



The VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF THE PENSACOLA BAY AREA

Volume 58, Issue 5
January 2009

Off Shore Drilling – Good for Florida?

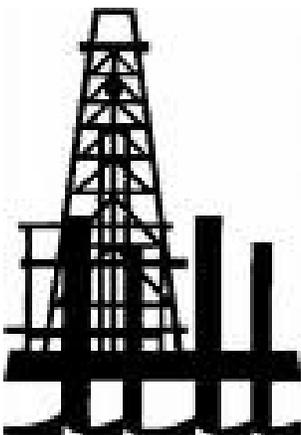
General Meeting
Saturday, January 17, 2008
Coffee at 9:00 am, 9:30 am program
First Presbyterian Church, 33 E. Gregory St.

Speaker: Dr. Enid Sisskin

Dr. Enid Sisskin has a PhD from Columbia University, post doctoral work at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, has worked at Everglades National Park and is currently at the University of West Florida and WUWF Public Media. She is a well-known activist who serves on the boards of Gulf Coast Environmental Defense and Southern Alliance for Clean Energy. Enid is a member of the Natural Resources committee of the local League and the LWV Florida Climate Change Committee.

Statement of Position on Natural Resources, as Affirmed by the 1986 Convention, Based on Positions Reached from 1958 Through 1986:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that natural resources should be managed as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems. Resources should be conserved and protected to assure their future availability. Pollution of these resources should be controlled in order to preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of ecosystems and to protect public health.



History

Since the mid-1980's, the League of Women Voters of Florida, along with the Pensacola Bay Area LWV, has strongly opposed oil drilling in the Gulf of Mexico. The League has objected to selling of leases for drilling for oil and gas off the coast. These objections are based on League positions that have been established over the years.

Concern of negative impacts on the environment, our economy and the quality of life

Offshore drilling is opposed because of the threat it presents to our greatest natural and economic resource, our coastal environment-the beaches, fisheries and wildlife, which bring millions of tourists to our state each year and contribute so heavily to Florida's economy.

"Normal" offshore drilling operations will dump thousands of pounds of drilling muds and their accompanying toxic mixes into surrounding waters. The routine activities of support vessels will also adversely affect both land and marine natural resources.

Cumulative effects to be considered

Over time, there will be a build-up of toxins that will adversely affect the sea life of the Gulf, thus exposing marine and coastal resources to increased risk.

Negative economic impacts

The Gulf of Mexico is the source of income for a major fishing industry, both recreational and commercial, and this industry would be seriously threatened if drilling is allowed.

Impacts on ecosystem

The Gulf is an ecosystem with interdependent coastal, near-shore and deepwater zones, all of which support marine resources. Wells off the Panhandle have to be seen in this context also. Federal law recognizes the interdependence by including Florida in federal resource-management decisions. Similarly, Florida law and policies require a holistic approach to managing our natural resources.

LWVF presented statements in opposition to drilling proposals in hearings of the Department of Interior Minerals Management Service in 1999 and 2001. (Vivian Faircloth has copies of these statements and will make them available at your request.)

The League of Women Voters of Florida supports governmental action that results in sustainability: meeting the needs of the present without endangering the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Environment, society and the economy must be integrated and balanced to achieve a sustainable Florida.

President's Message

Happy New Year !

I hope you had a safe and happy holiday season. The League is gearing up for another busy spring.

We're kicking off the year with our monthly meeting on offshore oil drilling. UWF environmental expert and League member Enid Sisskin has graciously offered to present this timely subject. The meeting will be held at 9:30, January 17, at First Presbyterian Church, 33 East Gregory Street. Hope to see you there!

LWVUS Study

Delegates at LWVUS Convention 2008 voted to study the advisability of using the National Popular Vote (NPV) Compact among the states as a method for electing the U.S. President. The NPV Compact provides a way to choose the President of the United States by popular vote, without amending the Constitution. If approved, it could significantly alter citizens' role in electing the Chief Executive. The problem of an electorally-elected President, who did not gain the popular vote, would no longer be a possibility.

Later in the spring, our local League will participate in the study and consensus on this National Popular Vote Compact Study; consensus questions will be provided by LWVUS. This should be an interesting study and I hope all members will consider participating. You can now find study materials and consensus questions on the LWVUS website, www.lwv.org.

LWVF

On the state League front, in coming weeks we'll meet to go over recommendations to the State League Program. Ongoing issues range from the environment, to electoral processes, to education. Members who have suggestions for topics they'd like to see the state study are encouraged to contact me at 449-1746 or any Board member.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES

We're still seeking volunteers to interview state legislators about their positions on various League issues. If you're interested in going with another Leaguer to meet with one of our elected officials, please contact me at 449-1746 to work out the details. Interview information is due at the State League by February 27.

This year's legislative session starts March 3, and now is the time to be thinking about attending this year's League Legislative Seminar in Tallahassee. The 49th annual seminar runs March 22 to 24, and early bird registration begins on March 8.

In the meantime, volunteers interested in monitoring the City of Pensacola's Charter Review Committee

meetings would be welcome. City residents are especially encouraged to participate.

