



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
O F S A N I B E L

## *The Voter*

lwvsanibel.org

League of Women Voters of Sanibel Newsletter

Volume 7 Issue 4

February 2016

Editor's Note: If you do not see a photo of Robin Krivanek below, click on "display images" in your email program.



### Greetings from Robin Krivanek, LWV Sanibel President

Dear Leaguers:

Here is your opportunity to make suggestions for next year's programs. On Wednesday, February 10th, your Board will be formulating the LWV Sanibel program schedule for the 2016-17 Season. As required by our LWV By-Laws, the proposed programs must be presented to the membership at our March meeting with a final vote taken at our April annual meeting. Remember, your program suggestions must relate to the principles and positions of the national League (LWVUS) or to the state governmental issues chosen at last year's LWV state convention. For this year's legislative priorities, the national League has chosen to focus on Representative Government (primarily voting rights and money in politics) and on Climate Change, while continuing to monitor issues relating to immigration, health care, and reproductive rights. The Florida State League chose as its priorities: Election Laws, Education, Health Care, Gun Safety and Land and Water. Your local LWV Board values your input. Please take a moment to reflect on topics that you would like to see addressed at our monthly (in season) programs next year and [click here](#) to send me an email if you would like further information or to express your interests.

At the national level, the LWVUS has been involved in a study of the Constitutional Amendment process. Due to the large number of states that have already approved the holding of a constitutional convention to consider a balanced budget amendment, 246 state and local Leagues took part in the study and the national League recently announced consensus positions addressing safeguards to govern the process and considerations for evaluating constitutional amendment proposals. [Click here](#) for more information.

Now as the presidential election season gets into full swing, please bear in mind that for those not already registered to vote, the deadline is February 16th if they want to take part in the Florida Presidential Preference Primary scheduled for March 15th. And for anyone wanting additional information on the candidates, a Voters' Guide to the Presidential Candidates -- produced by the LWVUS Education Fund -- will be available at [www.411VOTE.org](http://www.411VOTE.org) at least two weeks before the November 8, 2016 Election Day.

Check below for information on this month's luncheon speaker who has been in the thick of environmental politics for many years. It should be fascinating. I look forward to seeing you there.



## Defending the Environment: A Bi-Partisan Approach

**Reserve your place now.**  
LWV Sanibel Luncheon and Program, February 18.

**Speaker:**  
**Alik Moncrief, Executive Director,**  
**Florida Conservation Voters**

Ms. Moncrief was Deputy Campaign Manager for the Florida Water and Land Legacy which successfully conducted a grass-roots drive to pass Amendment One in the November, 2014 election. Amendment One, designed to establish a fund for the acquisition and maintenance of environmentally sensitive Florida lands, was enacted when more than 75% of Florida's voters supported it. However, the Florida legislature and governor have diverted most of the funding to the regular operating budget of the state. The Florida Conservation Voters, the successor organization to the Florida Water and Land Legacy, aims to become the state's leading non-partisan political voice for Florida's environment by electing environmentally aware candidates and by educating and holding

Florida's elected officials accountable for their conservation policies.

Ms. Moncrief earned her law degree from Harvard in 1999 and has worked as a litigator in a number of environmental not for profit and state agencies.

**Where:**

Sundial Beach Resort, 1451 Middle Gulf Dr, Sanibel.

**When:**

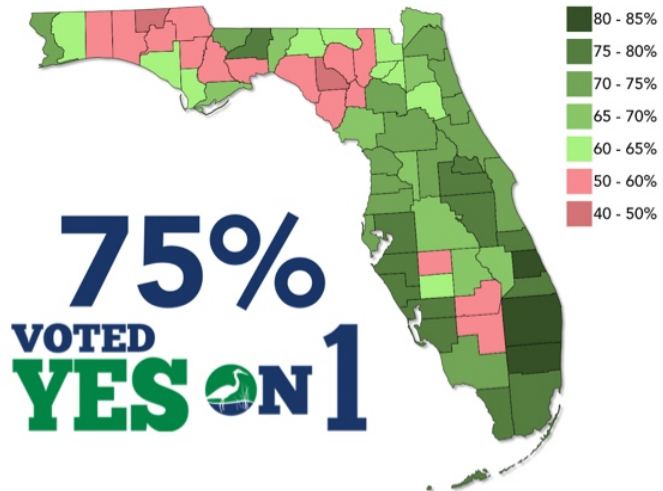
Thursday, February 18, 2016, Registration at 11:30 a.m., Luncheon and Program at 12:00, noon.

