his book on 21st century poverty, ***The American Way of Poverty: How the Other Half Still Lives***. His most recent book, ***The House of Twenty Thousand Books***, is about his Eastern European bibliophile grandfather, Chimen Abramsky, who was the son and grandson of illustrious rabbis. Sasha's upcoming book, ***Jumping at Shadows***, will be published by Nation Books in September.

Lecture followed by a light supper. The event is free and open to the public.

Sunday, April 30 at 5 - 8 pm
Temple Beth-El
400 Pasadena Ave. S, St. Petersburg 33707

Presented by **The Leif Nissen Social Justice Lecture Series of Temple Beth-El** in partnership with the League of Women Voters of the St. Petersburg Area, University of South Florida St. Petersburg, Unitarian Universalists of Clearwater, and Unitarian Universalists of St. Petersburg.

For more information, contact Temple Beth-El Social Action co-chair, [Robin Warren](#) or the Temple office at 727-347-6136.

The Leif Nissen Social Justice Lecture Series is sponsored by Karen Lieberman & Bruce Nissen to honor their son Leif (May 21, 1980-November 19, 2008) of blessed memory. Leif was dedicated to social justice issues and his family is choosing to honor him through these lectures.

In the Know

League members are known for being informed activists. This new column, started in December, highlights timely and authoritative resources related to issues on the chapter's annual program plan. We hope to provide new insights, provoke thought, and stimulate action.

Advocacy:

["Lessons from the Tea Party,"](#) a recent op-ed in ***The New York Times***, outlines Tea Party tactics that can be used in responding to current threats to our democracy and our values. Three former Congressional aides, who saw the effectiveness of the Tea Party in action, wrote the article. The group also authored

the succinct and powerful website "[Indivisible: A Practical Guide for Resisting the Trump Agenda.](#)"

"[What Calling Congress Achieves.](#)" a March 6 *New Yorker* article by Kathryn Schulz outlines the most effective ways to petition the government but asks "does it really make a difference?" It is a powerful call to action.

Education:

"[What the U.S. Can Learn from Smart Schools in Other Nations.](#)" outlines findings from the triennial PISA testing of 15-year-olds in 69 countries. The study models show that adherence to a set of core practices translates into student success in problem solving, making compelling written arguments, and identifying patterns. Core practices include making teaching more prestigious and selective, and directing more resources to the neediest children. The U.S. follows only one of five core practices.

-- Sharon Winters

Bits and Pieces

KUDOS

Our own **Amy Weintraub** will be a recipient of the **Gardner W. Beckett Jr. Civil Liberties Award at the annual Bill of Rights Dinner of the ACLU** Pinellas County Chapter on Thursday, April 20. This is the same award our League won in 2016. Amy receives the award in recognition of her leadership on January's fabulous Women's March St. Pete. Congrats, Amy!



Wish to attend?

ACLU Bill of Rights Dinner Pinellas County Chapter

Thursday, 4/20 at 6:00 pm

Banquet Masters

13355 49th St N, Clearwater 33762

Tickets \$50 per person. [Click here](#) for more information and to purchase tickets.

MEMBERSHIP

Check out new details, including our [New Member Handbook](#) under the updated [membership section](#) on our website.

BI-MONTHLY LEAGUE MEETINGS STARTING THIS MONTH

Heeding the call for more consistency on general meetings, our local League has scheduled bi-monthly meetings starting with our Annual Meeting & Luncheon on Saturday, April 22nd. After that, **we will be gathering every other 2nd Tuesday at the Main Library at 3745 9th Ave. N at 6:30 pm.** The plan for each meeting is a League update, followed by an interactive program. Please mark your calendars with these dates:

~ June 13th, 6:30 pm

~ August 7th, 6:30 pm

~ October 10th, 6:30 pm

"FREE" DONATIONS TO THE FLORIDA LEAGUE EDUCATION FUND



Do you order online from Amazon? If so, they will donate a small percentage of your purchase amount to the charity of your choice when you order through the [Amazon Smile](#) page. The page is identical to the regular Amazon home page and you use your regular Amazon account. Just indicate that your charity of choice is the "League of Women Voters of Florida Education Fund." Every little bit helps!



Upcoming Events Quick Reference Guide

[Please visit our website calendar](#) for the most current information about events and meetings or for driving directions.

When	What	Where
Tue. 4/18, 6:30 pm	Membership Group Meeting	LWVSPA Office 233 3rd St. N, St. Pete
Tue. 4/18, 7:00 pm	Reproductive Rights Group Meeting	Home of Annie Miller
Wed. 4/19, 6:00 pm	Cocktails & Conversation	The Avenue Eat/Drink 330 1st Ave. S, St. Pete
Sat. 4/22, 10:30 am	Annual Meeting & Luncheon	St. Petersburg Yacht Club 111 Central Ave. St. Pete
Mon. 4/24, 2:30 pm	Immigration Group Meeting	Home of Karen Coale
Mon. 4/24, 6:00 pm	New Member Orientation	Home of Julie Kessel
Fri. 4/28, 6:30 pm	Film: Who is Dayani Cristal?	American Stage Theatre 163 3rd St. N, St. Pete
Sun. 4/30, 3:30 pm	Film: After Spring	American Stage Theatre 163 3rd St. N, St. Pete
Sun. 4/30, 5:00 pm	Leif Nissen Social Justice Lecture: Journalist & Author Sasha Abramsky	Temple Beth El 400 Pasadena Ave. S, St. Pete
Mon. 5/1, 2:00 pm	International Relations Group: Korean Choices	Pinellas Park Library 7720 52nd St. N, Pinellas Park
Mon. 5/8, 12 noon	Reproductive Rights Group Conference Call	Click here for call-in instructions
Fri. 5/12, 6:30 pm	Campaign Finance Reform Advocacy Workshop	Allendale UMC 3803 Haines Rd. N, St. Pete

Membership



Join Us We Make a Difference

We need your support to continue our work in the community and at state and national levels. Whether you want to be an active member or a supporting member, your dues help advance the League's mission.

We offer five levels of membership:

Carrie Chapman Catt (Gold) for \$250*, Susan B. Anthony (Silver) for \$125*, Household for \$78*, Individual for \$52, Student for \$26

*Includes two members residing at the same address.

It's easy to join or renew. [Pay online using PayPal](#) (you do **not** need a PayPal account to pay us by credit card), or if you prefer, mail a check payable to LWVSPA to **POB 11775, St. Petersburg, FL 33733-11775**.

A large percentage of what you pay for an individual membership goes to support our state and national Leagues. By selecting the Gold or Silver membership level, most of your dues will help support the work of our local League.

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

League of Women Voters of the St. Petersburg Area | office@lwvspa.org |
727.896.5197 | www.lwvspa.org

LWVSPA, P.O. Box 11775, St. Petersburg, FL 33733

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