



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

# ***THE VOTER***

Sanibel Member-at-Large Unit

Volume 1 Issue 1

January, 2010

## **Letter from the President**

It is an extreme honor for me to write this first letter as the first president of the Sanibel MAL Unit of the League of Women Voters. Who would have thought that when a few of us met and discussed the possibility of forming a Sanibel League last spring, we would be writing *The Voter* newsletter in January?

Our MAL Unit was approved by the State LWV Board last July and we have been off and running ever since. Our first official meeting took place on November 10, 2009. State president Deirdre Macnab, state executive director Peg McGarity, state membership chair Ruth Schecter and our mentor – Jeannette Boucher from the Naples League were on hand to help celebrate the occasion as well as explain the history and policies of the league.

Our first Board of Directors had been formed and we now have a great team of seven board members. Our membership is growing faster than our expectations and is presently at 60, 25% of whom are men. A current membership list has recently been emailed to all members. Our programs for the rest of the year have been planned.

I hope all of you are as excited as I am to be involved in our new endeavor and I wish you a happy and healthy 2010.

*Carla Benninga*  
President



*Left to right: President Carla Benninga; Secretary Linda Kramer; and Treasurer Linda Robison.*



*The first meeting of the Sanibel MAL unit of the League.*

## The League of Women Voters – Study and Action

The strength and credibility of the League of Women voters is based on strong grassroots membership understanding and involvement in the entire program and action process. Every member of the League is encouraged to participate in the process of “study and action” in its entirety, from the adoption of a study, through the achievement of a consensus, to its ultimate conclusion with action.

### Program

Members of local Leagues come together to discuss issues of statewide interest and current or potential League concerns. They recommend to their local League boards the issues for study and action. Local League boards consolidate the members’ recommendations and decide which issues and positions have the most support, are most timely and are most appropriate for League activity. They then send their recommendations to the board of the League of Women Voters of Florida (LWVF). The state board weighs the various recommendations from the local Leagues and decides which issues will become part of the state program that it will recommend to the state biennial convention (composed of local League delegates) for adoption.

### Study — consensus or concurrence — position

When a program is adopted that includes an issue for study, members first research the issue. Background material on all sides of the issue, a bibliography and consensus questions are furnished by a state study committee as approved by the State Board. These questions, when answered by the membership, may establish a statewide consensus. Consensus by group discussion is the technique most often used in the League for reaching member agreement. It is a process whereby members participate in a group discussion of an issue. The consensus reached by members through group discussion is not a simple majority, nor is it unanimity; rather it is the overall sense of the group as expressed through the exchange of ideas and opinions, whether in a membership meeting or a series of membership or unit meetings.

The state board evaluates the conclusions of the local Leagues. Wherever the state board determines there is substantial agreement (or consensus), a formal LWVF position is adopted.

Occasionally the concurrence approach is used whereby local Leagues formally agree with a position already arrived at by another organizational unit of the League. Concurrence may be taken with the findings of a resource committee, with a statement formulated by a League board or with positions reached by another League. The subject of concurrence should be one about which members already have a base of knowledge and would be likely to agree. A League cannot take action on an issue until it establishes a position on that issue.

### Action

Action can be taken through various means: lobbying elected officials, testimony, letter-writing campaigns, litigation and informing the public, among others. At the national level, action may be taken based only on national positions. At the state level, action may be taken based on national or

state positions. Local action may be taken based on local, state or national positions as long as there is member understanding of how the position relates to the situation and it affects only that local League's area. If the application would have regional implications, all local Leagues in the affected region must agree that the action is appropriate.

Excerpted from *Study and Action*, [www.lwvfla.org](http://www.lwvfla.org):

## Can We Concur on Florida: Mass Transportation?

The League of Women Voters of Florida (LWVF) is asking all local Leagues to participate in developing a Florida state position on public transportation. The federal government is emphasizing and funding commuter and high speed rail and public transportation projects.

Florida's elected officials and decision makers are talking about such projects, including a high speed rail transportation system.

