



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

Miami-Dade Voter

Volume 1, Issue 8
March - April 2009
Making Democracy Work

In Memoriam: Debbie Curtin

Deborah Jay Curtin was a remarkable woman who, in every position she served, excelled and demonstrated great leadership. At the League of Women Voters of Miami-Dade County, we have firsthand knowledge of Debbie's professional contributions, her leadership skills and her courage when faced with adversity. Debbie was an inspiration of courage and a fearless fighter for all women who share the same diagnosis. Her smile never revealed her pain and discomfort and her heart was strong and her generosity great. Debbie ran the race with style and she never let us down. We at the League are grateful for her dedication to citizen participation in good government and teaching us a lesson on how to live and love.

Debbie's untimely death on August 11, 2008 came as a shock to all who knew her indomitable spirit. But our local League's website will serve as a constant reminder of the wonderful contributions Debbie made as a member of the board of the LWV of Miami-Dade County. We would like to offer our deepest condolences to Debbie's husband Dan, her mother Dorothy Jay, and to all her family members. We thank you for sharing her with us.

Annie Betancourt, President Judith Cannon, Past President

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GO GREEN! HELP US REACH YOU VIA E-MAIL

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THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
PRESENTS:
HOT TOPIC LUNCHEON
THE FORECLOSURE CRISIS:
THE PROBLEM & SOME SOLUTIONS*

A Panel Presentation

Tuesday, April 14th

12:00-1:30

94th Aero Squadron Restaurant
1395 NW 57th Avenue

(State Road 836 at Red Road)

Buffet Lunch - \$25

***Speakers: Circuit Ct Judge Bailey, Bankruptcy Judge Cristol, Jeffrey Hearne, Esq. & Hashim Benford**

Reserve your place now! R.S.V.P. 305.751.0504

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Immigration & Florida's Economy

Wednesday, May 20th
6:00 PM - 8:30 PM

Miami-Dade College
Inter-American Campus
627 SW 27th Ave., Miami
Free - Refreshments Provided

RSVP - 305.661.3906

dkmarks@sprynet.com

2009 Annual Meeting LWV of Miami-Dade

Tuesday, June 23rd
5:30 PM - 8:30 PM

Coral Reef Yacht Club
Coconut Grove

President's Corner

Last year at our Annual Meeting, our local League approved a rather ambitious local program which included good government, civic education, voter services and quality of life issues. On top of our list, under "good government" we committed to engage on the following activities: monitor local government, promote transparency, ethics and accountability and support citizen input at public hearings.

Since the League's founding, members have been on the front lines to promote government transparency at the local, state and national level. We believe that an open and accountable government is the cornerstone of a healthy, vibrant democracy.

Not only are we fortunate to live in the Sunshine State - our enviable weather has earned us that title - but Florida has been on the cutting edge of public records law and government-in-the-sunshine. One hundred years ago, our state led the way in shaping open government for the rest of the nation.

In celebration of Sunshine Week 2009, a national initiative dedicated to the importance of open government and freedom of information, a series of events have taken place. The League is a signatory to the **OpenTheGovernment.org** Statement of Values which includes holding our government accountable and defending the freedoms upon which our democracy depends.

You can learn more about this important initiative at <http://www.openthegovernment.org/> or through the LWVUS website, <http://www.lwv.org/> under *Sunshine Week*. There you will find a pdf of the LWVUS 2006 publication, *Looking for Sunshine: Protecting Your Right to Know*.

Let's continue to be vigilant in our commitment of good government and not forget to hold accountable those who ignore its principles or violate this precious right.

Annie Betancourt

Our League

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JOIN THE LWV M-D!
SEE PAGE 6 FOR A MEMBER-
SHIP APPLICATION!

The **Miami-Dade Voter** is published every two months by the League of Women Voters of Miami-Dade County.

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO HELP
STOP GERRYMANDERING

Please visit www.fairdistrictsflorida.org or call
Julia Lopes at 305.445.5442

LWV M-D HOLDS INFORMATIVE FORUM ON ENERGY - by Dorrit Marks



On February 26th, 2009, the LWV of Miami-Dade County held a forum regarding our nation's energy needs and supply co-sponsored by the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce. A panel of experts presented various points of view on the issue. After a welcome by local League president Annie Betancourt, Dorrit Marks shared the League's position in favor of reducing global warming and pollution through energy conservation and developing renewable energies. Forum participants enjoyed excellent refreshments courtesy of Florida Power and Light (FPL) and League board member, Elizabeth Pines.

Steve Scroggs, FPL Senior Director of Project Development, described how national and state energy policies influence FPL plans. He detailed the varied fuels that supply FPL's power plants and electricity production: natural gas, oil, coal, nuclear and other alternatives. Renewable energy is not yet a significant source of fuel, but the company is looking at wind power, solar and municipal waste as alternative fuels.

