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VOTER

January 2014

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LWVSPA
PO Box 11775
St. Petersburg, FL 33733

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LWVSPA Leadership

Officers

[Karen Coale, President](#)

President's Letter



Karen Coale, President

Dear League Members and Supporters,

Happy New Year! LWVSPA is beginning 2014 by finishing two exciting studies.

Join us on Monday, January 13th, for the Consensus Meeting on Charter Schools Study. Using data collected by each participating League, consensus statements were developed by the State's study leaders and approved by the LWV Board. These consensus questions provide structure for the meeting.

Consensus is not a vote; rather, consensus is mutual agreement of League members that is arrived at through discussion. Members discuss the pros and cons until it becomes apparent that consensus has or has not been reached on each question.

The outcomes of the local League meetings across Florida will form the basis of the League's position on Charter Schools--our framework for advocacy. ***I encourage each of you to attend and participate in this stage of the study process, not only to learn more about Charter Schools, but also to experience how League positions are developed. This process is at the core of how the League operates.*** My thanks to Jim Jackson and Evelyn Wright for the work they continue to do for this project. See information below for details about the meeting.

At this week's Board of Directors meeting Ayele Hunt, Chair of our St. Petersburg Libraries Study, presented the committee's findings and recommendations. What an outstanding piece of work! My thanks to the committee

[Julie Kessel, 1st VP](#)
[Sydni Shollenberger, 2nd VP](#)
[Kathy Arsenault, Sec.](#)
[Caroline Bloodworth, Treas.](#)

Board of Directors
[Raechel Garafalo](#)
[Ayele Hunt](#)
[Susan Mayer, VOTER editor](#)
[Chitra Naidu](#)
[Nancy Tait](#)

In the Community

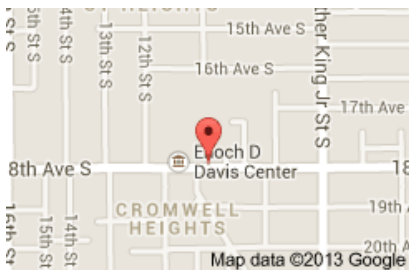
The second annual [St. Petersburg Conference on World Affairs](#) is a cooperative venture of the University of South Florida St. Petersburg, together with a group of civic-minded area residents headed by U.S. Ambassador Douglas McElhane.

The Conference will take place February 13 -15 in the University Student Center in downtown St. Petersburg.

The public is cordially invited to attend the three-day conference free of charge.

Charter School Consensus Meeting

It's Here! Our Consensus Meeting: Monday Night, January 13th



5:30 to 7:30 PM (hospitality and light refreshments at 5:00 PM)
[James Weldon Johnson Branch Library](#)
[1059 18th Avenue South](#)

Committee chair Dr. Jim Jackson, committee member Evelyn Wright, and LWVSPA President Karen Coale will facilitate a consensus meeting based on the results of the recently-completed Charter School Study. League members will have the opportunity to evaluate issues raised by the news media about resegregation of schools, dissipation of scarce resources, lack of significant educational gains, and financial mismanagement.

To be informed and prepared for this meeting, read the [local study](#) and the [state consensus packet](#).

who designed the survey instrument, gathered data from 303 library users over a three week period, and tabulated and analyzed that feedback.

My thanks also go to those of you who contributed your input at our November 19th General Meeting at Studio@620. Your energetic involvement and creative ideas assisted the study and made for a very interesting evening.

Several elections are taking place in Pinellas County during the first quarter of the year. Voters Service Chair Raechel Garafalo, needs members to help with Candidate Forums and Voter Registration. Contact her soonest!

It is your membership that makes this type of important work possible. In case you have forgotten, [please click here to renew](#), or mail your dues to LWVSPA, PO Box 11775, St Petersburg, FL 33733.

In League,

Karen

St. Petersburg Community Library Study



Ayele Hunt, Library Study Chair

Can We Save and Improve Our Libraries?

by Ayele Hunt, Library Committee Chair

We are pleased to begin the new year by sharing the results of our recently completed [Community Library Study](#), which includes survey results from over 300 library users, a knowledge café group dialogue meeting, and additional research.

The LWVSPA Library Committee convened with the intention of determining the actions and advocacy necessary to strengthen St. Petersburg public libraries as a vital resource in the local community. The published study was the result of the hard work and dedication of our committee members, Winnie Foster, Diane Lohr, Anne Humphreys, Sydni Shollenberger, Kofi Hunt, Kathy Arsenault, and Morgan Brazil. Kudos and thanks!

To conduct the study, the committee focused primarily on engaging a random sample of the opinions of members of the community on the current state of public libraries, their service usage, and suggestions for library improvements. The respondents were roughly evenly distributed among several age groups: 31.1% of the respondents were 18-39 years of age, 33.1% were 40-59 years of age, and 31.2% were 60 or over.



Some of the study results include:

- The top services requested for expansion were book selection (34.1%), computer/internet stations (28.1%), and DVD/CD selection (24.2%). 76.2% responded computers were always or sometimes available when they needed to use them. 31.6% of users surveyed don't have internet access at home.
- When asked about the willingness to pay more taxes to ensure library services were maintained and improved, 73% responded yes to paying more taxes.
- The most common requests for additional services/programs were an increase in teen programs, revised library space with additions of areas for small group meetups, availability of cafeteria/café services on the premises, as well as expansion of classes, workshops, storytimes, and special events.

We encourage you to read the [full study](#) to enable you to arrive at an informed decision about this important topic.

