



THE SPACE COAST VOTER

<http://www.lwv-spacecoast.org>

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More Committee Info here!

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Sign up to help! We all do as much as we can! Any little bit is a big help! You can address postcards, go to events in your area, time in any form is appreciated and NEEDED!

WHIRLWIND TRIP TO CUBA

~ Suzanne Taylor, President

I recently traveled to Havana, Cuba, with the League of Women Voters of Florida's Sisters Across the Straits program. This program has taken US League members to Cuba for over 30 years. We had 11 members (10 sisters and a brother) take this 5 day journey, led by the Honorable Annie Betancourt, a longtime Miami chapter member and former Florida legislator. Annie was born in Cuba and emigrated to the US as a teenager.



Pink cars in Havana

I had a great adventure and am so glad that I went. The people returning to Cuba to visit family or friends all seemed to take the maximum amount of "luggage" allowed, which in this case were large, plastic wrapped containers of stuff. One man told me he was taking frozen meat there for his family as that was the only way they were able to afford meat. Despite the communist government, there were definitely "haves" and "have nots" in Cuba.

The trip was mostly what you would expect when travelling to an island in the Caribbean. It was hot and steamy, even in November. Lots of palm trees and coconuts. We were only in and near Havana, but the ocean is ever-present. Havana is filled with trendy restaurants, museums and statues. But every place has things that distinguish it. Havana's are: classic cars, crumbling buildings and effects of the American embargo. I thought all cars would be old ones, but the classics were about 30-40% of what I saw in Havana. Crumbling buildings were everywhere. Sometimes a building looked abandoned but then on closer look, I'd see laundry hanging out of a window or lights on inside. But many buildings were abandoned. And the embargo. We heard a lot about that, maybe because we were Americans.

Continued on Page 2

**A vote is not a valentine,
you aren't confessing your
love for the candidate.
It's a chess move for the
world you want to live in.**

UP NEXT!

November

11/28 DEI Task Force meeting

December

12/03 Painting with a Twist Fundraiser

12/05 **Cancelled - LWVSC Board**

12/09 **Board Meeting & Holiday Luncheon**

12/11 Natural Resource Committee

12/18 Social Justice Committee

12/20 Education Committee

January

01/09 Lobby Days Tallahassee

01/15 Solar Co-op Closes TODAY!

01/23 DEI Task Force meeting

February

02/24 Annual Bunko Party Fundraiser

All events are open except Board meetings.

Continued from Page 1 – From Suzanne

Cubans are entitled to a job from their government, health care, education, and their “basket”, which is a monthly promise of some basic foods, like eggs, rice, beans, coffee, sugar, and more. But every person we met told us how insufficient that is. And everyone seems to have a side hustle. Our breakfast cook for the trip was a history professor. There are pop-up “stores” everywhere, reselling goods. And there is still begging. Despite the decades of pain caused by Castro’s revolution and its aftermath, it was the American embargo that got the blame for the state of affairs in Cuba. I did have first-hand contact with the free medical system when I went to the tourist/immigrant hospital after a Cuban lunch gave me stomach pain. All tourists are required to acquire a license for any needed healthcare. Some airlines include it with the plane ticket. So that episode cost me nothing.

We were told that the literacy rate is 97%, and that Cuba prioritizes education. Unfortunately, there seems to be a disconnect between that education and an improvement in the lives of Cubans. The government has an agreement with Venezuela where they send doctors and Venezuela sends oil to Cuba. That doesn't stop there from being regular long lines at the gas stations. It made me wonder why Cuba couldn't do a similar exchange for manufacturing or agricultural knowledge.

I now feel I have enough information to say that the American embargo on Cuba is wrong-headed and should be lifted. But once that happens, it will take a long time for Cuba to be able to compete on the global market. It felt like all explanations of Cuba’s plight came back to that embargo. But I find it hard to believe that Cuba can’t operate with non-American goods. I know we’re 90 miles apart, but the rest of the world isn’t much farther away, especially with modern distribution. Americans have trouble finding goods made in America so it doesn't make sense that after all these decades Cubans haven’t found other sources for goods or figured out how to do it themselves.