**Reservations and Cost:**

[Click here](#) to email LWV Sanibel Treasurer, Ellen Strobel, with your reservation. Cost is \$25 per person. You can pay at the door or send your check to LWV Sanibel, P.O. Box 1194, Sanibel, FL 33957.

**RSVP Deadline** is Noon, Monday, February 15, 2016.

You changed the world!



**SAVE THE DATE!!**  
**Saturday, March 12**

**Florida's Sunshine Laws Are Being Weakened**

Learn more about the background and what citizens can do at this free, public event.

**OPEN GOVERNMENT & YOU:  
A PUBLIC FORUM ON THE  
CURRENT STATE OF OUR SUNSHINE LAWS**

**Keynote speaker:**

Barbara Peterson, **President, The First Amendment Foundation**

**Panels:**



- Shutting the Door on Open Government
- An Informed Media = An Informed Community
- When You Don't Know: The Impact of Weakened Sunshine Laws

**Hosted by:** The LWV Lee County and The News-Press Media Group

**WHEN:** SATURDAY, MARCH 12, 2016, 1-5 p.m. Registration at 12:30 p.m.

**WHERE:** THE NEWS-PRESS BUILDING, 2442 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Fort Myers, FL.

**Cost:** Free and open to the public.

Democratic government depends on the active participation of informed citizens and requires that governmental bodies protect citizens' access to public information by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making public records accessible.

Florida has traditionally been a leader in providing its citizens oversight and review of the actions of its elected officials at every level through its Sunshine laws. Unfortunately, privacy concerns and influential special interests are working to erode these laws and erect barriers to transparency and accountability.

[Click here](#) for details on the LWV Lee County website.

### **Action Alert from the LWV Florida TAKE ACTION NOW!!**



[Click here to ask your state legislators to unlock affordable solar power in the Sunshine State!](#)

**House Bill (HB) 687** by



that prohibits  
buying solar power  
from anyone  
other than a  
monopoly utility.



Floridians for  
Solar Choice

FLSOLARCHOICE.ORG



Representatives Costello and Rehwinkel Vasilinda and **Senate Bill (SB) 1328** by Senator Altman would open up the solar market in Florida by allowing home and business owners the option to enter into third party power purchasing agreements

(PPAs) to buy solar power. This is currently illegal in the state.

While solar can provide all or a large portion of a home or business' electricity needs, the panels and equipment typically cost tens of thousands of dollars up front to purchase and install. However, with a solar PPA, a solar company buys, installs, and maintains the solar system on a home or business and sells the electricity generated to the property owner through a contract, allowing Florida families and businesses to lock-in long term savings.



Florida is one of only four states where third party PPAs are not allowed, meaning our electric utility companies have no competition and a complete monopoly on energy sales. As a result, solar development in The Sunshine State has languished - halting the potential for thousands of well-paying solar jobs along the way.

[Click here](#) to support House Bill 687 and Senate Bill 1328.

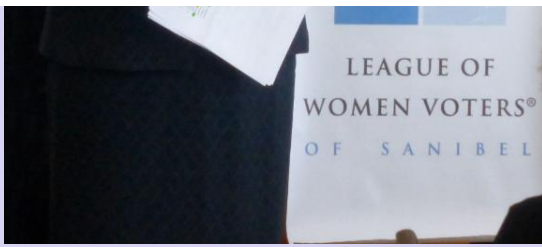
Watch your email for other important **ACTION ALERT** messages from your Florida LWV.



## **BIG WORD, BIG PROBLEM: DISENFRANCHISEMENT -- NOT A NEW PHENOMENON**

**By Mary La Velle**

According to Dr. Laura Weir of Florida Southwestern State College (we once knew it as Edison College) in Fort Myers, the history of right to vote is one of expansion-and reaction. It is a



central responsibility of citizens-one exercised by disappointingly small numbers of our electorate, one exercised in many cases without thoughtfulness or solid information...and one that has been

fought for, guarded, restricted, and in some cases lost.

Dr. Weir, who holds her Ph.D. in Political Science from Case Western Reserve in Ohio, heads FSW's Center for International Education, and studies voting not only abroad (including the Middle East) but also here at home. Our politics may be "tribal" in some ways, but in the Middle East they are that, at a basic level. In Jordan, for example, one must vote OUT LOUD in front of tribal leaders and guards with AK47's. So much for a secret ballot! In other cases, 85 to 90% of people vote because their sheik has decided whom his tribe will support. They must vote thus, often because it will preserve the tribal leader's economic interests. (For us, lobbyists help do that job...)

