

LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS
OF THE
ST. PETERSBURG
AREA

ELECTION REPORT

2020 Primary & General Elections

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LWV[®]

ELECTION 2020

VOTING AND ELECTION PROTECTION REPORT



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INTRODUCTION



The 2020 election was historic for many reasons; it was the 100-year anniversary of women’s suffrage, it was held during a pandemic, and the year was marred with significant disinformation campaigns to reduce voter confidence. Our League witnessed accounts of voter intimidation in-person, wide-reaching misinformation campaigns, and the politicization of voting and our election process. In short, our organization had its work cut out for us this year. However, our volunteers and leadership adapted and persevered; we created health and safety protocols for voter service volunteers, utilized voter data from the Supervisor of Elections office and our Engage St. Pete report to drive our

voter turnout efforts, and used the remaining Engage St. Pete Project funds to promote voting information and safe ways to vote by partnering with organizations that work directly with the community audiences we wanted to reach. This year was a testament to the legacy of the League of Women Voters as a nonpartisan political organization seeking to protect democracy and empower voters. It also builds the foundation for the direction our 100-year organization seeks to move toward; a legacy of working to empower those who are underserved, underrepresented, and disenfranchised.

Partnerships & Collaborations

We partnered with a wide variety of neighborhood associations, government agencies, nonprofits, community organizations, and churches to reach out to new and underserved voters. Because of these rich partnerships, we were able to register voters, spread the word about voting by mail (VBM), and promote voter education and information using printed materials and virtual PDF shares. We shared our community-focused VBM social media campaign toolkit and distributed our printed Voter Guides (6,500 Constitutional Amendment guides, 2,500 local races).

Community Collaborations for 2020 Elections

Partner	Material Distribution	Voter Guide	Postcards	Voter Registration
Neighborhood Associations:				
Bartlett Park, Campbell Park, Childs Park, 13th St. Heights	X	X		
Community-Based Organizations:				
Community Development and Training Center (CDAT)	X			
Deuces Live!	X			
National Council of Negro Women*	X	X	X	
Pinellas Ex-Offender Re-Entry Coalition**	X			X
St. Pete Peace Protest / Tri-Partisan Canvas	X			X
Urban League Young Professionals †	X			
Faith-Based Organizations:				
Mt. Zion Progressive Church	X	X	X	
Nonprofits / Funders:				
Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg	X			
St. Pete Free Clinic	X			
Job Corps	X			
Midtown Rotary	X			
St. Petersburg College	X			X
<p>* NCNQW served as a liaison to distribute materials to a larger network of South St. Petersburg churches including Mt. Zion AME</p> <p>** This coalition is comprised of 30-40 organizations who work with returning citizens</p> <p>† Virtual presentation was given to ULYP about the voting process</p>				

COVID-19 Impacts

COVID-19 had a significant impact on how our Voter Services team conducted voter outreach this year. Much of our outreach was through social media, email, and traditional mail. Some in-person events were hosted to help people register to vote; volunteers were provided personal protective equipment like masks, face shields, and specific instructions to reduce exposure (social distancing, using sanitizer, etc.).

BACKGROUND

GET OUT THE VOTE / VOTER TURNOUT

Overall, there was a 2-point increase in turnout, which is a 2.6% increase across Pinellas county. Of the 428 Pinellas precincts, 236 of them had at least some increase. The rest, 192 precincts, were flat or down. This can be attributed to a historic election in a



hyper-partisan environment, as well as grassroots efforts from organizations across the political spectrum promoting voter registration, education, and turnout. Messaging related to the need for policy change to address racial injustice, the COVID-19 pandemic, and police brutality was linked with the push for getting communities of color and their allies to take their protests

and frustration to the polls. The 2020 General Election yielded a 77.7% voter turnout rate for St. Petersburg with a 69.7% turnout rate for Black voters and 71.9% for Hispanic voters. This was a positive change from 2016 and 2018; 77.4% and 66.1% respectively. During the

2018 General Election, 62.5% of Black voters voted while 56.6% of Hispanic voters cast their ballot. In 2016, Black voter turnout was 69.9% and Hispanic voter turnout was 69.5% in St. Petersburg. This was evident in national, state, and local election turnout.

The 2020 Primary Election was a strong indicator of turnout for the general election; we saw increases from the last presidential election in the primaries this year for many of our low voter turnout precincts.