So, the bottom line. The food wasn’t great but a good restaurant meal was very inexpensive. The mojitos were very good. American money is almost

Continued on Page 3



Pictures of Havana

Continued from Page 2 – From Suzanne

universally accepted, which was good because American credit cards are not. If you have money, Cuba is an interesting place to visit, but not a place where you'd want your loved ones to live. If you get the chance, go and see for yourself. And the American embargo should be lifted to allow Cuban citizens access to goods. There is no benefit to anyone by maintaining the embargo. All it does is increase the emigration from Cuba to the US when we should be actively helping others stay in their home countries.

The highlight of our visit was a cocktail party at the residence of the British Ambassador to Cuba, at which we also met the British Ambassador to Mexico. Both men and their wives were very willing to share their experiences of their host countries and their backgrounds, and all four were impressive people. We had interesting discussions of American, Cuban, and Mexican politics, and gained insight into the differences between British and American foreign policy.

Some Monthly LWV-Space Coast Meetings



The New Member Orientation was well attended. New Member Orientations will continue in 2024.



November Membership meeting with Mark Rendell, new Brevard Public School Superintendent, as speaker.

Education Committee*~Hilah Mercer, Education Chair*

The remaining Brevard Public School Board (BPS) meeting for 2023 is: December 12th. It is scheduled for 5:30 p.m. at the Educational Services Facility (ESF) in the Board Room at 2700 Judge Fran Jamieson Way Viera, FL 32940. Please wear your League T-shirt if you have one. We have observer buttons.

Eyes on the Legislature, FL Board of Education, and FL Board of Governors

The attention of the **LWVFL Education Action Team** is on the upcoming FL legislative session to be held January 9, 2024 – March 8, 2024. The LWVFL Strike Team visit is scheduled for December 12-13 and Lobby Days are January 23-24. The team is monitoring proposed House and Senate bills as they drop. The team can take one of three actions:

- Testify in support or opposition.
- Waive in support or opposition - When we waive our name is added to the organizations that hold the same position.
- Take no action.

Because the LWVFL Education Action Team has limited resources, we voted to focus on bills that align closely with our 2024 priorities: adequate funding for public education; support of a strong statewide assessment and accountability system for all students and schools; higher standards for early childhood education; and promotion of diversity and nondiscrimination in all publicly funded schools including colleges and universities. The LWVFL Education Action Team is also monitoring the work of the FL Board of Education (pre-K – 12th grade) and FL Board of Governors (state colleges and universities) which define the rules for schools based on bills that are passed by the legislature. Members of both boards are appointed by the current governor.

Currently the LWVFL Education Action Team has voted to testify in opposition to two bills closely aligned with our priorities:

HB 49 – Bill Description: Allows employers to schedule 16- and 17-year-old minor children to work unlimited hours, without breaks, overnight, and for more than six days in a row, regardless of whether school is in session or not. This bill also blocks local governments from passing curfews for teen workers that are stricter than state law.

Talking points in opposition:

- Allows 16/17 year old minor children to request a waiver to the Child Labor Laws, which would allow them to work more than 30 hours per week, before 6:30 a.m. and after 11 p.m. This waiver is granted by the school superintendent or designee. When work responsibilities become more important than school responsibilities, teens will choose work over school and drop out, thus hindering their future lives and earning potential. Teens, aged 16/17, lack the maturity to gauge appropriate work environments, thus allowing them to be exposed to dangerous work conditions and harassment.

HB 109 (Companion Bill SB 246) – Bill Description: Municipalities will be able to apply to convert existing district schools to charter schools. Allows municipality to convert any or all district schools. Eliminates teacher input in the decision, leaving it up to 50% of parents. Mandates that the district becomes the charter school's sponsor.

Talking points in opposition:

- The bill erodes control from duly elected school boards, while burdening district staff to provide oversight.
- Municipalities have no experience or expertise in public education. Examples of district conversion to charter schools have not been successful, eg. Jefferson County charter conversion.
- Eliminating teacher input and relying solely on parents further erodes professional input and expertise in teaching and learning.

Essential comments include:

- This bill is the latest “parental rights” movement to remove control from professionals.
- It allows profiteers to convert an entire district to contract with their management company.
- It will further demoralize and disrespect teachers, leading to further exodus of talented teachers and influx of permanent substitutes.
- Kids will suffer. Lower standards lead to lower education outputs.

