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## THE VOTER

May 2026

By Jackie Azis, LWVSPA President



Dear League Members and Supporters,

I write to you from a work trip in Montgomery, Alabama, a city with a deep history in voting rights. It is here where Martin Luther King, Jr. eventually led thousands of nonviolent demonstrators in a 5-day, 54-mile march from Selma, Alabama to protest the systemic disenfranchisement of Black voters. As you know, the first march ended when law enforcement violently attacked the peaceful protesters, what is known as "Bloody Sunday," and the second march stopped early due to a court injunction that prohibited the march. The Selma-to-Montgomery marchers demanded the right to vote and participate fully in our democracy. Collectively, these three marches were the catalyst for the Voting Rights Act of 1965, a landmark federal law passed to end racial discrimination in voting. Former Supreme Court Justice Ginsberg once called it "one of the most consequential, efficacious, and amply justified exercises of federal legislative power in our Nation's history."

The heaviness of this history and this moment as I sit here in Montgomery is not lost on me. To put it bluntly, these last few weeks have been devastating for voting rights.

[Read more here...](#)

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# ANNUAL MEETING & LUNCHEON

## Thanks...

**To the dedicated members** whose extraordinary contributions to our work were recognized and honored.

**To all who attended...**We are so grateful for your presence and participation.

**To all who donated...**Your generosity helps to keep our work going!

[View the complete photo gallery](#)

[View the Year in Review Slide Show](#)

***Our Annual Luncheon is our biggest fundraiser of the year!***

Your donations help fund our action teams, office, and operating expenses. Donate now to help us reach our Gift From the Heart Goal!

[Make a gift to LWVSPA](#)



### Thanks to our continuing leaders:

**Jackie Azis:** President  
**Stephanie Sembler:** Secretary  
**Rachel Kent:** Director  
**Rachana Suri:** Director  
**Stacey Campo:** Director

**Voter Services Co-Chairs**  
**Laura Williamson**  
**Heidi Davis**

### **Reproductive Rights Co-Chairs**

**Stephanie Sembler**  
**Lindsay Polega**

### **Education Co-Chairs**

**Sue Castleman**  
**Joni Jonas**

### **NPV (National Popular Vote) Co-Chairs**

**Sarah Peacock**  
**Marty Shapiro**

**Amy Weintraub:** Membership Chair  
**Nicole Jones:** Parent Advocacy League Chair  
**Kristen Ehrlich:** Communications Chair  
**Cindy Campbell:** Bylaws Chair

### **Welcome to our incoming leaders (all 2026-2027 except where noted):**

**Sarah Peacock:** 1st Vice President  
**Gerni Oster:** 2nd Vice President  
**Linda Tanner:** Treasurer 2026-2028  
**Amy Keith:** Director 2026-2028  
**Jean Johnston:** Director 2026-2028

### **Nominating Committee**

**Laura Williamson:** Chair  
**Maryellen Greer**  
**Shelley Manes**  
**Emily Timoner**

### **Welcome to our incoming Action Team leaders:**

**Robin Davidov:** Community-Centered Development Chair  
**Shannon Tierney:** Reproductive Rights Co-chair  
**Courtney Prokopas:** Immigration Justice Chair  
**Tanji Shelton Balke:** Unite & Rise: Defending Democracy Chair

### **Thanks to our outgoing board members and leaders:**

**Lindsay Polega:** 1st Vice President 2025-26  
**Sue Castleman:** Treasurer 2022-26  
**Carla Vila:** Immigration Justice

**The dedication, effort, and time of our all-volunteer leadership team are crucial to our work. Congratulations to the LWVSPA members recognized for their outstanding contributions this year...and our many other rock star volunteers!**

### **President's Award**

**Sue Castleman**

### **Virgina Burnside Award for Long-Term Service**

**Heidi Davis**

### **Making Democracy Work Award**

**Kristen Ehrlich**  
**Shelley Manes**

### **Congratulations to our League Leadership Program 2025-26 graduates:**

**Cindy Campbell**  
**Caprice Edmond**

Rachel Kent  
Gerni Oster  
Sarah Peacock  
Melissa Reddington  
Stephanie Sembler