Table 1

Analysis of Voting Age Population (VAP), St. Petersburg FL (2020 Primary Election)				
Population Group	Estimated AP (18 and older)	% VAP Registered to Vote in 2020 Primary Election	% VAP who Voted in 2020 Primary Election	% Registered Voters who Voted in 2020 Primary Election
TOTAL	209,845	90%	29%	32%
Women	110,140	90%	30%	34%
Men	99,705	84%	26%	31%
White	140,288	92%	31%	34%
Black or African American	43,475	82%	27%	33%
Hispanic or Latino	14,309	63%	13%	21%
<i>Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates; Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections 2020 Primary Election District Voter Turnout Analysis</i>				
<i>Notes on demographic breakdown: These figures should be considered as estimates. The Supervisor of Elections does not require people to provide demographic data in order to register to vote, therefore individuals who opted not to enter some of this information may not be captured in the voting data above. Estimates for White, Black/African American, and Hispanic/Latino VAP have been calculated to avoid overlap between these groups as far as possible. People of other races, multiple races or unknown race are included in the total but are not included as a separate breakdown because sufficient data was not publicly available. In addition, neither the U.S. Census Bureau nor the SOE currently provides an option for people who do not identify as either male or female.</i>				

Precincts with the lowest voter turnout in St. Petersburg saw increases in voter turnout for the 2020 Primary Election compared to the last presidential election. Precinct 204 was the only precinct in this cohort that did not see an increase; the decrease was 1%.

Table 2

Demographic & Voting Information by Precinct in Top Ten Lowest Voter Turnout Precincts (2018) in 2020 Primary Election

Precinct #	Census Tract #	Zip Code	Voter Turnout %	% Change from 2016	Absentee #	Voted at Polls #	Early Voting
131	229.02	33713	25.1%	+5%	293	85	6
162	245.11	33762, 33716	20%	+5.5%	885	208	32
132	230, 246.02	33713	22.7%	+4.6%	303	72	3
126	216, 234	33705, 33713,	28%	+4.7%	207	49	8
204	208, 201.01	33711, 33712	23.7%	-1%	164	39	4
120	218, 219, 207	33712, 33711	25.8%	+2.7%	718	173	31
117	212, 287	33712, 33705	27.2%	+6.6%	289	94	12
119	205, 286, 212	33705, 33701	24.2%	+5.1%	629	127	20

In comparison to the last presidential general election in 2016, the city of St. Petersburg saw gains in all demographic areas of the voting age population.

Table 3

Analysis of Voting Age Population (VAP), St. Petersburg FL (2020 General Election)					
Population Group	Estimated AP (18 and older)	% VAP Registered to Vote in 2020 General Election	% Change from 2016 (VAP Registered to vote in 2016)	% VAP who Voted in 2020 General Election	% Registered Voters who Voted in 2020 General Election
TOTAL	209,845	93%	+11%	72%	78%
Women	110,140	93%	+9%	73%	79%
Men	99,705	87%	+10%	66%	76%
White	140,288	95%	+10%	77%	81%

Black or African American	43,475	85%	+5%	59%	70%
Hispanic or Latino	14,309	67%	+16%	48%	72%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates; Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections 2020 General Election District Voter Turnout Analysis

Notes on demographic breakdown: These figures should be considered as estimates. The Supervisor of Elections does not require people to provide demographic data in order to register to vote, therefore individuals who opted not to enter some of this information may not be captured in the voting data above. Estimates for White, Black/African American, and Hispanic/Latino VAP have been calculated to avoid overlap between these groups as far as possible. People of other races, multiple races or unknown race are included in the total but are not included as a separate breakdown because sufficient data was not publicly available. In addition, neither the U.S. Census Bureau nor the SOE currently provides an option for people who do not identify as either male or female.

When comparing the low voter turnout precincts, there were mixed gains and losses for turnout during the general election this year compared to the 2018 midterm elections.

Table 4

Demographic & Voting Information by Precinct in Top Ten Lowest Voter Turnout Precincts (2018) in 2020 General Election							
Precinct #	Census Tract #	Zip Code	Voter Turnout %	% Change from 2016	Absentee #	Voted at Polls #	Early Voting
131	229.02	33713	72.0	+4.7%	625	293	229
162	245.11	33762, 33716	73.9	+2.0%	2313	966	1121
132	230, 246.02	33713	71.0	+2.9%	699	221	1740
126	216, 234	33705, 33713,	69.9	+6.9%	416	156	154
204	208, 201.01	33711, 33712	60.3	-4.4%	273	138	135

120	218, 219, 207	33712, 33711	61.6	-5.4%	1307	465	492
117	212, 287	33712, 33705	58.7	-3.9%	491	227	163
119	205, 286, 212	33705, 33701	60.6	+3.2%	1138	445	472

Previous Election Comparisons

As it has been said time and time again, the 2020 election was a significant and historic event in our nation's history. Our county saw significant increases in voter turnout; in 2016, Pinellas witnessed a 77.39% voter turnout and in 2018, 65.95% of voters cast a ballot. This general election saw a 79.4% voter turnout rate. St. Petersburg's voter turnout rates for 2016 and 2018 were 76.6% and 66.1%, respectively. For additional voter information and context, the following tables provide snapshots of the voting age population and voter turnout rates for the 2018 and 2016 elections in low voter turnout precincts.

