

THE VOTER

May 2020

Letter from the President

Greetings Leaguers!

I hope this newsletter finds you and your loved ones safe and well. We had a successful online Annual Meeting this past month -- thank you to those who helped make it happen and to everyone who attended! I'm so inspired by our ability to adapt and the passion our members have for the League.

COVID-19 has challenged us to shift how we conduct outreach, advocacy efforts, and League business. Luckily, we're up to the task! Here's what we're doing:

- We're launching a podcast (and looking for folks with relevant skills to help!)
- We're moving critical League and partnered events to video conference.
- We're coordinating with partners to promote voter registration, vote-by-mail requests, and census participation.
- We're busy working on a social marketing campaign focused on promoting Vote-By-Mail ballot requests to voters living in low turnout precincts.

Civic engagement is even more crucial now; our public infrastructures and democracy depend on it.

Congratulations to our Making Democracy Work Award Winners Raechel Garafalo and Caroline Bloodworth for their years of hard work and dedication to the League. I'd also like to thank and congratulate our amazing Rockstar Volunteer Award winners!

Stay safe and healthy!

Linsey



Is It Safe to Vote By Mail in Pinellas County?

The COVID-19 pandemic has left much uncertain about the future, including what the upcoming elections look like. As a result, we're asking members to sign up to receive their vote-by-mail ballots now so we can ensure you will be able to vote no matter what come August and November.



In addition, voting by mail is also the best thing you can do to protect people who are working at the polls on Election Day and people who need to vote in person due to a disability or an accessibility issue. Voting by mail is an act of care for your community during a time like this.

But we also know many people have concerns about voting by mail, which is why the Voter Services team has put together a fact sheet to answer some of the most common concerns about voting by mail. The fact sheet answers such questions as "How many vote-by-mail ballots were rejected in Pinellas County in 2018?", "How will I know if my ballot has a problem?" and "What is the most common reason for a vote-by-mail ballot to be rejected?"

Read the fact sheet about [the safety of voting by mail in Pinellas County on our Voter Guide](#).

The ACLU of Florida has conducted studies about voting after the last two general elections. (You can read the [most recent one here](#).) While the authors found troubling information about voting by mail around the state, the authors pointed out that Pinellas County actually has one of the lowest vote-by-mail rejection rates in Florida, as well as an effective system for curing ballots that *do* have issues.

We're trying to distribute this information to as many of our partners as possible, so if you have someone you think would benefit from this information, get in touch with the Voter Protection subcommittee! (And if you have other questions or concerns about voting by mail, we want to hear them. Email us at voterprotection@lwvspa.org.)

Sign up to vote by mail at votepinellas.com or by calling the Supervisor of Elections Office at 727-464-8683.



Giving Tuesday Is May 5. Will You Support The LWVSPA?

Giving Tuesday is an opportunity to show support for the organizations and nonprofits around the world that are doing work to make our communities stronger.

This May 5, we're asking you to make a donation to the League of Women Voters of the St. Petersburg Area. Help us continue to be a voice for change and leaders in democracy in our community.

You may already know that only about \$7 of your dues goes to the LWVSPA, while the rest goes to the state and national chapters. That means we can use all of the help we can get! Your donations will be used to:

- Train voter registrars and poll monitors
- Produce our Voter Guide both in digital and paper format
- Put on events that educate and inform the community about elections, candidates and issues
- And so much more!

More information about [how to donate](#) can be found on our site. Thank you for your support!



Coffee in Common Is Going Digital!

Coffee in Common is moving our discussion (and coffee sipping) online!

- **When:** Saturday May 16 at 10 a.m.
- **Where:** Online video
- [Registration link](#)

Our long-time Coffee in Common partner, Hogg Batch, is offering a specialty blend, the Common Blend, at a discounted rate for Coffee in Common attendees to purchase in their store and will be shipped directly to their address.

