



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

Miami-Dade Voter

Volume 1, Issue 2
December - January 2008

Making Democracy Work

President's Corner

As a young girl growing up, I was always intrigued by nature and the effect it has on our everyday life. I developed an interest in the world around me; natural science and geography were no doubt my favorite subjects in school and Arbor Day became a huge celebration, the perfect excuse for me to get my hands in the dirt and plant trees. What a great way to thank Mother Nature, I thought, since she has been so kind to give us the elements. Even the four seasons were clearly distinct: summer was hot, winter was cold, flowers bloomed in the spring, and leaves fell in autumn. What appeared inconceivable to me then was that these natural resources were finite. Well, not anymore.

Today the case is somewhat different. We find erratic weather patterns all over the globe, as evidenced by severe droughts in Florida, Lake Okeechobee at a record low with archaeological artifacts exposed, wild fires in California, melting glaciers in Chile and raising oceans. These climatic changes, by any number of natural or man-made causes, dramatically affect the Earth's resources as well.

What's going on here, you might ask? The study of global warming is not a new science. It was first recognized as a potential threat in the early 1800's, but the seriousness of this subject intensified 30 years ago. The complex interaction of these elements was brilliantly detailed in the award winning documentary "An Inconvenient Truth" by Vice President Al Gore, who has been widely recognized for his work in bringing awareness to global warming and its devastating effect.

Fortunately, the League continues to be on the cutting-edge of climate change and has an action plan in place to educate its members on the facts concerning this "hot topic" (no pun intended), and how to influence statewide policies to mitigate impacts from climate change. I urge our members to read the National Voter (Oct. 2007 issue) "The Heat is On," that describes in greater detail the U.S. program to reduce the emissions of the atmospheric pollutants and the concept of "cap-and-trade." In addition, our State League has a Climate Change Committee which is working very hard to bring awareness and shape public policy. I urge you to learn about this topic and get involved with your family, friends and with your local community. Visit the Alliance for Climate Protection at <http://www.climateprotect.org/> for more information.

Annie Betancourt, President

"Do not follow where the path may lead. Go, instead, where there is no path and leave a trail." Ralph Waldo Emerson

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR !

- ♦ **Board of Directors Meetings**
December 17th & January 21st
6:00 pm
United Way of Miami-Dade
3250 SW 3rd Avenue
- ♦ **HOT TOPIC LUNCHEON:**
January Ballot Questions
Co-Hosted by the American Society of Public Administrators (ASPA) Miami-Dade Chapter
January 15, 2008 12:00 PM
Miami City Club
200 South Biscayne Blvd. #5500
\$15 per person
RSVP: Annie Betancourt at
(305) 446-0880
- ♦ **Help the LWVUS Decide on Its 2008-10 Program**
January 21, 2008
7:00 pm
United Way of Miami-Dade
3250 SW 3rd Avenue



**Making
Democracy
Work**

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

Mailing Address:
5783 Bird Road - Box 146
Miami, Florida 33155
Phone: (305) 666-0186



Membership: Our Lifeblood

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.

JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2007 / 2008 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 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 | | |

NAME/NAMES _____ STREET _____
 CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____ E-MAIL _____
 PHONE (DAYTIME) _____ PHONE (EVENING) _____

Checks are payable to the League of Women Voters of Dade County, Inc.
 Membership dues and contributions are not deductible as a personal or business expense.
 Mail to: 5783 Bird Rd. #146 Miami, FL 33155 (305) 666-0186.

Know Your 2007-2008 Board of Directors

Officers / Directors

Annie Betancourt	President	Maribel Balbin	Angela Gittens
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Dannie McMillon	Historian/Parlamentarian		
Deborah Curtin	Editor, <i>The Voter</i>		

If you are interested in joining the League of Women Voters of Miami-Dade and would like more information on membership, please contact Annie Betancourt at (305) 666-0186.
 THANKS!

Hometown Democracy by Fran Bohnsak

The League of Women Voters of Dade County, Inc. kicked off its inaugural "Hot Topics" discussion on October 30th at a luncheon in partnership with folks from the Downtown Bay Forum. The subject dealt with how future issues of growth should be decided in Florida: as the status quo dictates today with all decisions made by elected officials, or as communities self-determine by voting growth initiatives up or down on the ballot. Billed as "The Battle of the Constitutional Amendments," the program featured guests Lesley Blackner, attorney and founder of Florida Hometown Democracy, and Mike Caputo, Executive Director of Floridians for Smarter Growth.

The Florida Hometown Democracy ballot initiative would require public referendums on any proposed changes to local Comprehensive Plans, a clear effort to curb uncontrolled growth. What Florida is experiencing now,

asserted Ms. Blackner, is "government of the developer, by the developer and for the developer." Ms. Blackner described herself as increasingly frustrated at how elected leaders ignore residents' wishes, coming to see Florida land use regulations as a corrupt system. Inspired by California counties that require voter approval of major land-use changes, the Blackner initiative, if successful, would apply the same approval requirement statewide. To date, FHD has about two thirds of the 611,000 signatures needed to place it on the ballot with a deadline for the end of 2007.

Floridians for Smarter Growth, a coalition of developers, builders, and real estate professionals backed by the Florida Chamber and Associated Industries of Florida is a direct counterpunch to FHD. Mike Caputo, Executive Director of Floridians for Smarter Growth, explained the tenets of the "Smarter Growth" initiative, which are

basically three: 1) all referendum proposals will be required to have signatures of 10 percent of the local electorate before a vote can take place; 2) voter petitions will only be allowed if signed at the Supervisor of Elections office; and 3) the "Smarter Growth" measure will supersede all other growth control amendments on the ballot. The Smarter Growth coalition needs to collect 65,000 signatures by February 1st before it can be reviewed for adequacy by the Supreme Court.