Table 5

Analysis of Voting Age Population (VAP), St. Petersburg FL				
Population Group	Estimated AP (18 and older)	% VAP Registered to Vote in 2018 General Election	% VAP who Voted in 2018 General Election	% Registered Voters who Voted in 2018 General Election
TOTAL	209,845	86%	57%	66%
Women	110,140	89%	60%	67%
Men	99,705	82%	53%	65%
White	140,288	89%	61%	69%
Black or African American	43,475	79%	50%	62%
Hispanic or Latino	14,309	57%	32%	57%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates; Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections 2018 General Election District Voter Turnout Analysis

Notes on demographic breakdown: These figures should be considered as estimates. The Supervisor of Elections does not require people to provide demographic data in order to register to vote, therefore individuals who opted not to enter some of this information may not be captured in the voting data above. Estimates for White, Black/African American, and Hispanic/Latino VAP have been calculated to avoid overlap between these groups as far as possible. People of other races, multiple races or unknown races are included in the total but are not included as a separate breakdown because sufficient data was not publicly available. In addition, neither the U.S. Census Bureau nor the SOE currently provides an option for people who do not identify as either male or female.

Table 6

Demographic & Voting Information by Precinct in Top Ten Lowest Voter Turnout Precincts in 2018 General Election						
Precinct #	Census Tract #	Zip Code	Voter Turnout %	Absentee #	Voted at Polls #	Early Voting
131	229.02	33713	54.9	374	349	70
162	245.11	33762, 33716	54.5	1230	1200	591
132	230, 246.02	33713	53.4	375	375	80
126	216, 234	33705, 33713,	53.4	227	186	69
204	208, 201.01	33711, 33712	53.2	169	163	79
120	218, 219, 207	33712, 33711	52.9	789	627	308
117	212, 287	33712, 33705	50.2	305	287	102
119	205, 286, 212	33705, 33701	50.2	644	577	256

Table 7

Analysis of Voting Age Population (VAP), St. Petersburg FL

Population Group	Estimated VAP (18 and older)	% VAP Registered to Vote in 2016 General Election	% VAP who Voted in 2016 General Election	% Registered Voters who Voted in 2016 General Election
TOTAL	209,845	82%	63%	77%
Women	110,140	84%	66%	79%
Men	99,705	77%	57%	74%
White	140,288	85%	68%	79%
Black or African American	43,475	80%	57%	71%
Hispanic or Latino	14,309	51%	36%	71%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates; Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections 2016 General Election District Voter Turnout Analysis

Notes on demographic breakdown: These figures should be considered as estimates. The Supervisor of Elections does not require people to provide demographic data in order to register to vote, therefore individuals who opted not to enter some of this information may not be captured in the voting data above. Estimates for White, Black/African American, and Hispanic/Latino VAP have been calculated to avoid overlap between these groups as far as possible. People of other races, multiple races or unknown race are included in the total but are not included as a separate breakdown because sufficient data was not publicly available. In addition, neither the U.S. Census Bureau nor the SOE currently provides an option for people who do not identify as either male or female.

Table 8

Demographic & Voting Information by Precinct in Top Ten Lowest Voter Turnout Precincts in 2016 General Election						
Precinct #	Census Tract #	Zip Code	Voter Turnout %	Absentee #	Voted at Polls #	Early Voting
131	229.02	33713	68.8	403	456	114
162	245.11	33762, 33716	72.2%	1484	1420	892
132	230, 246.02	33713	69%	447	496	138
126	216, 234	33705, 33713,	65.4%	252	236	93

204	208, 201.01	33711. 33712	63.1%	205	213	80
120	218, 219, 207	33712, 33711	65.1	917	736	386
117	212, 287	33712, 33705	61.1%	334	322	132
119	205, 286, 212	33705, 33701	58.7%	753	612	319

INITIATIVES & STRATEGIES

Outreach Strategies



LWVSPA employed a lot of different strategies to reach out to a diverse set of voters in St. Petersburg. Our organization hosted a Drag Out the Vote event on Oct. 31, 2020 to encourage LGBTQIA residents to vote and vote safely. We partnered with a coalition of local organizations led by the Carter G. Woodson African American History Museum and Women Talk Black to host Roll to the Polls, a series of events promoting early voting throughout the month of October. In addition to these events, we co-hosted a drive-in movie screening of the new documentary "All In: The Fight for Democracy" on Oct. 24, 2020 in the historic Deuces Live district in South St.