Voters Service

It's Baaaaaaack! Election Season

By [Raechel Garafalo](#), Voters Service Chair

Calling All Political Addicts...or Just Plain Interested Citizens! Would you like to help us staff candidate forums? Register voters? This is your chance!





Voter registration at USF

Our Voter Registration Drive is from January 15th through February 10th, prior to municipal elections and the U.S. Congressional District 13 Special General Election on March 11th. Please consider lending a hand in this very important effort. We guarantee a rewarding experience!

Candidate Forums are in the process of being scheduled. If you have evening availability during January through early March, we have a job for you. We currently have two forums confirmed:

Tuesday, January 28th, 7:00 PM (staff arrival 6:30 PM)

City of Gulfport Councilmember Ward III Candidates

Sponsored by the City of Gulfport

Council Chambers

2401 53rd Street South, Gulfport 33707



A candidate forum during the last election cycle

Tuesday, February 18th, 6:30 PM (staff arrival 6:00 PM)

City of St. Pete Beach

Candidates for Mayor and Commission Districts 1 & 3

Sponsored by the City of St. Petersburg Beach,

Commission Chambers

155 Corey Avenue, St. Pete Beach, 33706

Check our [events calendar](#) for updated forum information as it becomes available.

Please contact me if you would like more information or to volunteer:

[Raechel Garafalo](#)

727.527.2309

I'd love to hear from you!

Membership

We Just Keep Growing and Growing and Growing

by Nancy Tait, Membership Co-Chair

Having no new members to announce is hardly the norm for the LWVSPA. We have almost doubled our rolls in the past year, so a little "holiday break" for new member signups is something we can live with. Now that all the festivities are over, we look forward to continuing our incredible growth.

Renewals

If you have not renewed your membership, we urge you to do so now. We have a busy year planned, and we need your support. As you receive an electronic reminder or a friendly phone call, please decide to continue to be a part of our group!

Mentoring New Members

Our LWVSPA Mentoring Program offers a "friendly guide" for new members who want to take part in this program. Mentors are assigned based on common characteristics such as interests, age, proximity, friendship, or strong connection. Our latest pairing is that of energetic new member Paula Jordan and Nancy Tait.

Please contact [Nancy Tait](#), (727.480.4254) or Laurie Clement, (727.667.0822), Membership Team Co-chairs, for a mentor or mentee assignment.



New members participate in a League "Scavenger Hunt" at our latest New Member Orientation

Universal Curbside Recycling



Into Action With a New Administration

By [Karen Coale](#), LWVSPA Member of the People's Trash Coalition

Over the past month the focus within City Hall has been on planning the transition to a new administration. Now that the new Mayor and City Council are in place, it is time to begin anew our advocacy to bring curbside recycling to all households in St Petersburg.

Our project is called The People's Trash, and it is a coalition of partners including, the Council of Neighborhood Associations, The People's Budget Review, The Suncoast Sierra Club and the LWVSPA. Current League members include: Kathy Mossing, Chitra Naidu, Ray Wunderlich, and myself. Join us!

For more information or to volunteer to help out, please contact [Karen Coale](#).

Immigration

Florida Legislature Exploring Options for Immigrants

By [Karen Coale](#), Immigration Committee Co-Chair

Congress has been in recess since our last VOTER, so no movement on comprehensive immigration reform has been made in the U.S. House of Representatives. Locally, we will raise this issue with all candidates for the open District 13 Congressional seat, asking them to support Comprehensive Immigration Reform.



Meanwhile, the Florida House of Representatives is exploring legislation (HB 45) that would help youth who came to this country as minors obtain Florida drivers' licenses. The legislation recommends recognizing Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals status issued by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services as valid proof of identity for purposes of applying for a driver's license.

The Florida House has also drafted a proposed amendment to Section 2 of Article I of the State Constitution (HJR 119) that would delete a provision authorizing laws that prohibit the

ownership, inheritance, disposition, and possession of real property by aliens ineligible for citizenship.

The Florida Senate is working on a bill to allow in-state tuition for undocumented students or students who have immigration papers or are citizens but their parents do not have papers SB 428).

Your LWVF immigration Committee will continue to monitor upcoming legislation that may impact immigrants residing here in Florida, and develop advocacy action plans. We hope that you will participate.

The next Immigration Committee meeting will be on Wednesday, January 15th, 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM. Come join us, and become informed on this complex issue.



Monday, January 13th, 5:30 to 7:30 PM (hospitality and light refreshments at 5:00 PM)

Consensus Meeting for Charter School Study

[Johnson Branch Library](#)

1059 18th Avenue South, St. Petersburg

Wednesday, January 15th, 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM

Immigration Committee Meeting

Home of [Sue Price](#)

Saturday, February 22nd, 1:00 PM to Sunday, February 23rd, 1:00 PM

LWVF [Everglades Excursion](#)

Ivey Hotel

107 Camelia Street

Everglades City, FL 34139

Saturday, February 22nd, 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM

International Relations Committee Meeting

Pinellas Park Library

7720 52nd Street North, Pinellas Park

Topic: Spying



Special Guest Speaker

Brigadier General John Reppert (U.S. Army, Ret.)

Saturday, April 26th, 11:30 AM to 2:00 PM

Annual Meeting

St. Petersburg Yacht Club



Special Guest Speaker
Pat Schroeder
U.S. House of Representatives, 1973-1997

LWVSPA CONTACT INFORMATION

For further information, questions, or concerns, please contact us at 727.896.5197.

League of Women Voters of the St. Petersburg Area

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