

The Voter

The League of Women Voters of the Space Coast



www.lwv-spacecoast.org

Volume 36: No. 3

Mission: 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.

"Celebrate the League" - November 15th



The Board of League of Women Voters of the Space

Coast is hosting the 4th "Celebrate the League" and inviting all League members and friends who might be interested in joining League to a

Wine and Hors d'oeuvre Party. This is an enjoyable social event. Camaraderie and long lasting

friendships are also benefits of League Membership.

Tuesday, November 15th When:

5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Time:

115 River Drive River House Where: 115 N. Indian River Drive, Cocoa, FL 32922 The River House is located across the street from the 115 River Drive Condominium.

Reservations: to Doreen Archer at 321-622-4071 by Thursday, November 10th so we know how many will be attending. There is no cost.

Directions to 115 River Drive River House

From the south: US 1 to Peachtree Street just before Cocoa water tower. Turn right, go to blinking red light to make left turn onto Forrest Ave. Turn right on Mulberry Street, just before public library. Condo parking is off Mulberry on your right.

From the east: 520 past Whitley Bay condominium; turn right onto Indian River Drive. Go to end of 2nd block to turn left for library or condo parking off Mulberry Street.

Indian River Drive is in front of the two-story condominium buildings along the river.

Parking: Use parking spaces west of condo buildings or the library's parking lot and walk to River House. There is no parking adjacent to the River House building itself. Parking is available behind the condominium buildings, but not allowed on the riverbank. There are two entrances to parking lots from Mulberry Street (between condominium and library). Those with difficulty walking will prefer the lot behind the two-story buildings, as there are few steps to negotiate. If necessary, park in the library's lot.

A ramp leads to the recreation building's south door, but there are a few steps to be negotiated for the door on the north side.

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Diversity Mission Statement

The League of Women Voters of the Space Coast will promote in all aspects of the League's activities, a philosophy of inclusion that reflects the diverse composition and issues of the community.

November 2016

November 2016

President's Corner Fran Baer & Priscilla Griffith What's On Your Mind?

Elections, so close, remind us that 2016 is not only about who will be President of the United States. In Florida, thanks to a successful redistricting suit initiated by the League of Women Voters in Florida, all 120 House seats and 40 Senate seats are up for the voters to decide. The idea calls to mind Samuel Johnson's quote, "The prospect of being hanged focuses the mind wonderfully."

Recently the LWVF presented a list of Legislative Priorities which was disseminated to League members throughout the state. Members were asked to list their top five. With special thanks to those who shared what was on their minds, Space Coast respondents ranked the priorities as follows:

#1 Education #2 Environmental Protection & Pollution Control

#3 Finance and Delivery of Health Care

#4 Gun Safety

#5 Land Use

Comments included the Indian River Lagoon as a critical issue which was not part of the state priority list, but which Space Coast will submit to be included in the 2017 legislative lobbying effort.

For years now the League has been studying and formulating positions on these and other significant issues affecting the lives of our families, our elections, and our environment. Too often the legislative support has lagged behind the effort to improve conditions that lead to a more sustainable community. With so many seeking to serve in Florida's Legislature, the opportunity in this election is there to elect candidates who will FOCUS, listen and act on our concerns.

The forums and voter guides are a good start in getting to know where candidates stand on these issues. The new LWVSC Membership Book, 2016-2017 has the Position Statement and Program of Work of our active, vibrant committees. Articles in the "Voter" inform and update the work of the committees. Doing our homework and advocating our positions to potential and elected representatives keep us busy all year round.

Which reminds us of another Samuel Johnson quote, "What we hope ever to do with ease we may learn first to do with diligence."

Let's pledge to keep the candidates and newly elected officials focused on our issues arrived at with diligence.

Fran Baer

Welcome To Our New Members

Rhonda Rhoads Daniel T. Bennett

We have two new members to add to your membership book that you received in late August. Addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses of new members will be sent to you by e-mail.