At *Convention 2009*, the support for public transportation became part of the League of Women Voters US (LWVUS) program. The LWVUS position is:

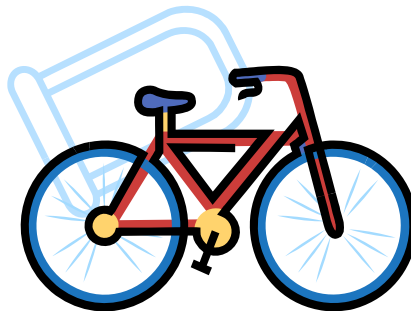
*Promote energy efficient and environmentally sound transportation systems that enhance the well being of cities and afford better access to housing and jobs. The LWV of Florida does not presently have a position on mass transportation.*

All local Leagues are being asked to consider concurring (accepting another League's consensus or affirmation of its position on a common program item) with the already existing positions of the LWV of Orange and Seminole Counties and the LWV of Tallahassee.

Once LWVF has concurrence and each local League has a transportation position, LWVF will have a solid foundation from which to complete the transportation study that was approved at Convention 2009.

### WHAT THE LWV SANIBEL MAL UNIT NEEDS TO DO:

Please complete the form on the next page and bring to it our January 18th meeting. (Forms will also be available there.) The board will determine if our membership has general agreement with these positions and report our concurrence or nonconcurrence to you and LWVF.



**A. Concurrence on the need for Regional Transportation Authorities (RTA)**

I support the concept of regional transportation authorities

CONCUR \_\_\_\_\_ NO CONCURRENCE \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Concurrence on the need for a comprehensive, integrated and multi modal system of transportation that will provide an effective system of Public Transit (including but not limited to buses, commuter and light rail, trolley), Sidewalks and Bikeways (multi-modal).**

We believe that state, counties, municipalities, regional authorities or combinations of all should work together to create a transportation system that serves the needs of all Floridians and protects the environment.

CONCUR \_\_\_\_\_ NO CONCURRENCE \_\_\_\_\_

**C. Concurrence on the need for Dedicated Funding Sources**

1. Provisions should be made for adequate, ongoing financing for construction and maintenance, and operation of the multi-modal transportation systems listed above.
2. Many funding options have been proposed. Local and regional governments should have the ability to choose which option(s) are best for their areas.

CONCUR \_\_\_\_\_ NO CONCURRENCE \_\_\_\_\_

**First Call to Convention 2010**

*from LWVUS President Mary G. Wilson*

WHAT: The LWVUS 49th National Convention

WHEN: June 11-15, 2010

Friday, June 11 Pre-Convention Training 2-5 pm

Saturday, June 12 Briefings 10 am-Noon

Call to order Convention starts 1 p. m.

Sunday, June 13 All Day

Monday, June 14 All Day

Tuesday, June 15 Adjourn Noon

WHERE: Atlanta Marriott Marquis

265 Peachtree Center Ave, Atlanta Georgia

## LWVF Website – Check it out!

*Right on front of home page is “New League Starts in Sanibel!” See <http://www.lwvfla.org/>.*

The site is a wealth of information about the LWV Florida and its positions. A very useful start is Study and Action, 2007-2009, a 64-page guide to LWVF public policy positions.

The hot topics column includes articles about two of our upcoming programs on coastal drilling and redistricting reform, and many more. And there are dozens of links to government agencies and private organizations related to LWVF issues.

## About Carla Benninga, President

Carla was born in The Hague, the Netherlands. After her marriage to Benno in 1950, they moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, where she was actively involved in civic affairs. She was a longtime member of the Greater Cincinnati League of Women Voters where she served in different capacities including Vice President of the Board and organizing a televised Statewide Gubernatorial Debate. She formed her own company which offered a wide array of services including public relations/public affairs/legislative affairs and opinion research. The Benningas moved to Sanibel in 1993 where she served for six years on the Board of the former Pirate Playhouse/J. Howard Wood Theatre and on the Board of BIG ARTS from 2003 till 2009.

### INVITATION FROM THE FLORIDA STATE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

*Save The Date:*

You are invited to a very special Legislative Seminar

**Monday, March 22 – Wednesday, March 24, 2010**

Join us at the 2010 Legislature Seminar in Tallahassee, as we celebrate the 90th anniversary of the LWV and women’s suffrage with

***Cocktails On Top of the Capital!***

A Proclamation for the League from Governor Crist and the Cabinet!

Meet with legislators and make OUR voice heard!

Plan NOW and watch for more exciting news and updates!

### MISSION STATEMENT

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.

### SANIBEL MAL UNIT

[sanibellwv@gmail.com](mailto:sanibellwv@gmail.com)

President - Carla Benninga

Vice President – Program - Mary McLaughlin

Treasurer - Linda Robison

Secretary - Linda Kramer

### Board of Directors

Darlene Boda - Membership

Martha Ponader - Voterservice

Dawn Schumann - Local Government

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