We want to support small businesses like Hogg Batch during this time while still having great coffee during a great discussion!

A link to this special roast will be sent if you register by May 8. Don't miss out on locally made coffee and community-focused conversation!

ST. PETERSBURG ALUMNAE CHAPTER OF DELTA SIGMA THETA SORORITY, INC. & THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE ST. PETERSBURG AREA PRESENT

Join us virtually for coffee, conversation, and camaraderie

A DISCUSSION OF RACE & POLITICS

This Month's Topic:
Healthcare: Racism, Politics & COVID 19

**SATURDAY, MAY 16TH
10 AM TO 12 PM
REGISTER FOR VIDEO CONFERENCE INFO**



Save the Date: Digital Dining With the Food Politics Team

The Food Politics team is planning to host an event called "Digital Dining" next month!

The team is encouraging League members to buy a meal at one of the local restaurants that have supported us this year (such as Love Food Central, Golden Dino, and Valhalla) and then join them online for a social get-together.

When: Thursday, June 11 at 6:30 p.m.

Where: Online

The goal of the event is to support local businesses and have a fun event while still practicing social distancing.

Details are still being finalized, so watch future League communications for more details, including a link to RSVP to the event.



Help Us Support Atwater's As They Feed the Community

Looking for a way to support people in the community who may be in need right now? We're accepting donations of nonperishable food to support free meals being prepared and distributed by Atwater's, the iconic St. Pete restaurant.

Eric Atwater, who is the owner and operator, has been feeding kids free lunches since schools were closed, and is also making free Saturday breakfasts for the community. You can read more about his efforts in [this Weekly Challenger story](#).

We want to support the work being done at Atwater's, which is being coordinated by much-loved community activist Carla Bristol and LWVSPA Voter Services member Caprice Edmunds.

We've already provided vote-by-mail information cards and request forms to the organizers, but we'd like to take it a step further and ask members to make a donation of nonperishable food to make sure as many people are fed as possible.

If you have food you'd like to donate, please contact [Maryellen Gordon](#). She will work with you to ensure your donation will get where it needs to go.



What's Happening Around LWVSPA?

Education

- **Co-chairs:** [Nikki Fleming](#) and [Barbara Meloche](#)

Gun Safety

This team is on hiatus through the 2020 election season.

Food Politics

- **Next Meeting:** Monday, May 18 at 7 p.m.
- **Location:** Conference call (605-472-5621; code: 555498)
- **Co-chairs:** [Julie Kessel](#), [Jen Underhill](#) and Wendy Wesley

Immigration

- **Next meeting:** Monday, May 25 @ 1:30 p.m.
- **Location:** Conference call, contact [Jack McCullough](#) for information
- **Chair:** [Karen Coale](#)

Media/Publicity

- **Next meeting:** Thursday, May 7 at 5 p.m.
- **Location:** Virtual conferencing
- **Chair:** [Lisa Yacso](#)

Membership Services

- **Next meeting:** Thursday, May 14 at 6 p.m.
- **Location:** Virtual conferencing
- **Chair:** [Stacey Jurewicz](#)

National Popular Vote

Deb Mazzaferro was interviewed by news anchor Paul Lagrone for an ABC Action News segment. [Watch it here.](#)

- **Co-chairs:** [Deb Mazzaferro](#) or [Marty Shapiro](#)

Nominating

Membership on this committee is set by conditions in LWVSPA bylaws (election or Board appointment).

- **Chair:** [Amy Weintraub](#)

Reproductive Rights

This team is on hiatus through the 2020 election season.

Social Justice

The newly formed Social Justice action team will hold its first meeting this month, which will likely be conducted via phone or video conference.

If interested, please contact [Linsey Grove](#) and/or [Stacey Kroto](#) to be included in the meeting.

Monthly meetings for this team will take over the slot formerly held by the Reproductive Rights team meetings, which was the second Thursday of every month.

- **Next Meeting:** Thursday, May 14 at 7 p.m.