Petersburg, in partnership with Deuces Live St. Pete, Fired Up Pinellas, the Carter G. Woodson African American Museum, and St. Petersburg College. This event promoted the importance of protecting our own and each others' voting rights and access to the ballot box, and provided a history of the systemic suppression of Black voters. This year we also developed and implemented a comprehensive social media GOTV campaign.

Democracy Starts at Home Campaign

Using funds from our Engage St. Pete project (granted by the Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg) we enhanced our promotion of voting by mail and dropping off mail-in ballots at appropriate locations as a part of our Democracy Starts at Home campaign. This included:

- A robust social media campaign with professionally photographed images of real folks in our community filling out and returning mail-in ballots. This included residents of color, LGBTQ+ couples, and multi-racial couples and families.
- A multi-phased texting campaign to register voters in low-voter turnout districts (see Table 9).
- Two murals in our community promoting diversity in democracy and mail-in voting with technology that links viewers to voting resources by artists of color.
- Kids ballots so families could fill out mail-in ballots together.



This project utilized the results of the Engage St. Pete Report and guidance from our community partners. Through this campaign, we recognized the importance of culturally relevant messaging, collaborating with local agencies and supporting their voting efforts, and using an asset-based lens to address civic engagement in the community.

Table 9

Texting Campaign for Primary Election 2020 (Resistance Labs Results)

Campaign	Textable Contacts	Positive Response	Percent	Negative Response	Percent
1st Absentee Ballot Ask - 6/24/20	8657	394	4.55%	21	.24%
2nd Absentee Ballot Chase - 8/12/20	8224	100	1.22%	22	.27%

VOTER REGISTRATION EFFORTS

Previous Election Comparisons

The League is well-known for its voter registration efforts in every local, state, and federal election. In 2019, the League of Women Voters hosted 22 voter registration events resulting in the completion of 155 voter registration forms and 34 vote-by-mail forms.

Outreach Strategies

We started 2020 with participation at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Parade and Family Fun Day events. With the onset of COVID-19 in March, our ability to host safe in-person events was limited, but the Voter Services team adapted. Volunteers registered voters at the Tropicana Field Feeding Tampa Bay events and conducted a total of 28 events in 2020. That includes 10 events from January to March and 18 from June to October. No events were hosted from March 12 to June 15 due to COVID-19.



2020 Voter Registration Team Metrics and Highlights

- 198 VR forms completed; 112 VBM forms.
- Distributed 10,000 VBM flyers to the community in partnership with Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg (7,000); Positive Impact Church for food pantry (1,000); NCNW; Mt. Zion Progressive Church; Bartlett Park Neighborhood Association; Campbell Park Neighborhood Association; Childs Park Neighborhood Association; 13th St. Heights Neighborhood Association; Community Development and Training (CDAT).
- Virtually distributed VBM flyers plus other voter education flyers, including Why Your Vote Matters and Be Ready to Vote 2020 to CDAT; Midtown Rotary; Deuces Live; Mt. Zion Progressive; National Council of Negro Women (NCNW); Urban League Young Professionals (ULYPs); 30+ organizations in the Pinellas Ex-offenders Re-entry Coalition (PERC) network; St. Petersburg College; Job Corps.
- Partnered with neighborhood associations (Bartlett Park, Campbell Park, Childs Park, 13th St. Heights; churches (Mt. Zion Progressive, Rock of Jesus, Mt. Zion AME, Positive Impact, others via NCNW); community and business organizations (Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg, Urban League and ULYPs, CDAT, Deuces Live, Midtown Rotary, PERC) to disseminate voter education VBM materials.
- With permission of the City, we commissioned a vote-by-mail mural on Enoch Davis Community Center. This artwork is on the west-facing wall by South Side artist Jabari Reed (a.k.a. iBOMS), with Derek Donnelly (a.k.a. Saint Paints) as advisor.
- Partnered with National Council of Negro Women and Mt. Zion Progressive Church to handwrite and mail 2,000 postcards to Black female registered voters in two of the lowest



voter-turnout precincts in St. Petersburg (117 & 119) in an effort to clarify dates and encourage voter engagement.