It is recommended that we cancel our scheduled December 20th meeting and resume Zoom meetings in Jan.

National Election Heroes Day-November 6, 2023*~ Judy DeAngelis-Small*

This year the League of Women Voters of the Space Coast celebrated and thanked Brevard County election workers. Gina Lindhorst, league member, took it upon herself to create and deliver lovely snack baskets for each Supervisor of Elections office throughout Brevard. The league plans on doing something similar for the 2024 Election Heroes!

**WHO IS AN ELECTION HERO?**

State and territorial officials, local election clerks, elections staff, poll workers, and ***everyone*** who keeps our democracy running.

**Election
Hero Day** 

Florida's Voter Assistance Hotline is
866-308- 6739 (in English and Español),
Mon. – Fri., 8am-5pm

Questions on how to vote? Call 1-866-
687-8683 or 1-888-839-8682 para
Español.

Get free voter ID help by calling
VoteRiders at 844-338-8743.



Polls workers are critical
to ensuring free and
and fair elections
— **and they're at a
shortage across
the country.**

Trevor Noah

Cape Canaveral Candidate Forum*-Judy DeAngelis-Small*

The League of Women Voters of the Space Coast organized and hosted the Cape Canaveral City Council Candidate Forum on Saturday, November 4th at the Cape Canaveral Public Library. By all accounts, the forum was a successful event giving the three candidates an opportunity to address the issues facing their community. The candidates faced not only questions compiled by the league, but also audience questions. It was a lively Q & A with the many community members in attendance getting a thorough look at each candidate before they went to the polls on Nov. 7th.

Thanks to Shannon Roberts, league member and former Cape Canaveral City Council member, for her guidance in preparing for the forum. Tatiana Rosado, 2nd Vice President, opened the forum with introductions and also closed the event. Judy DeAngelis-Small, 1st Vice President, moderated the forum, while Jo Shim and Diane Conaway were the timekeepers.

The LWVSC's mission is to empower voters with the tools to make informed decisions when casting their votes. Forums such as this one is one way the league serves our community.



A few pictures from the Cape Canaveral Candidate Forum.

League Shirt Sale!**Sale is Ongoing!****Ladies' Shirts Sizes S-XXXL****\$25. each****(based on minimum 25 sales)**

To Order, Visit...

www.lwv-spacecoast.org**League Name Tags****On-Going Sale for \$10****Visit: www.lwv-spacecoast.org****Use the Event Calendar to Order Yours !**
LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS'
OF THE SPACE COAST
Your Name Here

Natural Resource Report

- Maureen Rupe, Sustainability Committee

Titusville's Right to Clean Water Amendment Fiasco

The city of Titusville challenged the "Right to Clean Water Charter Amendment." First, saying it shouldn't go to ballot. When that didn't work, they said it should be overturned saying the amendment was unconstitutionally vague, violated state pre-emption law, and was "confusing". Senior Circuit Court Judge Charles Holcomb heard the hearing twice, and the Court of Appeals directed Titusville to certify the charter amendment. Titusville asked for another hearing stating Judge Holcomb's ruling did not provide required references. The suit was heard by Judge George Paulk on November 16th. Judge Paulk gave a final summary against Titusville. The people won! Titusville spent almost \$100,000 trying to fight what 82% of their citizens passed the November 2022 ballot for clean water. The city has 30 days to take it to the Florida Supreme Court.

The Titusville Right to Clean Water charter amendment initiative comports with state constitutional powers delegated to local governments for the purpose of enforcing the right of Floridians to a clean environment. Such a right was expressly noted by the Florida Supreme Court in its [Florida Wildlife Federation v. State decision in 1980](#), where it stated that by enacting the cause of action in Florida's Environmental Protect Act (Fla. Stat. Sect. 403.412(2)(a)), "The citizens of Florida have been given the capacity to protect their rights to a clean environment-a right not previously afforded them directly".