[Are you interested in helping to lead the League? Consider joining our League Leadership Program.](#)

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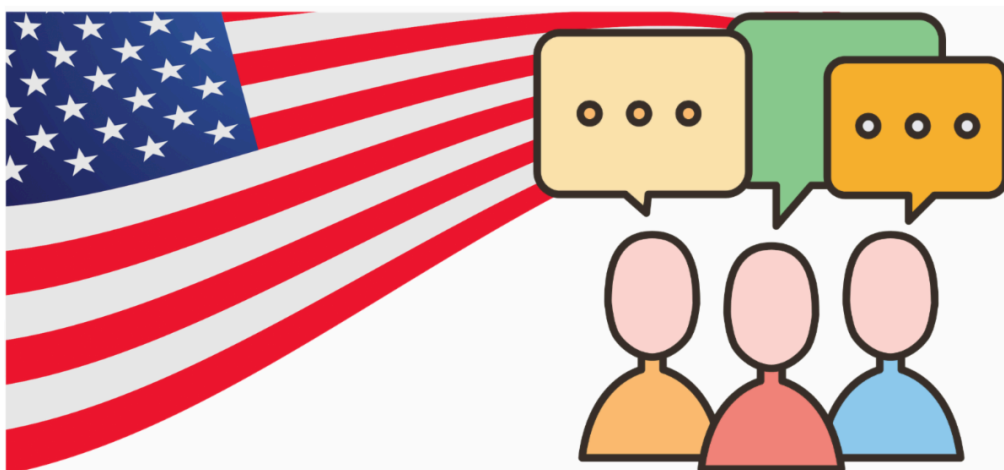


***Are you a future leader of our League?*** Want to sharpen your leadership and communication skills while gaining knowledge of LWV history and operations? Our next League Leadership Program (LLP) cohort, to be led by this year's graduates, launches in June.

LLP participants gain a thorough understanding of the goals and operations of our local League and a better understanding of our relationship with the state and national leagues. Recognized officially as future League Leaders, they develop relationships with other accomplished, civic-oriented members and deepen their leadership skills.

[Learn more and apply here!](#)

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## **Candidate Forums Coming Up**

**Save the dates for these evening (unless otherwise noted) Candidate Forums and watch the Voter Guide and Candidate Forum page**

on [lwvspa.org](http://lwvspa.org) for updates and additional information.

**District 6 St. Petersburg City Council Candidate Forum: June 2 @ 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm**

Enoch D. Davis Center: 1111 18th Ave. S., St. Petersburg FL 33705.  
Doors will open at 5:30 p.m. The Forum runs from 6:00 – 7:00 p.m. Parking is free. No registration required. Voters are invited to submit questions both in advance of the forum and during the event. **Submit questions ahead of time here.**

June 4

St. Petersburg City Council District 8 (if contested)

June 11, 12 pm - 2 pm - Livestream

Florida 6th Circuit Judge, Courtesy of LWV of Hillsborough and Pasco Counties

**City of St. Petersburg Mayoral Candidate Forum: June 18 @ 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm**

SPC Gibbs Campus Music Center, 6605 5th Ave. N., St. Petersburg FL 33710.  
Parking is free. Doors will open at 5:00 p.m.  
Due to expected attendance, registration is required and will be limited to 230 attendees. **RSVP Here / Submit questions ahead of time here.**

**District 2 St. Petersburg City Council Candidate Forum: June 23 @ 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm**

Paloma House in the Social Lounge, 10787 Oak St. NE., St. Petersburg, FL 33716.  
Doors will open at 5:30 p.m. The Forum runs from 6:00 – 7:00 p.m. Parking is free. No registration required. Voters are invited to submit questions both in advance of the forum and during the event. **Submit questions ahead of time here.**

Date pending

Pinellas County Commission and School Board

**Be election-ready! Click [here](#) to check your registration, request a mail ballot, and more.**

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## Community-Centered Development Team Kickoff

LWVSPA members interested in sustainable, community-oriented development are invited to an engaging and energizing evening with the newly formed Community-Centered Development Action Team on Wednesday, May 20 from 5:30–7:00 pm at Thrive DTSP, 136 4th St. N., Suite 201.