- Attended weekly community engagement calls with other organizations to stay updated on St. Petersburg community organizations voter turnout and education efforts.
- Partnered with the St. Petersburg Parks & Recreation Department to put “Register to Vote/Request VBM” info on all 14 recreation center marquees for one month.
- National Voter Registration Day:
 - Collaborated with When We All Vote and The Civics Center on virtual high school voter registration events at Pinellas County Public Schools and Shorecrest and Canterbury independent schools.
 - Served as keynote presenter at SPC virtual event.
 - Collaborated with Eckerd College’s Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) on its virtual event.
 - PIRG reported that across FL, over 2,000 students registered. Two weeks before the election, PIRG teams at the University of South Florida (USF) and SPC helped 124 people make concrete plans to vote.

Returning Citizen Efforts

Registering returning citizens (residents with former non-violent felony convictions who have served their sentence) to vote is a priority for both our local League and the League of Women Voters of Florida. While we stopped doing in-person voter registration work in mid-March, we pivoted to increased collaboration with our various community partners in a variety of ways, including:

- Regular communications with community activist and local Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRRC) representative Jabaar Edmond.
- Ongoing conversations with local churches and neighborhood associations about the voter education materials we can provide them for outreach to returning citizens (RCs).
- Engagement in monthly Zoom meetings with Pinellas Ex-Offender Re-Entry Coalition, which includes between 30-40 community organizations involved in work

with RCs. We are regularly invited to give updates on voter registration and education during those meetings.

- We also participated in the League of Women Voters of Florida (LWVFL) and American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) state-wide postcard and texting campaign to some 200,000 RCs who were deemed eligible to register. LWVSPA volunteers sent 2500 postcards.

An important initiative that came out of that work was offering the various organizations on the monthly PERC Zoom meeting the opportunity to have bundles of voter registration forms with stamped envelopes addressed to the Pinellas Co. Supervisor of Elections office, plus educational materials on voting, dropped off for their clients' use. We delivered more than 300 of these voter registration packets through this effort. This required funding for envelopes, stamps, and copying provided by our League.

VOTER EDUCATION

Another foundational activity that our League provides the community is voter education in the form of candidate forums, our award-winning Pinellas Voter Guide, and a speaker's bureau.

Candidate Forums

Due to COVID-19, LWVSPA offered candidate forums online using YouTube and Facebook Live to host multiple election forums. We also partnered with the SPC Institute for Strategic Policy Solutions and the St. Pete Catalyst to help produce these forums using their technology platforms and expertise. Our other partners included the National Council of Negro Women St. Petersburg Metropolitan Section, Community Law Program, Gulfcoast Legal Services, Clearwater Neighborhood Coalition, Pinellas Chapter of the ACLU, Pinellas and West Pinellas Chapters of the National Organization of Women (NOW), The University of South Florida St. Petersburg Campus (USFSP), USFSP Center for Civic Engagement, Pinellas County Council Parent-Teacher Association, and of course our sister-league, the LWV of North Pinellas County. These forums were offered live on Facebook and on YouTube. Our moderators for the forums included Al Ruechel, retired Bay News 9 news anchor, Ken Wrede, LWVSPA secretary, and Kristine Feher, local attorney and president of

the Pinellas County Chapter of the Florida Association for Women Lawyers (PFAWL). All general election forums were recorded and are available on our Facebook and Youtube site. When we could only host one Supervisor of Election candidate, we used the opportunity to provide our audience with a live forum to answer questions about voting. President Linsey Grove and Second Vice President and Election Protection Co-Chair Amy Keith served as panelists to answer audience questions. There was a sign-language interpreter included in the video with SPC ISPS and then live captioning with the St. Pete Catalyst. We hosted forums for the following races and candidates:

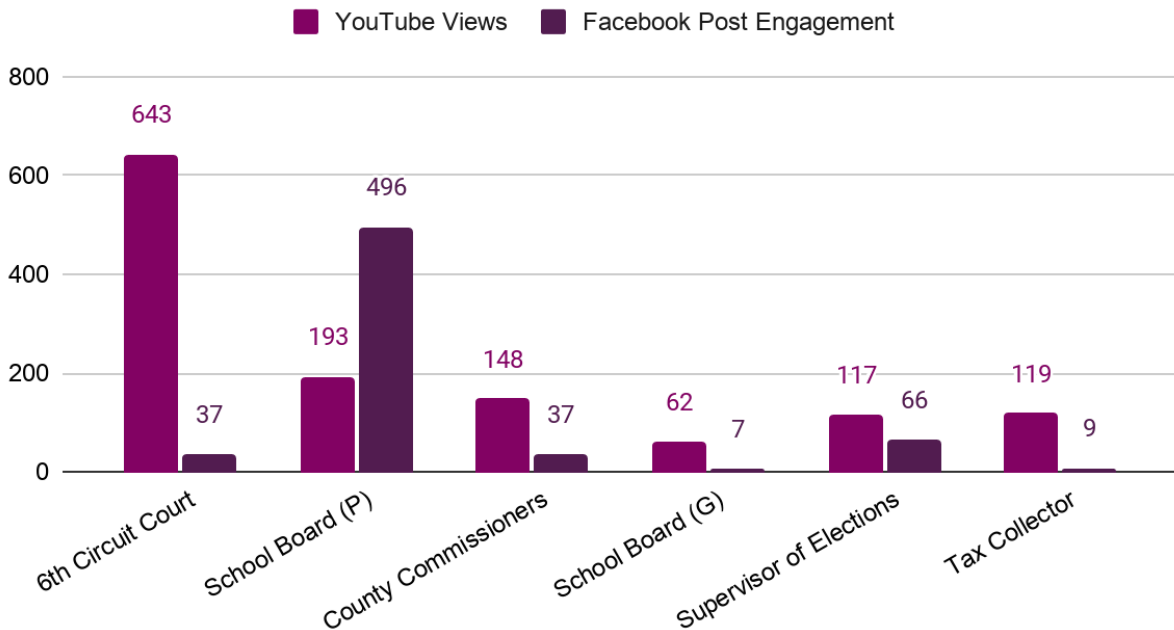
Primary Forums:

- 6th Circuit Court Judges
- Pinellas County School Board

General Election Forums:

- Pinellas County Commissioners
- Pinellas County School Board
- Pinellas County Sheriff
- Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections
- Pinellas County Tax Collector

Candidate Forum Views and Engagement



Voter Guide

We offered our award-winning, nonpartisan Pinellas Voter Guide both online and in print. The LWVFL produced English- and Spanish-language Constitutional Amendment (CA) Voter Guides, and provided LWVSPA with nearly 7,500 of them (6,500 in English and 1,000 in Spanish). We distributed most of the CA Voter Guides at weekly Feeding Tampa Bay drive-through mega-food pantry events at Tropicana Field, which were held every Saturday from Sept. 26 to Oct. 17, 2020. We also distributed them at voter registration events at Pinellas Suncoast Transportation Authority (PSTA) Headquarters, PSTA main bus station, and several other locations prior to the Oct. 5 Florida voter registration deadline, as well as sharing them with community partner organizations, churches and neighborhood associations. In addition, we distributed 2,500 CA Voter Guides and an additional 2,500 Local Election Voter Guides to community partner organizations, churches and neighborhood associations.

Due to the number of races and ballot issues in the 2020 General Election, online Voter Guide planning and development began in early July, prior to the August primary election. Some of the tasks involved in building the guide include updating and creating new content on the site, preparation of candidate survey questions for every race, completing ballot issue analysis, and also conducting candidate outreach and follow up for all the races appearing on the Pinellas County ballots (including state and federal candidates). Getting the online Voter Guide up and running ahead of the mail ballot date requires a big commitment on the part of team members, and once again we met the challenge in every area!

Key Voter Guide Metrics:

- Activity from Sept. 25 to Nov. 4 included over 917,000 page views and 205,000 users
- Since its launch in July 2018, the online Voter Guide has seen over 425,000 users and 2.5 million page views
- User time on the site has steadily increased since original launch to the current average of 5 minutes, 20 seconds per session
- Most frequently visited pages continue to be judicial races, ballot issues and local offices (the areas where voter information is scarce or not easily found).

Outreach and Virtual Presentations

LWVSPA worked to ensure that our own members were providing accurate information about voting rights and processes, and expanded those efforts to include ALL volunteers and activists across Pinellas County involved in GOTV efforts. As a result, we became a “go-to” source in St Petersburg for difficult voting questions and fact-checking. We did this by:

- Being continually available via phone and email for our community partners to ask us voting-related questions.
- Reviewing printed and virtual content for community partners prior to its distribution to voters.

-
- Hosting virtual “mini-trainings” and Q&A sessions .

Our Voter Service team and volunteers hosted seventeen different virtual presentations (as of 10/16/20) to community groups on: *Voting 101, Vote by Mail, Constitutional Amendments and Ballot Referenda, Voting Rights and Campaign Finance Reform.*

Example Audiences:

- LWSPA members and leadership
- Allendale United Methodist Church
- Indivisible FL-13
- Bay Pines VA Healthcare System
- Hillsborough Ex-Offender Re-entry Coalition
- ASPEC
- Woodlawn Neighborhood Association
- Kobie Marketing
- CreativeMornings St. Pete

LWSPA helped to ensure voters had access to all of the information they needed to cast a ballot that counted. We did this using a variety of platforms and outlets, including social media and local media. Voter Service leaders and content area experts provided interviews to the following local media outlets:

- Bay News 9
- Tampa Bay Breakfast Club radio show
- ABC Action News
- 10 Tampa Bay CBS
- Power Plug Radio
- St. Pete Catalyst
- The Weekly Challenger
- The Tampa Bay Times
- The Gabber
- Patch
- I Love the Burg
- Watermark

We developed and disseminated comprehensive FAQs and step-by-step voting process content available on the Voter Guide website. In addition, volunteers wrote blog posts

breaking down voting rights and processes such as voting by mail, early voting, voter ID, provisional ballots, address issues, and ballot tracking. To increase our footprint, we partnered with community-based organizations to distribute fact sheets to share with their



constituents, including fact sheets on voting by mail, early voting, address changes, signature changes, and registering to vote if you are homeless. We created and shared social media content addressing key voting facts and rights, and countering misinformation/misconceptions in real time via our Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter pages. In addition to the educational content, we made sure to respond to questions and correct misinformation on local social media groups and threads. To this end, we set up a specific VotingQuestions@lwvspa.org email account and staffed it with trained volunteers. The LWVSPA office phone was staffed with trained volunteers on Election Day in March and August, and throughout

early voting and on Election Day in October and November.

Making an Impact One Voter at a Time

During early voting, a volunteer with one of our community partners was driving an elderly woman to the polls to cast her ballot. The elderly woman had no photo ID at all, so the volunteer called one of LWVSPA's EVP co-chairs to see what could be done. LWVSPA advised that the woman would be able to vote at least on a provisional ballot, and encouraged them to bring the forms of ID the woman *did* have to the early voting location and explain the situation to the clerk. They did, and the clerk was able to confirm the woman's identity using a signature match, and the woman was able to vote a regular ballot! If the woman had not been able to vote a regular ballot, LWVSPA had equipped the volunteer with the information needed to help the voter follow up on a provisional ballot. Voting can seem overwhelming for voters who don't tick all the regular boxes, but when we arm voters with

information about their rights, we empower them to cast their vote despite things that seem like obstacles!

Outreach Strategies

It was important to promote and utilize our brand as brokers of truth and information about voting throughout the community. We also recognized, based on our Engage St. Pete Report, that our reach was limited, therefore, we relied on our community partners for crafting relevant messaging, information dissemination, and further reaching into more audiences. We employed social media, traditional media, partner networks and communication channels, mail, and texting. We tried to meet folks where they were at and find ways to keep our members and the community safe amidst COVID-19. Not having in-person events and one-on-one interactions with voters was difficult as this is a powerful way to connect with folks. However, we employed many other techniques, as outlined previously, which will equip us for future elections.

ELECTION AND VOTER PROTECTION

LWVSPA serves as the Pinellas County Lead for the nationwide Election Protection Coalition, working in close partnership with Common Cause Florida, which serves as the Florida state lead.

Previous Election Comparisons

The main issues in previous elections included voters not knowing where to drop off mail ballots on Election Day, voters being turned away or given provisional ballots for address issues (notably for young voters), and occasional machine issues.

In 2020, the main issues during early voting were long lines, aggressive electioneering, voter intimidation and police presence at poll places. The main issues during Election Day included not enough parking, a lot of redirecting voters to correct polling locations (and in some cases voters being misdirected to incorrect polling locations) and voters being turned away without being offered provisional ballots. We suspect that many of the issues we saw on Election Day were “a perfect storm” of several consolidated polling locations (due to

COVID-19), a lot of new poll workers (due to elderly, experienced poll workers being unable to serve due to COVID-19), and a lot of new voters (due to the significance of the election).

Poll Monitor Training

Over 150 volunteer poll monitors were trained in Pinellas County by LWVSPA and/or Common Cause (the state lead for the Election Protection coalition). In total, 124 volunteers served as poll monitors for LWVSPA between Oct. 19 and Nov. 3, 2020. Many volunteers (59) worked more than one shift, and one volunteer worked 12 separate poll monitoring shifts! Volunteers included members of LWVSPA and LWNPC, as well as several community members. Pinellas-specific poll monitoring training was conducted on Oct. 18 and 12, 2020, and an all-volunteer briefing was conducted on Nov. 2, 2020 with over 100 volunteers. We used social media to push voter information on early voting, ballot tracking, provisional ballots, 866-OUR-VOTE and more using infographics and blog posts.