Will they make it to the ballot? No one is quite sure. What we are sure of is that these initiatives are extremely important to Florida residents, and should be followed closely. If they do make the ballot, the League of Women Voters is likely to take a position. Stay tuned.

Optical Scan Technology By Lester Sola, Miami-Dade Supervisor of Elections

The passage of recent legislation has mandated that all elections in the State of Florida are to be conducted using paper-based voting equipment, which will require Miami-Dade County to undertake a complete equipment conversion.

This new equipment, referred to as "optical scan technology," must be utilized as of July 1, 2008. So, when you hit the polls for the August 26, 2008, Primary Election, you will encounter a brand new system, which will now require you to vote on a paper ballot by bubbling in a circle next to your selection and feeding it into an optical scan reader. This system captures your vote electronically; however the paper ballot is available for review during audits and in the case of a recount. Miami-Dade County is excited about conducting elections with this new equipment and we assure you that our poll

workers will be well trained and ready to assist all voters.

Optical scan technology will be used at all precincts on Election Day and at all Early Voting locations. Early Voting, for those of you who don't know, starts two weeks before every countywide election in 20 convenient locations throughout Miami-Dade County with varying hours of operation to accommodate all schedules. If you are unable to hit the polls during Early Voting or on Election Day, please keep in mind that you can vote by absentee ballot. In order to receive an absentee ballot, you must submit a request in writing to the Elections Department. The absentee ballot request form can be found on our website or can be requested by phone.

As with any election, next to voting, becoming

a poll worker is a great way to take a part in the democratic process. There are several poll worker positions available with salaries ranging from \$146 - \$257 per election. A poll worker application form can be found on our website or can be requested by phone. Upon submission of the application, a detailed letter will be sent to you explaining the next steps on becoming a member of our team.

I strongly urge you to have your voice heard by voting in every election you are eligible for; and in addition, I hope you will join the Elections team by becoming a poll worker. Please check our website at www.miamidade.gov/elections or call 305-499-VOTE (8683) for additional information.

LWV of Florida Opposes Property Tax Amendments by Terry Coble

On September 24, 2007, the Leon County Circuit Court found that the ballot language for the property tax amendments passed by the Florida Legislature in June was misleading, and ordered that it should not be placed on the January 29, 2008 ballot. Rather than rewrite the ballot language, the Florida legislature held an additional Special Legislative Session in October 2007 to craft new property tax provisions (SJR 2-D).

The new provisions will be on the January 29, 2008 ballot. They include: An additional \$25,000 homestead exemption for the assessed

value of homestead property valued at more than \$50,000; allowing homestead owners to transfer up to \$500,000 in Save Our Homes benefits to a new homestead within two years of giving up their previous homestead; a new \$25,000 exemption for business tangible personal property; and a 10% cap on assessment increases for non-homestead real property.

The League of Women Voters of Florida opposes SJR 2-D because it would add limitations and exemptions to tax sources to the Florida Constitution; it would extend and increase tax limitations on homesteads without regard to the

ability of homeowners to pay; it would extend the present Save Our Homes tax limitation by allowing homeowners to transfer savings to new homesteads; and it would worsen Florida's current infrastructure deficit and the decline in the level of services and in our quality of life.

For more information on SJR 2-D and the LWVF position, please see the December 2007 President's Mailing, which can be accessed at www.lwvfla.org.

HOT TOPIC LUNCHEON: JANUARY BALLOT QUESTIONS

BE AN INFORMED VOTER!

JOIN US AS WE DISCUSS THE UPCOMING JANUARY 2008 BALLOT QUESTIONS

Co-Hosted by The League of Women Voters of Miami-Dade &
American Society of Public Administrators, Miami-Dade Chapter (ASPA)

WHEN: TUESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2008 at 12:00 PM

WHERE: THE MIAMI CITY CLUB

220 S. Biscayne Boulevard, 55th Floor

COST: \$15.00 per person

R.S.V.P. Annie Betancourt at (305) 446-0880

League of Women Voters of Miami-Dade

5783 Bird Rd. #146

Miami, FL 33155

www.lwvmiami-dade.org

Postmaster: **DATED MATERIAL**

SLOT MACHINES ON JANUARY BALLOT: YOUR VOTE COUNTS

SLOT MACHINES LIMITED TO EXISTING HORSE AND DOG TRACKS AND JAI ALAI FRONTONS

SHALL SLOT MACHINE GAMING BE PERMISSIBLE AT EXISTING HORSE AND DOG TRACKS AND JAI ALAI FRONTONS IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY AS AUTHORIZED BY, AND SUBJECT TO THE RESTRICTIONS OF, STATE LAW AND SUBJECT TO STATE TAXES ON ALL SLOT MACHINE REVENUES THAT MUST BE USED TO SUPPLEMENT PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING STATEWIDE?

YES

NO

HELP US REACH YOU VIA E-MAIL

If you are receiving this issue of *The Voter* by U.S. mail, please provide us with your e-mail address if you have one! Help us lower our mailing expenses by sending you *The Voter* and other League of Women Voters of Miami-Dade County timely information and notices via e-mail rather than "snail mail."

Please send an e-mail to Debbie Curtin, Editor, *The Voter*, at curtind@bellsouth.net and we will add you to our e-mail distribution list.

Thank you!