



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

Miami-Dade Voter

Volume 1, Issue 5
September - October 2008
Making Democracy Work

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

PRESENTS:

HOT TOPIC LUNCHEON

**Make Smart Decisions
On the
2008 Ballot Questions***

Be Informed!

Wednesday, October 15th

12:00–1:30

94th Aero Squadron Restaurant

1395 NW 57th Avenue

(State Road 836 at Red Road)

Buffet Lunch - \$25

Reserve your place now! R.S.V.P. 305.446.0880

* The November ballot includes proposed amendments on working waterfronts, funding of community colleges, property tax exemptions and assessments, property rights of aliens and domestic partnerships.

IN THIS ISSUE

Calendar of Events	1
President's Corner	2
Our League	2
LWVF Positions on 2008 Ballot Questions	3
Membership: Our Lifeblood	4

**GO GREEN! HELP US
REACH YOU VIA E-
MAIL**

If you are receiving this issue of *The Voter* by U.S. mail, please send us your e-mail address if you have one! Help us lower our mailing expenses by sending you *The Voter* and other timely information and notices via e-mail! Please send an e-mail to Terry Coble, Associate Editor, *Miami-Dade Voter*, at terryarose@bellsouth.net so we can add you to our e-mail distribution list.

Thank you!

**MARK YOUR
CALENDAR!**

**LWV of Miami-Dade County
Board Meeting**
Monday, September 15, 2008
6:30 pm , United Way, 3250 SW
3rd Avenue, Miami.

**Hot Topic Luncheon:
2008 Ballot Questions**
Wednesday, Oct. 15, 12:30 pm
94th Aero Squadron Restaurant
1395 NW 57th Avenue
(Dolphin Xpwy & Red Road)
Miami - Cost \$25
RSVP - 305.446.0880

President's Corner

Participate (v) to take part, join or share with others
Democracy (n) government by the people, exercised either directly or through elected representatives.

Quite often we hear people complain about our elected officials, at the state capital, county hall or school district, who were elected to represent us. Do they or don't they?

The low voter turnout of the August 26 primaries once again exemplifies the apathy among our electorate; it was simply shameful. Political observers suggested that there was really no excitement or issue on the ballot to generate enough enthusiasm to motivate voters to come out. Well, after both major political parties had their televised national conventions (which seemed an extension of the games in Beijing), the presidential campaign is well underway. No matter which party wins the White House, history will be made. There is no room for apathy in this election cycle, and voters must seize the opportunity to get energized to fully participate.

The tenet of the League Women Voters is to encourage informed and active participation in government, and increase understanding of major public policy issues. Staying informed means more than understanding the issues that affect us directly or indirectly, it also means taking action. Take property taxes for instance, early this year voters went to the polls to amend the Florida constitution and later the Florida Taxation and Budget Reform Commission met to propose additional changes. Well, we found out that the Supreme Court declared Amendments 5, 7 and 9 unconstitutional so they will not appear on the November ballot. Definitely there are other vital issues, affordable health coverage, immigration reform and many others. It is important for us as League members to understand the implications and how these affect us, to take a stand and speak up when necessary. Writing letters to elected officials or making phone calls is another way of participating and letting our voices be heard. Friends and family often ask what I think of a particular issue and how it might affect them. And the reason they ask is because I try to be informed, and have become a good resource person to give a straight answer, or point them in the right direction. This is how Leaguers influence others, by being informed and actively participating in our democracy.

Along with the Fall Season come college football, new television programming, and plenty of political advertising, some of which might be distorted. I strongly urge you to find out the facts and be well informed before you vote, because the most precious gift we have is the freedom to go to the polls. We must participate and not take our democracy for granted.

Annie Betancourt

Our League

LWV of Miami-Dade County Board of Directors - 2008-09

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**JOIN US! SEE PAGE 4 FOR A
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION!**

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

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LWVF POSITIONS REGARDING 2008 BALLOT QUESTIONS

Editor's Note: Three proposed amendments to the Florida Constitution were removed from the ballot by the Florida Supreme Court on September 3, 2008: AMENDMENT #5, the so-called "Tax Swap," and AMENDMENTS #7 and #9, both of which attempted to authorize the expenditure of public funds for school vouchers. The League opposed all three of these amendments. League positions regarding the six proposed amendments that remain on the ballot are set forth below.

AMENDMENT #1: RELATING TO PROPERTY RIGHTS OF INELIGIBLE ALIENS

This amendment removes a provision in the Florida Constitution that allows laws prohibiting "aliens ineligible for citizenship" from owning, inheriting, disposing of and possessing real property.

The League of Women Voters of Florida **supports** this amendment. Florida and New Mexico are the only two states that still maintain these racially biased provisions in their constitutions. Both have amendments on the November ballot to remove these provisions.

AMENDMENT #2: FLORIDA MARRIAGE PROTECTION AMENDMENT

This amendment makes invalid any legal union that is treated as equivalent to marriage other than heterosexual marriage.

The League of Women Voters of Florida **opposes** this amendment. The League believes that no person or group should suffer legal, economic or administrative discrimination and that there should be equal rights and equal opportunity for all.

AMENDMENT #3: CHANGES AND IMPROVEMENTS AFFECTING THE ASSESSED VALUE OF RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY

This amendment would allow the state legislature to grant an exemption to residential real property taxes in the amount of the cost of increasing the property's wind resistance and of installing renewable energy devices.

The League of Women Voters of Florida **supports** this amendment. The League supports governmental action to encourage the use of renewable resources and energy conservation through financial incentives.

AMENDMENT #4: PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION OF PERPETUALLY PRESERVED LAND: CLASSIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF LAND USED FOR CONSERVATION

This amendment would require the state legislature to exempt real property dedicated in perpetuity for conservation purposes from *ad valorem* taxation, and would require such property to be assessed on the basis of its "character and use" instead of its "highest and best use."

The League of Women Voters of Florida **opposes** this amendment. The League supports management of land as a finite resource and land-use planning that reflects conservation and wise management of resources. This amendment does not link conservation to land-use planning and would further limit the ability of local governments to obtain revenue from real estate (their primary source of revenue).

AMENDMENT #6: ASSESSMENT OF WORKING WATERFRONT PROPERTY BASED UPON CURRENT USE

This amendment is known as the "Working Waterfronts" amendment. It would require that real property tax assessments of certain waterfront properties be based on current use rather than "highest and best use."

The League of Women Voters of Florida **supports** this amendment. The League believes that government should promote the conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest. This amendment promotes the continued public access to Florida waterfronts, and helps to stem the loss of waterfront-dependent businesses and jobs.

AMENDMENT #8: LOCAL OPTION COMMUNITY COLLEGE FUNDING

Amendment 8 would authorize counties with community colleges to levy a local option sales tax to supplement the college's funding if authorized by county voters.

The League of Women Voters has taken **no position** on this amendment.

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.

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www.lwvmiamidade.org

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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

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

Checks are payable to the League of Women Voters of Miami-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.