James McDonald, with Gunster Yoakley Attorneys at Law and General Counsel of the International Bio-Fuels Commission, told the group that the 2007 Energy and Security Act mandates the use of 36 billion gallons of bio-fuels in transportation by 2022, and that the International Bio-Fuels Commission promotes a global market for ethanol. Ethanol can be produced from corn or sugar, with ethanol made from sugar having a much higher energy content.

Joe Naroditsky, Executive Director of Faiths United for Sustainable Energy (FUSE) spoke about climate change, rising sea levels threatening Florida's coastline and communities and the need to emphasize energy efficiency, renewable energy sources and to move away from oil and nuclear energy. His group encourages people to conserve energy, buy efficient appliances and retrofit buildings and homes.

Ed del Valle, former Exxon executive and consultant, noted how essential energy is to every economy. He advocated achieving energy security through diversity of supply. Because he believes that the shift to alternatives will take time, we should devote more resources to finding additional oil. We can also slow oil consumption through efficient technology, conservation, and by increasing the use of mass public transportation.

A CLOSE LOOK AT THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS - by Annie Betancourt

Two weeks ago, along with Terry Coble, I attended the League's 2009 Legislative Seminar, which has become sort of a ritual for me. My first visit to Tallahassee was 25 years ago to attend a similar State League sponsored event and since then it has become my annual pilgrimage to the State Capitol to observe first hand Florida's government in action. For those who have not followed the legislative process up close, I highly recommend this – actually, it should be a required course in citizen education and certainly an eye-opener for any League member.

The three-day event was packed with dynamic speakers who shared valuable political tidbits as well as interactive workshops on membership development and networking with other Leagues throughout the state. Visits to legislators were de rigueur because it's an opportunity to sit face-to-face and lobby the League's 2009 legislative priorities such as election law, health care and sales tax reform.

Of particular interest for me is the State's fiscal condition perhaps because during the eight years that I served as a member of the State Legislature I sat on the House Finance & Tax Committee. Sad but true, our state is experiencing revenue decreases the likes of which have never been seen before. We are about to lose several billion dollars in revenues, falling short of meeting many necessary state expenses. These huge deficits will result in substantial cuts in the public education budget and other social services which are essential. You can follow these developments by logging onto www.lwvfla.org or www.myfloridahouse.gov

The League urges our state legislators to take the actions that are necessary to protect Florida's residents from further erosion of services and infrastructure needs, and raise the revenue necessary to safeguard our state's future.

**UPCOMING LWV M-D FORUM - MAY 20th, 6 PM:
IMMIGRATION & FLORIDA'S ECONOMY - by Dorrit Marks**

“The League of Women Voters believes that immigration policies should promote reunification of immediate families; meet the economic, business and employment needs of the United States; and be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises. Provision should also be made for qualified persons to enter the U.S. on student visas. All persons should receive fair treatment under the law.”

The above is a summary statement of the comprehensive immigration position adopted by the LWVUS in culmination of a two-year study and consensus process among League members throughout the United States. The May 20, 2009, 6 pm forum at Miami-Dade College InterAmerican Campus, 627 SW 27th Avenue, will be co-sponsored by the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce and will address the economic impact of immigrants working in Florida as well as humanitarian issues such as Temporary Protected Status for Haitian immigrants. Speakers will include, Emily Eisenhauer, FIU Professor and author of “Immigrants in Florida: Characteristics and Contributions.”

The event is free. Refreshments will be offered. For reservations, call 305.661.3906 or email dkmarks@sprynet.com.

HOT TOPIC LUNCHEON HELD ON RACE RELATIONS - by Terry Coble

On January 28, 2009, the LWV of Miami-Dade County sponsored a Hot Topic luncheon on The Future of Race Relations in Miami-Dade County at the 94th Aero Squadron Restaurant, 1395 NW 57th Avenue, in Miami. The event was moderated by board member and former chair of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, Peter Roulhac, and featured an all-star panel of activists in race relations: Thelma Gibson, Robert Steinback, Pedro Freyre, and Brad Brown.

Ms. Gibson, a former nurse and longtime community activist recounted her early experiences with segregation and being turned away from employment at Jackson Memorial Hospital (JMH) when the administration realized that the nurse to whom they had promised a job by letter was actually African American. She recounted the irony when, many years later, she served as a trustee on the board of JMH.

Robert Steinback, a longtime journalist for the Miami Herald, spoke about the geographic separateness he experienced between communities in Miami-Dade County and the difficulty of bridging the divides between cultures and ethnicities.

Pedro Freyre, Esq., a shareholder with the law firm Akerman Senterfitt and former chair of the Miami-Dade County Community Relations Committee talked about his experience as a Cuban American and the divisions even between Miami-Dade Hispanic communities originating from different countries.