If you have friends who belong to League of Women Voters of the Space Coast who do not receive email, it would be helpful if you could contact them and give them addresses and phone numbers of new members to add to their membership books. Thank you.



"Homeowners in Florida's Space Coast are forming a solar co-op! Co-op members will use their group buying power to get a discounted price for solar panels. If you've ever wanted to go solar and live in Brevard County, now is your chance! The co-op is sponsored by the League of Women Voters Florida, Rockledge Gardens, WFIT-FM, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Brevard, the Brevard Federation of Teachers,, Sierra Club and FL SUN.

Join us for an information session to learn more.

Tuesday, November 1, 7 p.m. David R. Schechter Community Center 1089 S Patrick Dr Satellite Beach, FL 32937

Wednesday, November 2, 7 p.m. Florida Solar Energy Center 1679 Clearlake Rd Cocoa, FL 32922

Go to <u>www.floridasun.org</u> to RSVP for one of these events.

In Memoriam Condolences to Barbara Mulligan in the loss of her husband Gerald Mulligan Gerald was also a member of LWVSC

November 2016



Education Linda Scales - Chair

Charter Schools in Brevard County by Laverne Bruffey & Lucia Watson

On Tuesday, Sept. 27, we had a very productive meeting with Stephanie Archer, Assistant Superintendent for Equity, Innovation and Choice. We came away feeling confident that BPS (Brevard Public Schools) is doing a very good job of monitoring all aspects of the charter schools here in Brevard; which includes financial health, student achievement, as well as supporting their autonomy from the district and their unique innovations.

All charter schools are public schools. They must be non-profit, however, some schools may contract with a management company for services. The schools Governing Board holds the contract for operation within the district and is responsible for the day to day operations. Charter school teachers are required to be certified in the subject in which they teach, however school administrators are not required to have the same credentials that the state of Florida requires for our public school administrators.

Currently there are 11 charter schools operating in the district. They serve mainly K-8 grades; however Odyssey serves students up to grade 11. Seven of those schools serve a large percentage of minority and/or disadvantaged students. Six of the schools are Title 1 schools. Four of the charters received an A grade and none received an F in 2016. Charter schools follow the same student discipline code of conduct as our public schools. While the charters handle their own daily discipline and may have school wide expectations, any student who commits an expellable offense is subject to being processed through the district. Expelled students may not enter another public school; they may be assigned to an alternative learning center, or attend a private school, or be home-schooled.

Emma Jewel Charter Academy in Cocoa exemplifies the goals of the charter school movement. It serves a population of which 91% is minority and 100% is disadvantaged. Thomas Cole, the director, makes an effort to accept any student who is eligible to attend. He has implemented a Saturday educational program, providing transportation and breakfast and lunch to those students who wish to participate. Richard Blake, a well-respected member of the community serves on the Governing Board, along with other very qualified community members. Although the school received an F in 2015 it did receive a D in 2016, missing a grade of C by 9 points. Odyssey Charter School (A grade) in Palm Bay is a totally "green" school, having earned national recognitions for their efforts. One aspect of their agriculture program is to grow their own vegetables and "farm" tilapia(fish). Their school lunch program is wholly organic and healthy.

Educational Horizons (A grade) in West Melbourne though one of the smallest schools in the BPS charters utilizes an elementary Montessori curriculum.

Of course there are problems faced by the charters such as challenges with transportation, food services and facilities. Because salary and benefits for teachers are usually not commensurate with those of BPS, teacher turnover can be a problem. When this occurs mid- year it is not in the best interest of students. However it appears that our district has a great relationship with their charters and feels that the schools are operating in the best interest of their students.

Three new charters are expected to open next school-year: Orion, Pineapple Cove North, and Legacy.

Legislative Issues:

BPS has recently retained a new lobbying firm, Capital City Consulting, located in Tallahassee. They have agreed to notify Ms. Archer's office regarding any proposed legislation pertaining to charter schools.

Highlights of HB 7029 (signed by the governor 4/16) that pertain to charter schools.

Prohibits a charter school from dismissing a student based on academic performance.