Early Voting

LWVSPA worked closely with Organize Florida to ensure poll monitors were on the ground at all five early voting locations during all days of Early Voting. Our efforts ensured that Pinellas County had some of the most comprehensive early voting poll monitor coverage in the state, and we were able to closely document and report numerous issues of voter intimidation, police presence, and long lines. LWVSPA provided updates on police presence and voter intimidation to the Florida Election Protection Coalition during early voting, providing facts-on-the-ground for advocacy partners such as All Voting Is Local and the ACLU of Florida. Volunteers both witnessed and experienced aggressive intimidation during early voting. Long lines during early voting made it clear that Pinellas County did (and does) not have a sufficient number of early voting locations. Pinellas County, with almost one million people, had only 5 locations. For comparison, Hillsborough County, with 1.47 million people, has 26, and Pasco County, with approximately 554,000 people, has 14.

Election Day Voting

LWVSPA had over 100 volunteers who covered 64 polling locations (encompassing over 130 precincts) from 7 a.m. - 7 p.m. on Election Day. We had a joint command center with Organize Florida to ensure coordinated coverage and information sharing and problem solving with Florida For All Education Fund and Election Defender infrastructure. One of our

members, Roxanne Fixen, served as the Florida Election Protection Coalitions's primary liaison with the Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections on Election Day.

The Impact of Poll Monitoring

Story #1

After voting in person at her polling place around lunchtime on Election Day, a mother wanted to get an absentee ballot for her son, who was working his shift in a restaurant in downtown St. Petersburg and wouldn't get off before 7 p.m. Our volunteer called us in the Pinellas command center and we explained to the mother that she *might* be able to get an emergency mail ballot for her son at the Supervisor of Elections Office at 501 1st Ave N. We explained to her the process of her son signing an affidavit explaining why he couldn't make it to his polling place, and we explained that she and her son would both need to sign a second affidavit to allow her to pick up his ballot for him. We were not sure if the Supervisor of Elections would accept the son's reason as an "emergency" but we encouraged the mother to try! We gave her our number in case there were any issues when she got to 501 1st Ave N. A few hours later, the mom called us to thank us --- they *were* able to get the emergency mail ballot and her son WAS able to vote! This is a story of Election Protection empowering a mom and a voter to go above and beyond.

Story #2

Nyana and her mother went to vote at their polling place, but Nyana was turned away because there was a problem with her address. However, her mother, who lives at the same address, *was* able to vote, which Nyana found very frustrating. Our volunteer immediately called us in the Pinellas command center, and, *crucially*, she stayed with Nyana as we worked through the problem. We explained to Nyana that she was allowed to update her address at the polling place, and that if that didn't work she can cast a provisional ballot as a last resort. We also alerted our county Election Protection legal liaison to the problem, and she called the Deputy Supervisor of Elections. Our volunteer waited outside the polling place with Nyana's mom for around an hour, providing moral support while the issue was resolved and making sure that Nyana didn't leave the polls without casting a ballot. As it turns out, Nyana was a newly registered voter, and there was an issue with her address that had it coming up as invalid. The SOE had sent both Nyana and her mom letters about

the address issue. Nyana's mom had gone to the SOE office to fix the issue in her file before the election, but Nyana reports that she never received her letter. Nyana was able to cast a provisional ballot, and her mom knew exactly where to go and what information they would need to be able to cure it. We made sure they knew the correct SOE office address, phone number and cure deadline of 5 p.m. on Nov. 5, 2020. We also assigned an Election Protection volunteer to follow up with Nyana to make sure her ballot was cured. To summarize, we supported Nyana to understand her rights on the ground, and also made sure that the Supervisor of Elections office was instructing the poll workers at the polling location properly about address changes and provisional ballots. This was a great team effort!

CONCLUSION

LESSONS LEARNED

- Need to better balance “nice to have” vs. “need to have” to fit our capacity
- Need to engage volunteers with strong administrative skill sets to support coordination during major election years
- Importance of accuracy in voting-related content. It was a good thing that VS Chairs were reviewing voting-related content because the community was looking to LWVSPA to provide accurate information. This is a good niche for us.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We should consider year-round voter education on how to vote, where to vote, and rights to provisional ballots (potentially in collaboration with Organize Florida and FHSP #citizen365). It is clear



that we need to engage in more advocacy with the Supervisor of Elections Office on more early voting locations based on our data. Even though this was a historic election, moving forward we need more collaboration with the League of Women Voters of North Pinellas (LWVNP). The LWVNP team, including president, were strong poll monitoring volunteers who did a lot of shifts for Election Protection. In addition, LWVSPA and LWVNP have both done strong work to support Returning Citizens. Knowing that we are a trusted source of voting information for our county, we need to increase our capacity by turning every LWVSPA member into a voting information ambassador!

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Pinellas Chapter of the ACLU



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