

SHARE:

[Join Our Email List](#)



## THE VOTER

January 2026

### Rising to the New Year's Challenges

By Jackie Azis, LWVSPA President



Dear Leaguers and LWVSPA Friends,

#### Happy New Year!

I hope you had a wonderful holiday season and that your new year is off to a great start.

As you know, 2026 is a busy election year. We are already hard at work on an array of community and voter services initiatives. We will be hosting candidate forums, registering voters and educating them on

their rights, continuing to engage on the redevelopment of the Historic Gas Plant District, and much more.

We are actively opposing the Florida Legislature's consideration of mid-decade redistricting, an effort in clear violation of the Florida Constitution. On December 4, LWVSPA members joined LWV Florida, sister League members from around Tampa Bay and the state, and other organizations and partners for a one-day trip to Tallahassee to listen to the first meeting of the Redistricting Committee. My guest editorial on this urgent issue was published on December 12 in the *Tampa Bay Times*.



Later this month, a delegation of LWVSPA members will head to the Florida Capitol for LWV Florida's annual Lobby Days. Lobby Days is an exciting opportunity to watch the Legislature in action and advocate for the League's positions and priorities. Read more below about how to get involved in our Lobby Days and for more information about other upcoming activities in this important election year.

We look forward to working with you as we continue to educate and empower voters and to tirelessly advocate for—in the words of our nation's Constitution—a more perfect union.

# VIEWPOINTS

Column

## Mid-decade redistricting is bad for Fla. Don't do it

League members and voting rights advocates boarded a bus to Tallahassee from Tampa on Dec. 4, hoping to be heard at the state Capitol as the House Select Committee on Congressional Redistricting convened its first meeting.



JACKIE AZIS

Upon arrival, the room was overflowing with hundreds of Floridians who had traveled from all over the state to attend the meeting

Florida Constitution, which explicitly states: "In establishing Congressional district boundaries: (1) No apportionment plan or individual district shall be drawn with the intent to favor or disfavor a political party or an incumbent." That means partisan mid-decade redistricting efforts are not only unethical and unfair — they are also unconstitutional in Florida.

As it is, Florida's previously gerrymandered maps already give a lopsided advantage to the majority party. Redrawing lines now for



### Coming Up on January 20 and 21!

**There's an old saying that it's best not to see how laws and sausages are made. Well, we strongly disagree (at least about the laws part)!**

Every year, League members from around the state journey up to the Florida Capitol while the Legislature is in session to observe lawmakers in action and meet with our representatives on key issues. Yes, it can be frustrating as well as inspiring, but we have our esprit de corps and profound belief in the power of the democratic process to get us through those moments.

LWV Florida and LWVSPA provide robust preparation, seasoned and supportive leadership on site, and a stipend to help offset travel expenses.

**Registration is now open for 2026 LWV Florida Lobby Days!** This signature event is one of our most impactful each year. Please join us as we mobilize to Tallahassee to push our state forward! **Questions? [Let us know!](#)**



#### **What Are Lobby Days Really Like?**

What's most rewarding about the experience? Most inspiring? Most impactful? We asked LWVSPA First Vice President Lindsay Polega, and she had lots of great thoughts to share. Read her responses [here](#).

**Register for LWV Florida Lobby Days**

**Let LWVSPA Know You're Going**



## Election Day is March 10, 2026!

Visit [lwvspa.org](http://lwvspa.org) to learn which towns have races and watch for the Voter Guide (coming in February) and Candidate Forum dates (coming soon!).

Municipal elections

Check your registration status and get answers to your voting questions!

Voting FAQs

The holiday season may be over, but our 2026 work is just getting started!



**Dozens** of in-person and online meetings,  
**41** volunteers trained to register voters,  
**4** candidate forums for local elections,  
**hundreds** of voters assisted with registration  
to vote by mail, **1,000+** voters visiting  
our online voter services resources...  
**LWSPA accomplished all this and a lot more**  
in 2025. And with 2026 an important election  
year, **your support is crucial.**





[Donate to LWVSPA](#)

## Let's Plan First! Historic Gas Plant Redevelopment Update

Your League has been actively engaged in the redevelopment of the 82-acre Historic Gas Plant District (HGPD) for several years. As the City of St. Petersburg once again considers how to proceed, it is worth revisiting the value of a "Plan First" approach.