Brad Brown, a marine fisheries scientist, a racial justice activist since the 1960's, and former president of the Miami-Dade NAACP described the harsh choice faced by light skinned African Americans of either remaining in the segregated “Black” world into which they were born, or passing as white and completely severing ties to their families of origin.

The questions from the audience that followed the presentations made clear that the panel had stirred a deep need to bridge the gaps that divide our county by race and ethnicity.

LWV OF MIAMI-DADE LOCAL PROGRAM 2009-10 - by Terry Coble

Dear Member of the LWV of Miami-Dade County:

What activities would you like your Local League to be involved in during the 2009-10 fiscal year? As Program Chair, I am charged with the responsibility of putting together a proposed program which our board will recommend and submit to you, the members, for approval at our Annual Meeting in June. I need your input!

Below is last year's LWV of Miami-Dade County Local Program. Please take a moment to review it and **send me your suggestions by April 30th** for the activities you think should be prioritized for the upcoming year. Please email, fax or mail me your suggestions at terryarose@bellsouth.net, (fax) 305.754.5197, or Terry A. Coble, 601 NE 56th Street, Miami, FL 33137. Many thanks.

**LWV of Miami-Dade County
Local Program for 2008-09
Adopted June 25, 2008**

1. Good Government

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Local Governance | Support citizen input in public hearings held by local government
Monitor local gov't issues, e.g., charter reform, global agreement |
| Ethics & Accountability | Promote transparency, ethics and accountability in local gov't |
| State Legislative Issues | Perform interviews of state legislators for LWV-FL
Participate in LWV-FL Legislative Action network |

2. Voter Services & Civic Education

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Voter Services | Register voters and encourage participation in elections
Conduct outreach to newly naturalized citizens and youth |
| Voter Rights | Support voter rights restoration |
| Election Reform | Monitor implementation of new voting system |
| Candidate Debates | Hold candidate forums upon request |
| Issue Forums | Hold forums on selected issues and hot topics as they arise |

3. Quality of Life

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Growth Management | Educate on Hometown Democracy initiative
Monitor urban development boundary line
Monitor County compliance with Consumptive Use Permit |
| Transportation | Participate in CITT nominating committee |
| Living Wage | Support Living Wage efforts |
| Affordable Housing | Promote affordable housing in livable communities |
| Capital Infrastructure | Monitor \$2.7 billion bond issue |

4. Family Issues

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Health | Promote an accessible quality health care system |
| Education | Monitor state, local & national efforts to support quality education |
| Immigration | Support national League on immigration reform |

Membership: Our Lifblood



**Making
Democracy
Work**

**League of Women Voters
Of Miami-Dade County**

The League of Women Voters of Miami-Dade Wants You!

The League of Women Voters has stood for good government for over eighty-five years – no individual can take your place in helping us make democracy work. Since 1920, the League has worked at local, state and national levels to generate democratic conversation among members, educate the general public and policy makers on pressing issues, and take concerted action to bring about social change.

The League of Women Voters is the most trusted not for profit organization in America. As such, League chapters are often called upon to convene community issue forums as well as host candidate debates.

- The League is nonpartisan; we do not support or oppose candidates.
- The League registers and mobilizes people to vote.
- The League of Women Voters of Miami-Dade County is one of 25 local Leagues and two Member-at-Large Units functioning in 31 of Florida's 67 most populous counties, and one of 850 local Leagues nationwide. There are Leagues in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Hong Kong. In addition to the numerous grass roots efforts that local Leagues are known for, the League of Women Voters of Florida represents League positions in Tallahassee, while the League's National Lobby Corps represents League positions on Capitol Hill.

"No chance, no destiny, no fate can circumvent or hinder or control the firm resolve of a determined soul."
Carrie Chapman Catt, founder, the League of Women Voters.

LWV of Miami-Dade County, Inc.

5794 Bird Road - Box 146
Miami, Florida 33155

Visit us on the Web!

www.lwvmiamidade.org

JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2008 / 2009 TODAY!

All League members receive The National Voter magazine, local and state publications, access to member information on the League website, alerts on breaking action on Capitol Hill and the State Legislature and significant discounts on publications, products, videos and other valuable resources. The Miami-Dade Chapter offers opportunities for everyone - ten hours a week to one hour a year! **Your voice matters!**

_____ \$ 35 STUDENT MEMBERSHIP _____ \$250 CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT SOCIETY
_____ \$ 65 INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP _____ \$500 IRON JAWED ANGELS
_____ \$105 CORNERSTONE MEMBERSHIP

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CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____ E-MAIL _____
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**Checks are payable to the League of Women Voters of Miami-Dade County, Inc.
Membership dues are not deductible as a personal or business expense.
Mail to: 5794 Bird Rd. #146 Miami, FL 33155 (305) 666-0186.**