Sustainability

This team is currently on hiatus.

- **Chair:** [Laura Crabtree](#)

Voter Service

- **Next Meeting:** Tuesday, May 26 at 6:30 p.m.
- **Location:** Conference call
- **Co-chairs:** [Robin Davidov](#), [Maryellen Gordon](#), [Caitlin Constantine](#), [Amy Keith](#), [Stephanie Owens](#)



Upcoming Events

May 12: St. Pete 2020 Solar Co-op Info Session
6-7:30 p.m. @ Online video session
[Facebook](#)

May 16: Coffee in Common: Health Care, Racism and COVID-19
10 a.m. - 12 p.m. @ Online video session
[Facebook](#) | [RSVP](#)



For Other
Upcoming Events

Click here to visit our website for the latest updates on action group meetings and other events.



Membership: Are You Up for Renewal?

Join us. Renew your membership. 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 invite you to [renew today!](#)

Renew / Join Now

We offer five levels of membership:

- Gold for \$250*
- Silver for \$125*
- Household for \$78*
- Individual for \$52
- Student for \$26

*Includes two members residing at the same address.

Note that LWVSPA keeps only about \$7 (!) of your basic dues paid at the Individual (\$52) or Household (\$78) levels. The rest goes to LWV-FL and LWV-US. Your local League has to raise almost all of its funds with voluntary contributions.

If you join at our Gold level (\$250) or Silver level (\$125), all the extra dues stay with our local League and we will recognize your generosity at our Annual Meeting.

You can also offer your financial support by upgrading your membership, offering an additional monthly, quarterly or annual donation, and encouraging others to do the same.

Consider including the League in your estate planning. Your gifts allow us to continue our education, advocacy and leadership programs to forward our mission in Making Democracy Work in the St. Petersburg area. If you would like to discuss an estate planning contribution or other gift, please **contact our office.**

The following memberships are up for renewal during this 3-month span. We invite you to [renew today!](#)

March 2020

Cecilia Allen
Sheila Bernhard
Stuart Bernhard
Janet Blair

Nancy Jacobson
Julie Kessel
Judy Lybrand-Kuhn
Cara McCown

Karen & Dave Coale
Karla Correa
Linda Eaton
Carol Fishet
Ann Fox
Jessica Jacobs

Hailey Ostwalt
Julia Sharp
Caroline Shasek
Jenna Sierra
Rebecca Wilson

April 2020

Jacqueline Barszewski
Mary Berglund
Cecelia Donovan
Cathy Harrelson
Katie Hatfield
Kay Lahdenpera

Dwight Lawton
Quinn Lundquist
Jovana Markovic
Lynne Schrum
Beth Settle
Sara Wallace



2019-2020 League Leadership

OFFICERS

President: Linsey Grove
First Vice President: Robin Davidov
Second Vice President: Amy Keith
Secretary: Ken Wrede
Treasurer: Gina Gallo

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ama Appiah
Nita Carroll
Ann Dieterle
Beate Marston
Stephanie Owens

[Visit our website](#) for more information about our local leaders.

[Click here](#) for more information about our education and advocacy groups.

EDUCATION, ADVOCACY, COMMITTEE LEADS

Voter Service: Robin Davidov, Maryellen Gordon, Caitlin Constantine, Amy Keith, Stephanie Owens
Gun Safety: On hiatus
Immigration: Karen Coale
Reproductive Rights: On hiatus
Census: Gina Gallo
Food Politics: Julie Kessel, Jen Underhill, Wendy Wesley
Sustainability: Laura Crabtree
National Popular Vote: Deb Mazzaferro, Marty Shapiro
International Relations: Judy McSwine
Social Justice: Linsey Grove, Stacey Kroto

Media/Publicity: Lisa Yacso
Membership: Stacey Jurewicz
Nominating: Amy Weintraub
Office Administrator: Julia Sharp



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.