Many cities across the country have successfully redeveloped large public sites using the "Plan First" model recommended by St. Petersburg's own master planners. In 2018, two versions of a HGPD master plan were produced with extensive community participation. One included a new baseball stadium; the other did not. Each version recommended that the city retain control of the land, divide it into parcels, and sell or lease these parcels over time, thus capturing future increases in land value and controlling development to maximize public benefit.

### Unplanned Consequences

Unfortunately, these recommendations were ignored. Instead, the city attempted—under two different administrations—to turn the entire property over to a single developer. For different reasons, both attempts failed.

We now find ourselves facing yet another new proposal to sell the entire 82-acre HGPD site to a single development team with no demonstrated experience in delivering large, complex mixed-use developments. According to state law, in considering one plan, the City has to also consider proposals by other prospective developers, a month-long process that will begin in early January.

### What We Can Do

Now is the time for city residents to act to protect the future of this site and its significant public value. Please email City Council and urge its members to commit to a "Plan First" approach. Address a message such as that suggested below to [jayne.ohlman@stpete.org](mailto:jayne.ohlman@stpete.org) and include in the email text and/or subject line: **"Please provide to each City Council member."**

*I am a resident, taxpayer, and voter in St. Petersburg. I urge you to pass a resolution pledging that you will not approve any sale or lease of the 82-acre Gas Plant property, or any portion of it, through a developer-driven bidding scheme. I ask you to demand a Plan First approach—not Developer First. [Your Name and Address]*

Want to stay updated on this and other activities of our Social Justice team? Simply cc: [office@lwvspa.org](mailto:office@lwvspa.org) in your email.

Click [here](#) for a more extensive LWVSPA recap of HGPD development history. We also encourage you to read a series of excellent, insightful blogs on the issue by retired financial executive Ron Diner at [homerunsmatter.com](http://homerunsmatter.com), available at no cost.



The 2018 master plan was developed to align with the city's own "Grow Smarter" strategy, guiding the transformation of this valuable site into a vibrant, multifaceted community hub and reflecting the profound advantages of a "Plan First" approach.



**LWV** LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS<sup>®</sup>  
OF THE ST. PETERSBURG AREA

**MLK  
DAY  
PARADE**

**MARCH WITH US!**



On December 14, LWVSPA was honored with the 2025 "Advocate for Social Justice" award from the @zuochapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and a \$1,000 prize. Many thanks to AKA — and to all the LWVSPA members whose hard work and commitment earned us this honor.

*LWVSPA leaders pictured:* Past President Linsey Grove, Membership Chair Amy Weintraub, current President Jackie Azis



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Zoom Events in Black In-Person Events in Red

**Vigils for Immigrant Justice**  
Every Sunday, @ 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm  
Pinellas County Justice Center  
14250 49th St. N., Clearwater, FL 33762

Join us for these inspiring gatherings as the Pinellas/Hillsborough Interfaith Coalition, LWVSPA, and our allies stand in solidarity with immigrant families and demand an end to the detention and deportation of our nonviolent, law-abiding immigrant community neighbors, siblings, and friends.

[Join our Social Justice team](#) for updates on this and other urgent issues. Your involvement can help make a difference!



**National Popular Vote Committee**  
January 6, 2026 @ 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Every vote should count when electing the president! Join us as we talk strategy. First-timers are welcome and all levels of experience are encouraged to join. [Join the NPV action team!](#)

**Reproductive Rights Film Screening and Action Team Meeting**

January 8 @ 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Join us for a group watch of *The Devil is Busy* and updates on repro-related legislation. We will have materials for letter-writing while you watch or to take home.

[Learn more about the movie here.](#)  
[RSVP here.](#)



**Social Justice Action Team Meeting**  
January 15 @ 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Allendale UMC Community Center

[Join us](#) to learn about our current initiatives and actions and how you can get involved.

**March With Us: MLK Jr. Day Parade**

January 19, 2026 @ 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Join the League as we help our community celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during the MLK Dream Big Parade! [RSVP to march with us!](#)

**LWVSPA Board Meeting**

January 19, 2026 @ 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm

LWVSPA members wishing to address the board can email [president@lwvspa.org](mailto:president@lwvspa.org) to get on the agenda and receive meeting info.

### **LWVFL Lobby Days**

**January 20 – January 21**

**Florida State Capitol, Tallahassee, FL**

Join LWVPSA's delegation to the 2026 Legislative Session and help make our voices heard on our key issues! For more information, see the article above.