The gathering is an opportunity to help shape our mission and exchange ideas while enjoying drinks and light refreshments in a relaxed, inviting co-working space.

[Register here!](#)

*All community members who are interested in this issue are also welcome at the **Community Voices Townhall** presented by St. Pete Black History at the Sunshine Center at 6 p.m. on May 12.*

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## Engaging Voters in Varied Settings

According to LWVUS, people under 30 are underrepresented in the electorate. While college-oriented voter registration efforts are important, more than two out of every five Americans have no college experience. So how can we reach them? By starting VR efforts at the high school level!

To engage and register eligible 16- to 18-year-old students, LWVSPA's Voter Services team trains students to conduct peer-to-peer voter registration at their high schools. Our first such event at Gibbs High School on April 8 was a success. Read more about this initiative [here](#).



On April 28, Voter Services volunteers Lenore Myka, Lori Bremer, and Ruth Barrens tabled at the the Regional Civics Bee for Hillsborough/Pinellas, sponsored by the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce. LWVSPA's presence at the event helped build our community visibility and relationships with the Chamber and the University of South Florida.

The Voter Services team has been on hand to help voters with registration and vote-by-mail questions at the Pinellas County Urban League (PCUL) monthly Food Truck Fridays. Co-Chair Heidi Davis was recently [interviewed by BayNews9](#) and Gerni Oster and Laura Williamson joined a Voting 101 panel discussion moderated by PCUL's Mhariel Summers.



On April 29, Voter Services co-hosted the NAACP's Community Town Hall at the Enoch Davis Center. A recap of the 2026 Florida legislative session and its impact on local citizens was presented to an attentive audience by Letitia Harmon, senior director of policy and research at Florida Rising.

Join the Voter Services team



## "Prepare, Don't Panic": Florida's New Voter ID Law

As Florida prepares to implement the newly passed Election Integrity Act (the state's version of the SAVE act) in January 2027, voting rights advocates warn that new verification requirements could exclude eligible voters. On April 8, Teresa Potter, co-president of the League of Women Voters of Hillsborough and Pasco

Counties, and LWVSPA board member Amy Keith, executive director of Common Cause Florida, joined WMNF's MidPoint to discuss the legislation, which makes several changes to Florida's election laws, including new requirements for voter registration and identification.

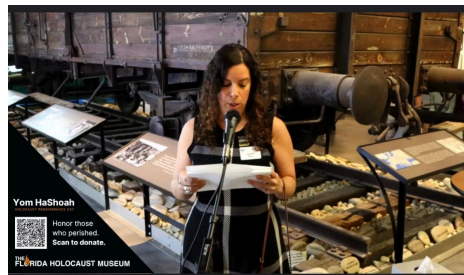
While the new law will not affect the November 2026 midterm elections, preparation for its requirements is crucial. Teresa Potter and Amy Keith encourage voters to prepare by paying attention to mail notices, ensuring name records match, keeping track of your important identification records, and being proactive about monitoring your voter registration.



Read WMNF's coverage of the event [here](#).

## Honoring Holocaust Victims

On Tuesday, April 14, the Florida Holocaust Museum paid solemn tribute to the lives lost during the Holocaust. LWVSPA President and Social Justice Team Lead Jackie Azis read names of Jewish victims on behalf of the League for the Yom HaShoah Commemoration (Holocaust Remembrance Day).



Through powerful in-person readings of the Jewish victims' names, we honor the memory of those who perished in the Holocaust and ensure their stories are never forgotten.

## View the 2026 Florida Legislative Session Breakdown

### 2026 Florida Legislative Session Outcomes

League of Women Voters St. Petersburg Area



Watch on

NAACP and LWVSPA held an event explaining outcomes of the 2026 Florida Legislative Session. We discussed laws that passed and what they mean for state & local citizens.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

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

#### **May Cocktails & Conversations**

**May 14 @ 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm**

#### **Green Light Lounge & Kitchen**

Join the League for Cocktails & Conversation, and invite a guest or two. The Social Justice Team has equipped us with materials for a postcard writing action at our May C&C. Take a stand against 287(g) agreements and get a few postcards off your chest while catching up with new and old friends.