Manatee Month

November is Manatee Awareness Month. This is a time boaters need to watch for Manatees as they move to Florida's warmer waters. These places usually include power plant discharge areas or Florida's springs. There have been 489 manatees die so far this year, much less than last year's 727 deaths, according to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

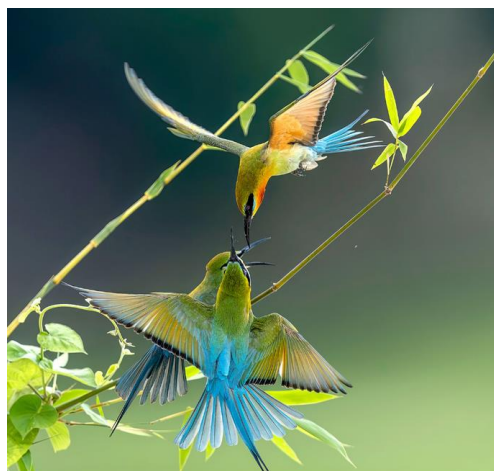
When watching Manatees, don't forget to give them space. It's illegal to disturb, feed, or do harm to the animal. Disturbing them could cause them to swim out of their protected areas.

Reference: <https://www.wlrn.org/environment/2023-11-15/manatees-on-the-move-boaters-asked-to-slow-down-for-the-sea-cows>

Climate Change Assessment

The Fifth National Climate Assessment came out earlier this month. This report is a mandated study by congress and is compiled every four years by 13 federal agencies. In this version's Section 9 "Coastal Effects," the report recommends proactive development relocation, which contradicts Florida's elected officials and our massive real estate commerce. However, the recommendation is understandable with [sea level rise](#) and [the increased frequency and intensity of our hurricanes](#). This would mean a planned gradual relocation to higher ground for man-made structures, leaving the coast for parks and reserves that everyone can enjoy. How many millions have taxpayers paid over the years just for sand renewal?

Reference: <https://nca2023.globalchange.gov/>



OMG! His expression!!!



Sustainability Committee

Ho! Ho! Ho! It's That Time Again!!

-Sue Little

Did you think I was reminding you of Christmas?? Not at all. But it is Florida Legislative Session time again! Committees have been busily filing bills and hearing testimony from interested parties. Almost 600 bills have been filed in the House and Senate to date and there are sure to be more before the actual session begins on January 9, 2024.

To track any bills that may interest you, go to either www.myfloridahouse.gov or www.myflsenate.gov and create an account in the Tracking Menu which is on the top right of the site. Senate Bills start with S or SB or SPB (if formulated in a special session). House Bills start with H or HB. You can search for a particular bill by using the Search bar at the top of each page. If you don't know the number, you can put more details in the search box to narrow down the search. This site has a lot of information and it will take awhile to learn how to best use it for your purposes so don't get frustrated if you don't find what you need on the first try. Once you do find a bill that you would like to track, go all the way to the right and click on the tracking symbol. Then, when that bill is being heard in committee you will be alerted through your tracking account

Some of the bills that the Natural Resource Committee of LWVFL is watching are:

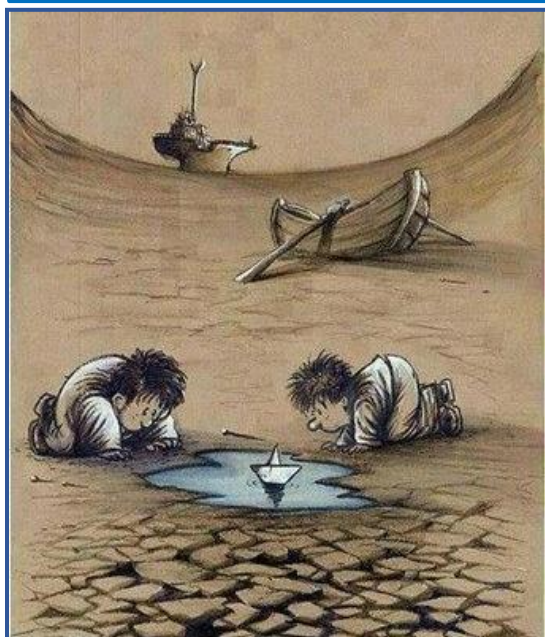
- H163 Dredging and Beach Restoration Projects. Introduced by Gossett-Seidman
- SB338/H165 Safe Waterways Act--Requires that the testing and Posting of Alerts to be transferred to FL DEP from the Department of Health. Introduced in the Senate by Berman and in the House by Gossett-Seidman
- SB298 Saltwater Intrusion Vulnerability Assessment. Introduced by Polsky. This would require coastal counties to assess the vulnerability of their communities to saltwater intrusion into the drinking water supply and assess their plans to mitigate this intrusion. Some matching funds will be available to communities to offset costs for this assessment. Communities with fewer than 50,000 people would not be required to supply matching funds.