In our own country, the Constitution is silent on the franchise. There was no intention by the founders for a popular vote. In fact, only white male landowners, some 6% of the entire population, were eligible to vote for George Washington! Slowly and not so surely the franchise was expanded, notably by the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1868 (granting citizenship to "all persons born or naturalized in the United States," which included former slaves who had just been freed after the Civil War). In 1870, black folks were legally able to vote, but since voting practices were reserved to each state, citizenship was no guarantee. Forbidden to refuse the vote based on race, creative states used the poll tax, high literacy tests, and terror to deny black citizens voting rights.

In 1920, after more than half a century of effort, women won the right to vote. Finally in 1947, after they served with distinction in World War II, Native Americans were awarded the vote. In 1965, after almost a century of disenfranchisement, the Voting Rights Act began to give African Americans a real right to vote. But not



real right to vote. But not  
without pushback,

Alice Paul (second from left) in National Woman's Party, 1920.



President Lyndon B. Johnson, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rosa Parks at the signing of the Voting Rights Act on August 6, 1965

especially after 2013, when the Supreme Court rescinded Section 4 of the act, which required states with a history of disenfranchisement to clear changes in voting rules with the Federal Government. Since 2012, 44 states have passed significant restrictions on the right to vote.

While gerrymandering-politicians choosing their

voters rather than voters choosing leaders-has a long and storied history from both parties, current efforts are ever more sophisticated with computer modeling. And even though Florida voters recently passed the Fair Districts Amendment (sponsored by the LWV and others), a lawsuit had to be filed this past year when the partisan FL Legislature tried to gerrymander anyway!

Among strategies to suppress voting, especially among the young, the old, the poor, minorities, and working people are the following:

- Voter ID cards are required, but costs are levied, and places where they can be obtained are restricted--for example Drivers' license bureaus are shut in disfavored districts;
- Hours and days of voting and early voting periods are restricted-Sunday voting especially!;
- In Baltimore, off-duty police and other imposing characters were stationed outside voting precincts to explain that there are many rules to voting which, if violated, could result in jail time;
- Lists of registered voters are purged by matching foreclosure lists (in Michigan, that was about a half million people in 2008!)
- In Florida, anyone convicted of a crime is permanently removed from voting lists-including those who have served their terms and re-entered society;
- County-wide elections dilute the influence of disfavored groups;
- Mailings sent to people which if they ignore or misplace the mailing and do not send it back, their name is removed from the voter list. ("They don't live there any more!")
- And restricting money for machines or workers in unfavored



- And restricting money for machines of workers in unfavored districts.

A changing electorate, less old, less white, has inspired many of these strategies. Fear of change can be a strong motivator. So can a threat to economic advantage. For example, in Iran, the Revolutionary Guard controls about 30% of that country's economy. Neither the Ayatollah nor the President can operate without them---and the Guards actually shoot people who they do not believe should try to vote.

Added to it all has been the effect of the Citizens United decision by the Supreme Court-an avalanche of money from highly interested sources that pour out to influence uninformed voters, especially to oppose unfavored candidates. And since Civics and even Social Studies seem to have disappeared from most school curricula, we face an ever more uneducated electorate. Not a pretty picture.

Our Sanibel LWV President, Robin Krivanek, remembers when citizens had to go to the County Courthouse to register to vote before groups like LWV were empowered to register voters in the streets, at markets, at people's homes. As LWV members we are dedicated to preserving the franchise. There are plenty of others dedicated to the opposite.

Dr. Weir gave us plenty to think about, including this: in Australia, voting is compulsory and Election Day is a holiday! People do not have to jam their vote into a day already full of work or school! Or wait in endless lines before or after work!







## Membership Renewal & Records Update

Please copy this form and mail it along with your check (made out to LWV Sanibel) to LWV Sanibel, P.O. Box 1194, Sanibel, FL 33957

Questions: [lwvsanibel@gmail.com](mailto:lwvsanibel@gmail.com)

LWV Sanibel annual membership is October 1 to September 30.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (Home) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (mobile) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

### Please Circle Annual Membership Level

\$125 Susan B. Anthony membership \_\_\_\_\_

\$95 Household membership \_\_\_\_\_

\$65 Individual membership \_\_\_\_\_

\$30 Student membership \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

### Please Circle Your Interest Topics

Voter Services

Local Government

Fundraising

Health Care

Sustainability/Natural Resources

Publicity

Membership

Hot Topics

Education

Hospitality/Events

## LWV Sanibel Board Meetings 2016

Members are invited to attend all Board meetings which are held at 3:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday (excepting October and May) of the month. Meeting dates are February 10, March 9, and April 13. [Click here](#) to contact Robin Krivanek as to the meeting location.

*The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that 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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