Requires background disclosure for charter school applicants and governing board members.

Capital outlay funding- provides additional funding per student to charters serving a significant number of students with disabilities and/or students receiving free or reduced price lunch.

Currently a charter must be in operation for 3 years to receive capital outlay funding; that requirement has been reduced to only 2 years.

HJR 759 sponsored by Representative Manny Diaz of South Florida.

This bill proposed placing the approval or denial of charter schools in the hands of the state Department of Education. (Bill defeated in 2016 session.)

A version of this bill will probably appear again in 2017. If the above authority is given, then they should also assume the huge responsibility of overseeing all the charters in the state. It is difficult to imagine how this could be done properly from Tallahassee!

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Health Committee

Jo Shim & Connie Dobrin Co-Chairs

(Meets the 3rd Monday of each month at 6 PM at Suntree/Viera Library) (due to length of article you will find References on page

(due to length of article you will find References on page 7)

Abbreviations signifying what?

LIP, DSH, RE, IGTs*(meanings are found in Notes below) -- Those few letters represent the various programs in the complex funding web that Florida has created to reimburse health care safety-net providers for the necessary care they provide to Florida's uninsured. The character of these programs is changing rapidly as the fragile web unravels.

Because Florida's governor and legislature have refused to accept federal funding available through the Affordable Care Act (**ACA**), coverage under the state's Medicaid program has not expanded and approximately 1 million adults who would be eligible under the expansion remain uninsured.¹ In recent years the costs associated with caring for the uninsured has shifted increasingly from the state to the counties. In 2017 the flow of federal dollars into Florida's Low Income Pool (**LIP**) is scheduled to expire. In the past year, the amount Florida received from the federal government has decreased by half. In fact, the funding available has decreased each year for the past several years. Dollars available through expanded coverage were supposed to make up the shortfall.^{1,2}

Miriam Harmatz and Charlotte Cassel of Florida Legal Services, Inc. have produced three excellent, very readable reports^{1,2,3} that provide background information about the history of Florida's federal Medicaid waivers and the mechanisms (LIP, DISH, RE, IGTs) Florida created to generate the required state match. In a January 2016 report, the authors highlight the impact Miami-Dade County will experience as federal funding dwindles as well as describing potential positive multiplier effects from acceptance of the expanded coverage dollars.¹ In their most recent report in July 2016, they focused on similar effects anticipated for Hillsborough County. They note:

[Hillsborough] County leaders should consider that because approximately 70,000 uninsured residents are eligible for expansion coverage, local health care providers would gain almost \$2 billion in new revenue over five years if those individuals received coverage. ...local leaders and stakeholders should understand how that increased revenue would impact the local economy.², p.13

Brevard County--Of Brevard's total population of approximately 550,000 about 90,000 or 16% are uninsured adults.³ In January 2015 in concert with the

Space Coast Health Foundation and Brevard County Legal Aid, Cassel and Harmatz produced a similar but abbreviated report about safety-net funding in Brevard County. At that time the authors noted that:

With the scheduled cuts to DSH and LIP, Brevard County will lose more than \$15 million in funding currently used to help cover the cost of the county's uninsured. The loss of that funding will be offset more than seven-fold if Florida devises a plan that would draw down federal funding for covering uninsured county residents.^{3,p.8}

These 3 reports emphasize the need for Florida citizens and their leaders not only to understand potential positive impacts from Medicaid expansion but even more urgently to understand the severe effects of NOT accepting federal expansion dollars. The human costs in terms of suffering and lack of access to care would be high, and the demand on state and local resources to make up the losses when the federal dollars are not available would be daunting. Yet, we do not anticipate that the State will change direction this year and decide to accept federal Medicaid expansion dollars. The January report cited above concludes with a caution to all of us:

...it is clear that future Medicaid safety-net funding is extremely uncertain. Both the amount and the structure of this funding will change in FY 2016-17, and the change will have a significant adverse impact on local economies and providers serving low income insured and uninsured county residents. Thus, it is critical that stakeholders both individually understand, and publicly discuss, how to fund and deliver health care for uninsured local residents.^{1, p. 21}

For additional information, see The League of Women Voters of Florida's Health Care page at: http://thefloridavoter.org/issues-2/health-care/ and the references listed on page 7 of this Voter.