[RSVP here](#)

#### **Parent Advocacy League**

**May 17 @ 10:00 am – 11:30 am**

#### **Crisp Park Playground**

The Parent Advocacy League (PAL) is a family-friendly space for parents and caregivers to connect, learn, and engage with the League of Women Voters of the St. Petersburg Area. [RSVP](#)

#### **LWVSPA Board Meeting**

**May 18 @ 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm**

If any LWVSPA member wishes to address the board, they should [email the president](#) to get on the agenda and to receive meeting info.

#### **Communications Committee Meeting**

**May 19 @ 11:00 am – 12:00 pm**

The LWVSPA Communications Committee meets monthly via Zoom. [Email](#) for the link if you'd like to get involved.

#### **Community-Centered Development Team Kick-Off**

**May 20 @ 5:30–7:00 PM**

#### **Thrive DTSP, 136 4th St. N, Suite 201**

This gathering offers an opportunity for LWVSPA members who care about sustainable community development and renewable energy to help shape our mission and exchange ideas in a relaxed, inviting co-working space. [RSVP](#) here.

#### **Voter Services Committee**

**May 20 @ 6:30 pm – 7:30 pm**

Join with the Voter Services Leadership Team to hear about our Voter Guide, Candidate Forums, Voter Registration, & Election and Voter Protection. [Join via Zoom](#)

#### **Equal Ground 2026 Legislative Debrief**

**May 23 @ 10:00 am - 2:00 pm**

#### **Dominion Worship Center 4034 12th Avenue S**

What's happening in Tallahassee is affecting all of us. Join Equal Ground and the League of Women Voters of North Pinellas County as we break down what happened during this legislative session, what the newly enacted laws mean for our community, and how we take action together. [RSVP here](#).

**Education Committee (With LWVNPC)**

**May 25 @ 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm**

Monthly LWVNPC/LWVSPA Education Committee Meeting via Zoom. [Email](#) for an agenda, invitation, or to register. Open to all current LWV members only.

**Committee on Membership**

**May 27 @ 1:30 pm – 2:30 pm**

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

**SAVE THE DATE! All-Member General Meeting**

**June 29 @ 6:00 pm**

**Allendale UMC**

**3803 Haines Rd N**

Gather with fellow members to catch up on what is happening League-wide. Childcare will be available during the meeting – after registering, a prompt will appear to another form to reserve childcare if needed. [RSVP here.](#)

**NEW TIME** !!

**TODOS LOS DOMINGOS!  
EVERY SUNDAY!**

**VIGILA por la JUSTICIA para los IMMIGRANTES  
VIGIL for IMMIGRANT JUSTICE**

 **Pinellas County Courthouse**  
14250 49th Street N (corner of 144 Ave N &  
49th St N), Clearwater, FL 33762

 **5 PM - 6 PM**

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

*Register Now* 



Join LWVSPA, the Pinellas/Hillsborough Interfaith Coalition, and community allies as we 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 Immigration Justice team](#) for updates on this and other urgent issues. Your involvement can help make a difference!

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



## Thanks to the following generous supporters who made gifts to LWVSPA in April:

Tanji Balke	Nicole Jones	Victoria Rexer
Kate Bird	Lora Karas	Dorothy Ritschel
Victoria Bishop	Amy Keith	Dalit Rotem
Gina Burchenal	Jessica Keith	Lucy Scheuringer
Sally Christopher	Diane Lajoie	Debie Scurr
Laura Crabtree	Roland Lajoie	Meco Sparks
Deborah Darrah	Doris Lovering	Rachana Suri
Robin Davidov	Beth Lurie	Linda Tanner
Julie Davis	Shelley Manes	Emily Timoner
Janet Deane	Beate Marston	Elizabeth Vanneste
Michael Drake	Tara Newsom	Sandra Weeks
Kristen Ehrlich	Sarah Peacock	Sharon Wheeler
Meggie Francisco	Lauren Penny	Nancy Wildfeir-Field
Flora Maria Garcia	Barbara Pierce	Brett Zager
Maryellen Gordon	Alison Quinn	
Maryellen Greer	Mary Ann Renfrow	

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## LEAGUE ONLINE

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- [Check Out Our Blog Archives](#)
- [Engage!](#)
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## 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.

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