The next meeting of the Natural Resource Committee will be on Dec. 11, 2023 from 5:30 to 6:30 pm. Please join us and let us know what is going on in your community.

STEP UP FOR SUSTAINABILITY

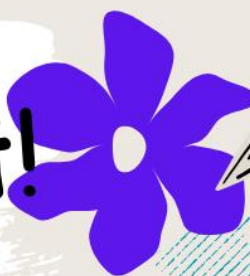
The Sustainability Committee is looking for a chairperson or two co-chairpersons to continue our work in educating the citizens of Brevard in the idea of a Sustainable World. . Please view the video library under **Get to Know Us** at www.lwv-spacecoast.org. The committee also has a very active book club to try to understand Sustainability ourselves.

Please contact Susan Little at regain88@gmail.com to find out more about this important position and how you could help lead the Sustainability Committee through all the changes in the last couple of years.



The importance of public transportation. What a great visual!

Painting With a Twist!



Join the League of Women
Voters of the Space Coast
for Some **HOLIDAY**
CREATIVITY!

Register at the Website Below

<https://www.paintingwithatwist.com/studio/melbourne/event/3363044/>

when

**Sunday,
Dec 3
2-4p.m.**

where

**Painting with a
Twist
702 E. New Haven
Avenue
Melbourne
(321) 345-5960**

Cost

**\$40
All Material
Provided**

Click [here](#) or the image above to go to the registration page.





Please join us for a

HOLIDAY PARTY

HOSTED BY LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE SPACE COAST

Saturday, Dec. 9th 1-4 pm

TUSCANY GRILL IN THE AVENUES
6630 COLONNADE AVE. VIERA, FL

Enjoy Lunch. Beverage. Cannoli. & Good Cheer !

\$28.24/person includes tax/tip

RSVP By Mon. Dec. 4th!

RESERVE AT WWW.LWV-SPACECOAST.ORG

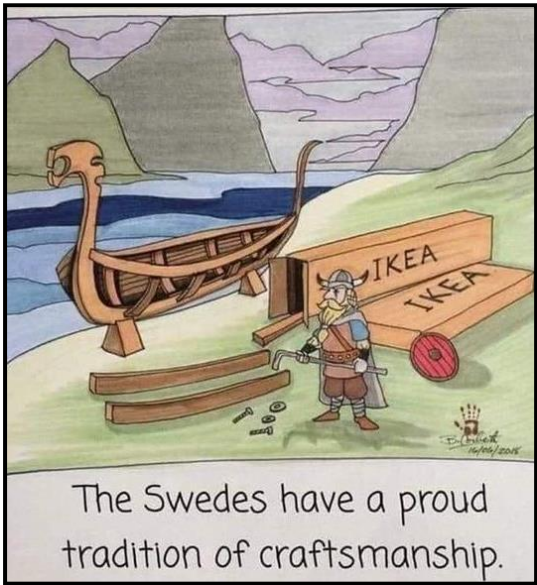
‘Tis the Season !

Please donate a gift card for Seniors & Homeless Children



Click [here](#) or the image above to go to the registration page. You may have to login first.

And now for some levity!



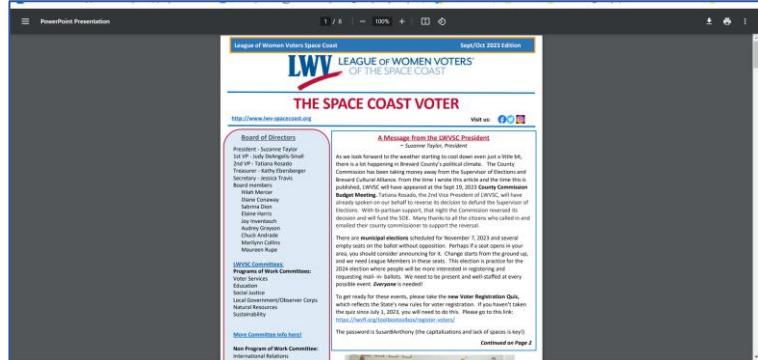
Want to get the most out of your newsletter?