NOTES

* "The **LIP** [Low-Income Pool] is a funding pool to support health care providers that provide uncompensated care to Florida residents who are uninsured or underinsured. It is *not* a health coverage program."^{4,p.1}

"The Medicaid Disproportionate Share **(DSH)** program provides payments to hospitals that serve a disproportionate number of Medicaid and uninsured patients."⁵

RE-- Rate Enhancements are specific dollar amounts distributed to individual hospitals in addition to DSH and LIP payments.^{2, p.6}

IGTs are Intergovernmental Transfers. Local funds from various sources including revenue from local taxing districts and surtaxes for local indigent care are sent to Tallahassee from a local government but in the name of a specific hospital.^{2, p.8}

(see References on Page 7)



Mosaic, The Power Behind the Secrets

by Maureen Rupe

The Mosaic Overview states "The Mosaic Company (NYSE: MOS) is the world's leading integrated producer and marketer of concentrated phosphate and potash. We employ nearly 9,000 people in six countries and participate in every aspect of crop nutrition development."

It went on to say they mine phosphate rock on almost 200,000 acres they own in Central Florida. It is this New Wales Facility in Mulberry Florida, where a number of news agencies including Rod Nickel in a September 17 story at Reuters.com, Titled "Florida sinkhole at Mosaic fertilizer site leaks radioactive water". A 45-foot sinkhole opened and leaked 215 million gallons of "slightly radioactive water," reported by a company spokesman. The article stated there was enough leaked water to fill 300 Olympic swimming pools. Jacki Lopez, the Florida Director of the Center for Biological Diversity, stated "Specific environmental and health concerns are the release of uranium, radium and radon gas.. Once contaminants reach the aquifer, which extends from central Florida to Georgia, they can potentially travel hundreds of miles, she said."

According to a Tampa Bay Times story by Christopher O'Donnell on September 16 titled "Mosaic plant sinkhole dumps 215 million gallons of reprocessed water into Floridan Aquifer", the leak was discovered on August 27th, where the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Polk County were notified, but no one notified the public for 3 weeks. At the time Mosiac said it was containing the contamination on site, so they didn't notify the public. But there were those who disagreed in the Tampa Bay Times Story.

"Water in the aquifer is laden with sand and sediment and flows slowly. Nonetheless, extracting all of the contaminated water and sediment before it spreads will be extremely difficult, said Robert Brinkmann, a professor of geology and environmental sustainability at Hofstra University and author of Florida Sinkholes: Science and Policy. "

"That's the bad thing about this: The aquifer is like Swiss cheese and it's interconnected," Brinkmann said. "Contamination can be very rapid. They must be working very hard to figure out where this is going."

The Tampa Bay Times story went on to say just last fall, Mosaic was fined \$2 billion to clean up six Florida sites and two sites in Louisiana. Mosiac was apparently mixing highly corrosive materials with solid waste and wastewater against Federal and State guidelines. This is the second sinkhole at New Wales Plant. A 120-footwide sinkhole opened in 1994. They pumped water out the same way as they did this time.

Again according to the story: "Still, a second potential contamination of the aquifer shows that phosphate production puts water supplies at risk, said Tania Galloni, managing attorney for the Florida Office of Earthjustice, an environmental nonprofit group."

"These phosphate companies are playing roulette with our public waters," Galloni said. "They cause devastation so severe that the scars can be seen clearly from space."

