

## THE VOTER

May 2022

### *Letter from the President*



Dear League Members,

Hi! I'm Gretchen. Thank you! I am so happy to be your new President. We may have met over Zoom meetings or at our in-person events. Since I am new, I wanted to introduce myself a bit to you. The best way I can describe myself is I'm an explorer and I'm curious about our world. I strive to build communities that build up each other and our environment. I want every voice heard and understood with empathy, compassion, and equity. This is why I love the League's commitment to nonpartisanship and to defend democracy because democracy is all of us.

I am continuously impressed and inspired by all of you and your work. From voter education to building demonstration rain gardens, you are all building community and strengthening democracy. You are the reason we are so successful so please let me know how I can help you increase civic engagement along with all the other wonderful things you are working on.

Please feel free to reach out to me with all your ideas and possibilities at [president@lwvspa.org](mailto:president@lwvspa.org). I'm new at this so I pledge to stay curious and learn from all of you.

I also wanted to recognize the amazing leadership of Linsey Grove who led the LWVSPA for three years, during a pandemic, and still thrived. She secured approximately \$230,000 in grants, moved the League office to the Sanderlin Center to be a better community partner in an area where there is a high need for voter outreach, worked to embed DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) into League processes and procedures, and helped to support new and innovative programming among our teams. Thank you

In peace, justice and the League,  
Gretchen Johnson

**ANNUAL MEETING**



**THANK YOU, Linsey!**

Linsey was elected as President of LWVSPA in 2019 and has finished her third term. She also served as the project co-lead for the Engage St. Pete initiative with Dr. Julie Kessel and co-chairs the Empowering Pinellas Youth Collaborative, a comprehensive sex education campaign as a part of her activity on the LWVSPA Social Justice Action Team. She has helped secure over \$200,000 for the LWVSPA in grants to help fund projects such as the Voter Guide and Engage St. Pete. Linsey has been on the Board since 2017 (having also served as 1st Vice President).



**Making Democracy  
Work Award**  
**Mary Ellen Gordon**



**Virginia Burnside  
Award for Long  
Term Service**  
**Amy Weintraub**



**We're a 501(c)(3) !**

The League of Women Voters of the St. Petersburg Area voted to approve the conversion of our League's current tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(4) to a public charity status under Section 501(c)(3). We have dissolved our 501(c)4, making our 501(c)3 the main organization. This change requires the inclusion of IRS-mandated amendments to our Bylaws, also approved by members at the annual meeting.

## **VOTER SERVICES**



### **Voter Education for Members**

The Voter Services team held their latest education event on Wednesday, April 20<sup>th</sup>. About 35 LWVSPA members came together to learn all about voting in Pinellas and what they can do as an individual to help others protect their vote. Amy Keith, LWVSPA Voter Services team co-chair, shared lots of useful information for the crowd. Bonnie Hough has summarized a few of the biggest takeaways so you, too, can be an informed voter and voting advocate for others.

(Left) Bethany Peabody (Pinellas County's Most Determined Voter) and Presenter Amy

Keith.

[\(Read More\)](#)



### **Voter Registration and The Arts!**

Our tireless voter registration volunteers had a blast April 23 at the Painting in the Park event, hosted by Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Florida.

While the kids were engaged, our volunteers talked to their parents about everything voting-related. League volunteers also talked to the kids about suffragists of color displayed on posters provided by the museum at our table. In addition, the yard and table signs that surrounded our area featured Jacob Lawrence's painting called *Migrants Cast Their Ballots*, created as part of

Laurence's Migration Series (1940-41) about the Black population that migrated North to escape Jim Crow laws.

Thank you, Museum of Fine Arts St. Petersburg and League Volunteers for a meaningful and memorable event.



## LWVFL IN THE NEWS

- [Voting Groups Sue Florida Over DeSantis Congressional Map](#)
- [Federal Judge Says Parts of 2021 Florida Voting Law Are Unconstitutional](#)

## SUSTAINABILITY TEAM IN ACTION



### Creating a Rain Garden: A Project of the LWVSPA Sustainability Team

Rain gardens are shallow, constructed depressions that are planted with deep-rooted native plants and grasses. Rain gardens slow the flow of rainwater from roofs, sidewalks, streets, parking lots, and other impervious surfaces, allowing the water to penetrate the soil. The soil cleans the water of pollutants before it enters the storm drain and empties into our bayous and bays.

Laura Crabtree and her team applied for and won a mini-grant from Tampa Bay Estuary Program to create a "Demonstration Rain Garden" at Sanderlin Neighborhood Family Center. One hundred ninety



native plants, 40 bales of pine straw, and 1300 lbs of rock were installed. Plant identifier signs and interpretive signage will be installed to educate school kids and the community about the importance of native habitat and how it provides cleaner ground and surface water.

Twenty-eight volunteers showed up on Saturday April 9th, 2022 to create the garden. About half the volunteers were League members, the others were non-League members. Jan, David, Deb and Dan from the Florida Native Plant Society were there to assist League members Gretchen Johnson, Rita Knorr, Laura Crabtree and Elizabeth Nail with the planting.



**Now that the planting is done, volunteers are needed to water and weed the garden. Donations of even one hour would be a huge help!**

**If you are interested please contact Laura Crabtree at [Lauracrabtree.league@gmail.com](mailto:Lauracrabtree.league@gmail.com)**

## VISIT OUR WEBSITE

- [May calendar of Events/Meetings](#)
- [Meet our Board](#)
- [Explore Issues](#)
- [Check Out our Blog Archives](#)
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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.