~ Suzie DeBusk

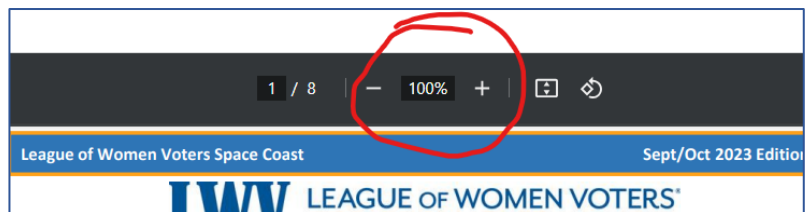
A few people have mentioned that they cannot read some of the items in the newsletter. That's a shame, especially if you can't see the comics! (That's my favorite part...)

It's very easy to enlarge your screen. MOST of your PDF's will open with a screen that looks like this:

Can't see this? ➔
Don't worry!



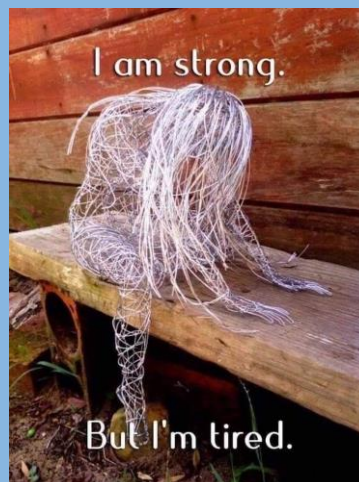
At the top of the page,
you should see
- 100% +



Press the + (plus sign) a
few times and it will
enlarge it!



If it's too large, just press the - (minus sign) and it will return to 100% or less. Or you can type in a number - like 55%. Easy peasy! Try it on this page.



How Does a Solar Co-op Work in Florida?

~Susan Little, Sustainability Committee

When a solar co-op is announced in a specific geographical area, the online portal of the co-op begins to accept members within that area. The Space Coast Solar Co-op opened in August 2023 and will close on January 15, 2024.

After the first 30-35 homeowners have signed up, there will be a meeting of co-op members and representatives from Solar United Neighbors of Florida (FL SUN) to determine what criteria is important to the homeowners when thinking of purchasing rooftop solar. Using that information, FL SUN will draft a Request for Proposal and send it to local solar installers. Interested contractors will send their bids to FL SUN who then put all the information from the bids into a spreadsheet to make comparison easier for homeowners. FL SUN also vets the contractors to make sure their licenses and insurances are active.

The next step is another meeting with co-op members and FL SUN to compare the bids and select a contractor. Once a contractor has been chosen, they are notified by FL SUN and the contractor is given the information from co-op members who wish to purchase rooftop solar. The contractors then set up times to view co-op members' homes to determine their energy needs and feasibility for solar. During this process, FL SUN representatives are available to answer questions should they arise. Then the co-op member decides whether or not to sign with the company. If they sign with the company, plans are drawn up with parameters agreed upon in the group bid. Then installation is scheduled.

Again, the Space Coast Solar Co-op portal is open to homeowners until January 15, 2024. It is advantageous to sign up early and become one of the decision-makers.

Sign up here: <https://www.solarunitedneighbors.org/florida/> at the Space Coast tab.

Joining a co-op does NOT mean you have to purchase rooftop solar. It only means that you are interested enough to spend some time with friends and neighbors to learn more about the equipment involved and the process of purchasing and installing solar on your roof.



Go Solar Now!

Solar Co-op Extended!

Now Ends Jan. 15th, 2024

With the help and expertise of non-profit Solar United Neighbors, co-op members use their bulk-purchasing power to get discounted pricing and a quality installation.

NO COST TO JOIN & NO OBLIGATION TO INSTALL!

Learn more at
<http://www.solarunitedneighbors.org/spacecoast>