Very concerning is the fact our Governor has removed the scientists from Florida DEP, and now the agency seems to be more concerned about keeping friends with industry than keeping our water safe. Reference:

Mosaic Website: http://www.mosaicco.com/ http://www.bradenton.com/news/state/florida/articl e102179787.html http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mosaic-sinkholeidUSKCN11M1QW http://www.tampabay.com/news/environment/water /mosaic-plant-sinkhole-dumps-215-million-gallons-ofreprocessed-water-into/2293845



Local Government Ron Bobay - Chair

The Local Government Committee met on September 22, 2016. Our Program of Work was reviewed. It included the Observer Corp, Sustainability, coordination with the Natural Resources Committee and industrialization of Port Canaveral, understanding the activities of the Brevard Economic Development Council, further study of the position of an Inspector General in local government and study of the Brevard County Long Range Comprehensive Plan.

If you have a particular interest in any of these topics we would welcome you to our Committee deliberations. We will have a priority this year to establish an **Observer Corps** to assist our League in staying informed on County and municipal activities. Even if you are not actively engaged in the Local Government Committee we can use your assistance either in attending local municipal board meetings or agencies with countywide responsibilities.

We need at least twelve (12) volunteers from throughout the County. If you have an interest, you can contact me at **321-383-7955 or ronbbobr@cfl.rr.com**

November 2016



International Relations Joyce Calese

We invite everyone to the November meeting at the Satellite Beach Library on Tuesday, November 8th. Our meeting is from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. We will be disccusing favorite books of the last year on **International Topics**.

From February through May 2017 we will meet twice a month. These meetings are to study and discuss the 8 topics in the Great Decisions booklet published by the Foreign Policy Association and are on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month.

The 8 Great Decisions 2017 Topics are: The Future of Europe *By Andrew Moravcsik*

The outcome of the United Kingdom referendum on EU membership sent shockwaves across the globe. It even caught British voters by surprise. The European Union has helped secure peace in Europe for the past 70 years. Now it faces an uncertain future. Amid a refugee crisis, lingering financial recession and the constant specter of terrorism, unity seems more imperative than ever. But the Brexit vote underscores the complexities of integrating an extremely diverse continent. What will post-Brexit Europe look like, and how can U.S. foreign policy adapt?

Trade and Politics

By Jeremy Haft

The U.S. political mood toward trade has gone sour. One need look no further than the 2016 presidential contest for the popular narrative: trade means that China wins, at America's expense. But do the numbers support that conclusion? The metrics used to gauge economic strength – Gross Domestic Product and balance of trade – have not kept up with the realities of modern manufacturing. Obtaining an accurate picture of U.S. economic stature requires a critique of those numbers. Only then can the U.S. develop appropriate policy solutions for the challenges at hand.

Conflict in the South China Sea

By Bernard D. Cole

The South China Sea is a locus of competing territorial claims, and China its most vocal claimant. Beijing's interest has intensified disputes with other countries in the region in recent years, especially since China has increased its naval presence. Despite rising international pressure, including an unfavorable ruling by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, China staunchly defends its policies in the region. Preventing tensions from boiling over is a matter of careful diplomacy.

Saudi Arabia in Transition

By Lawrence G. Potter

As Saudi Arabia struggles to adjust to the drastic decline in oil revenue, Deputy Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman attempts to boldly transform the country and shift more power to the younger generation. At the same time, many countries such as the U.S. point out the lack of democracy, women's rights and human rights in Saudi Arabia, and blame its promotion of Wahhabism, an extremely conservative version of Islam, for creating jihadists. Bipartisan criticism of Saudi Arabia is rising in Congress. Both countries need each other, but they are at a crossroads in bilateral relations.

U.S. Foreign Policy and Petroleum *Jonathan Chanis*

What is the effect of U.S. petroleum security on foreign policy? For 45 years, the country has alternated between periods of energy security and insecurity, sometimes able to wield petroleum as a useful instrument of foreign policy, sometimes not. Despite the so-called "energy revolution," the U.S. today is by no means disentangled from foreign dependence and global trends. In order to be successful, policymakers must recognize both petroleum security circumstances and patterns in the relationship between petroleum and foreign policy.