[Register to attend](#) / [Let LWVSPA know you're going](#)

### **Monthly Communications Committee Meeting**

**January 20, 2026 @ 11:00 am – 12:00 pm**

Email [office@lwvspa.org](mailto:office@lwvspa.org) for the link if you'd like to get involved.

### **Committee on Membership**

**January 20, 2026 @ 1:30 pm – 2:30 pm**

Contact chair [Amy Weintraub](#) for teleconference link or for more info.

### **Voter Services Committee**

**January 21, 2026 @ 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm**

**Allendale UMC Sanctuary**

Our January meeting will be focused on planning for the busy election-filled year ahead of us. We will meet in person at the Allendale UMC Sanctuary. [See you there!](#)

### **Roe v. Wade Anniversary Reproductive Freedom Visibility Event**

**January 22, 2026 @ 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm**

**Downtown St. Petersburg (various intersections)**

Join St. Pete's annual rally and sign-waving visibility event to commemorate the anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade decision. Let's raise our voices of resistance to attacks on reproductive freedom. Led by Pinellas NOW; LWVSPA is a proud co-host. Bring signs if you can; extras will be available. [Pick your location on the event registration form.](#)

### **Monthly Education Committee Meeting (With LWNPC)**

**January 26, 2026 @ 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm**

For an invitation or to attend, contact [lwvnpc.info@gmail.com](mailto:lwvnpc.info@gmail.com) to receive an agenda. Open to all current LWV members only.

### **Parent Advocacy League Meetup**

**January 26, 2026 @ 5:00 pm – 6:30 pm**

**St. Pete Pier Playground**

Bring dinner or grab something at the nearby café and join us for a picnic-style meetup with League updates and community connection in a joyful, kid-friendly environment. [RSVP](#)

### **Cocktails & Conversation**

**January 27, 2026 @ 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm**

**The Big Catch, 1500 2nd St. South**

Come on down to our monthly happy hour for some great conversation and company, and feel free to bring a guest or two. [RSVP](#)

***Strengthened by robust advocacy training activities in the fall of 2025, LWVSPA is making strides in efforts to:***

- **Stop** unconstitutional mid-decade redistricting that dilutes voter power
- **Promote** fair and equitable development of the Historic Gas Plant District
- **Protect immigrant justice** and protest law enforcement collusion with ICE
- **Support** reproductive rights
- **Add** an early voting site in South St. Petersburg to expand voter access
- **Convince** our state legislators to support the National Popular Vote Compact

For more information on all of these initiatives and how you can get involved, click [here.](#)

**Discover more events at [www.lwvspa.org/events](http://www.lwvspa.org/events).**



## Thanks to the following generous donors who supported our work in December!

Laura Angelides  
Jacqueline Azis & Zeke Zager  
Lori Bremer  
Dorothea Cappadona  
Karen Coale  
Beverly Cohen  
Nancy Cohen  
Kathleen Cote & Kim Cromwell  
Deborah Darrah  
Greg Davidson  
Janice Drinkwine  
Rebecca Falkenberry & Bill Stokes  
Meredith Gaunce  
Kate Herrington  
Valerie Hyman & Jocelyn Howard  
Jean Johnston  
Pat Lucas

Marilyn Maginley  
Beate Marston  
Sarah Peacock  
Barbara Pierce  
Alison Quinn  
Dorothy Ritschel  
JoEllen Schilke  
Stephanie Sembler  
Beth Settle  
Kate Steinway  
Emily Timoner  
Carla Vila & Justin McClain  
Maureen Walter  
Ellen Weiner  
Amy & Caroline Weintraub  
Deborah Williams & Al Hanulik  
Iris Yetter

## LEAGUE ONLINE

- [Calendar of Events and Meetings](#)
- [Explore Issues](#)
- [Check Out Our Blog Archives](#)
- [Engage!](#)
- [Get Your LWVSPA Gear!](#)

## SUBSCRIBE!

Reading *The Voter* via a link or forwarded email?  
Sign up to get your very own subscription [here!](#)

## Have news to share?

Send your news and updates one week in advance of the  
1st of the month directly to [communications@lwwspa.org](mailto:communications@lwwspa.org).



League of Women Voters of the St. Petersburg Area

[Email](#) | [Website](#)

Telephone: 727-295-5255



**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.**

LWVSPA | 3803 Haines Rd. N. | St. Petersburg, FL 33703 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!