Latin America's Political Pendulum

By Michael Shifter and Bruno Binetti

The pendulum of Latin American politics is swinging rightward once again. Yet as the "pink tide" recedes, the forces of change have more to do with socioeconomics than ideology. Dramatic economic and political crises have coincided in countries like Brazil and Venezuela. Still, the final result for Latin America may be the emergence of centrist, pragmatic modes of governance, and with them, opportunities for the U.S. to improve relations. The new administration must look beyond the neoliberal model of the 1990s, and develop an approach to relations fit for the 21st century.

Prospects for Afghanistan and Pakistan *By Austin Long*

Major internal conflict has plagued Afghanistan for four decades. The U.S., for its part, has conducted military operations in the country nearly continuously since 9/11. Today, war with the Taliban persists, and tensions between the U.S. and Pakistan have gradually deteriorated. As his time in office drew to a close, President Obama limited further withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan. The incoming administration has a choice: will it maintain the status quo, completely reverse the Obama administration drawdown or withdraw completely? Does the U.S. face a no win situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan?

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Education Article continued from Page 3

Highlights from Sue Legg's 9/30/17 post:

The federal DOE has awarded more than \$58,000,000 in charter school start-up funding to Florida, more than to any other state! Interestingly, a study conducted at UF of previous federally funded start-up charters in Florida found no academic achievement advantage for the charters. Many of the usual problems were also reported.

The Education Committee will continue to monitor those bills pertaining to charter schools in the 2017 legislative session.

References from Health Article found on Page 4

REFERENCES

1. Harmatz M and Cassel CJ, Medicaid Safety-Net Funding Issues: Implications for Counties and Low-Income Uninsured Floridians. Florida Legal Services, Inc. Report January 2016. Available at: http://thefloridavoter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/LIP-Report_State_FINAL_Jan-20-2016.pdf. Accessed ooon 9/21/16.

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5. Florida Hospital Association, Medicaid Disproportionate Share. Available at:

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International Relations Article continued from Page 6

Nuclear Security By Todd Stephen Sechser

Nuclear nonproliferation was a top priority for the Obama administration. While the Iran Deal was a diplomatic victory toward this end, major threats persist from both state and non-state actors. Countries like North Korea, Russia, and India and Pakistan continue to challenge nonproliferation efforts. The possibility that terrorists will carry out an attack using a "dirty bomb," made from captured nuclear materials, looks increasingly real. In a fractious world, which way forward for U.S. nuclear security policy?

~November Calendar - Members are welcome at all meetings~

Wednesday, Nov. 2	Board Meeting – Large Room at Suntree Library at 10:00 a.m.
Tuesday, Nov. 8	International Relations Meeting at Satellite Beach Library 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
Tuesday, Nov. 15	Celebrate the League at River House Club House (see details on Page 1)
Thursday, Nov. 17	Education Committee Meeting at home of Doreen Archer 1 p.m.
Monday, Nov. 21	Health Committee Meeting at Suntree Library at 6:00 p.m. to 7:45 p.m.

(As additional dates of Committee Meetings are known they will be posted on the website.)

<u>Voter:</u> Monthly publication (except June, July, August) Issue Date: November 2016 League of Women Voters of the Space Coast P.O. Box 360823 Melbourne, FL 32936-0823 <u>www.lwv-spacecoast.org</u>



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Men Are Welcome to Join LWV!

PLEASE CHECK YOUR INTERESTS

- Education _Fund Raising/Finance _Health Issues _Hospitality/Events _International Relations Study Group Justice _Legislative Action _Local Government/Observer Corps _Membership ____Natural Resources _Publicity & Public Relations _Speaker's Bureau _Telephone Committee _Voter Service _The Voter (monthly newsletter) Website
- _____Women's Issues

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please complete the information below and return with your check made payable to League of Women Voters of the Space Coast

Mail to: LWV Space Coast 6629 Canal Road Melbourne Village, FL 32904

Name
Address
City/State
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E-Mail Address
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New Member Returning Member ANNUAL DUES
\$60.00 for Individual Membership
\$85.00 for Household Membership
\$25.00 for Student Membership