Deborah, 449-1746

Wanted: Interviewers!

If you are interested in meeting with local legislators and informing them of the League's legislative priorities, as well as obtaining information that will assist the League of Women Voters of Florida's lobbying efforts, then sign up now for our local Legislative Interviews! Interview Teams are needed to interview the legislators.

Please contact Deborah Nelson, 449-1746, if you are interested and we will provide you with a Legislative Interview Packet, a partner and detailed instructions.

Restoration of Civil Rights of Felons

The League extends sincere thanks to Susan Watson, Executive Director of the local ACLU, for her very timely and informative presentation at the November general League meeting. Many of the attendees were from the greater Pensacola community, who obviously came to get information about how to proceed in getting rights restored. Many timely questions were answered following Susan's talk. Additionally, Susan spent time dealing with individuals who had specific questions. Generally, it appeared that this program provided information to a segment of the population who, in some cases, seem to be reluctant to interact with the establishment.

For those of you who are already involved, or are interested in working with felons to get their rights restored, you can find a wealth of information at the FRRC web site: <http://www.restorerights.org/>

At the bottom of the FRRC home page, you will find restoration information in a layout similar to the information below.

TO FIND OUT IF A FELON'S RIGHTS HAVE BEEN RESTORED:



THIS LINK WILL BE PROVIDED TO THE FLORIDA PAROLE COMMISSION'S DATABASE SEARCH TOOL FOR AS LONG AS THE DATABASE IS AVAILABLE THROUGH THEIR WEBSITE.

City of Pensacola Charter Review Commission

The Charter Review Commission is to be commended on their good job with citizen participation. The next CRC meeting is scheduled for January 21st at 4 P.M. Hagler/Mason Conference Room, 2nd floor City Hall. A list of scheduled meetings is available on the City of Pensacola's website, which can easily be found through Google.

The public is encouraged, especially City residents, to attend the CRC meetings and give input about the particulars of the proposed Charter. The Commission is deliberating on the specifics now and drafting of the charter has begun; NOW is the time for significant input from citizens.

The League thanks Bette Boddy for sponsoring this issue of The Voter.

Calendar

January

- 6 Tuesday, 5:30 pm **Board Meeting** at Tryon Branch Library, 9th Ave. Members welcome.
- 15 Thursday, 4:00 pm, **Education Committee** meeting at Azalea Trace, third floor meeting room. Contact Barbara Goggins for information 478-2953.

Welcome New Members!

Kelly Merrit Richards

Haley M. Richards
1110 N. Reus Street 32501
H-438-4214 C-450-6626
krichards2@cox.net

Mable J. Knight
2046 East Roberts Rd.
32534
H - 968-5892

Address changes:

Frances (Fran) H. Jones
3318 Overlook Drive
St. Petersburg, FL, 33703

Janet deLorge
2928 Sundance
Cantonment, 32533
H - 607-9170

General Meeting

at First Presbyterian Church, 33 E. Gregory St.

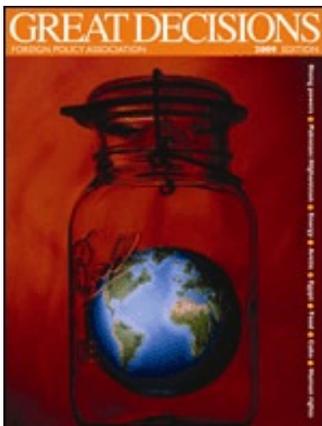
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Great Decisions Discussion



The 2009 booklets for the Great Decisions discussion group have arrived. Published annually by the Foreign Policy Association, the Great Decisions briefing book features impartial, thought-provoking analyses on eight issues of concern to U.S. policymakers today. The 2009 edition features articles on U.S. and rising powers, Afghanistan/Pakistan, Energy & the global economy, The Arctic, Egypt in the 21st Century, Global

food supply, Cuba after Castro, and Universal human rights.

In February, join Dr. Don Freeman at Azalea Trace to explore these questions: Since Fidel Castro handed over the presidency of Cuba to his brother Raúl in early 2008, signs of greater economic openness have led to much speculation. Will Raúl seek to reopen ties with the U.S.? What role will Cuba's American exiles play in shaping a post-Castro Cuba?

- 19 Monday, 10 am **International Relations Committee**. Azalea Trace, **Great Decisions**, Leader of a discussion of current events is *Gene Feicht*. Contact Gene Feicht at 479-3352
- 20 Tuesday, 5:30 pm **Natural Resources/Growth Management Committee** meeting at Caldwell and Associates Architects Inc., Interior Designers's Conference Room, 116 North Tarragona Street, for a continuation of discussion of local solid waste positions. Contact Mary Gutierrez, gutmry@cox.net

February

- 3 Tuesday, 5:30 pm **Board Meeting** at Tryon Branch Library, 9th Ave.
- 16 Monday, 10 am **International Relations Committee**, Azalea Trace, **Great Decisions**, Leader for discussion of Cuba after Castro is *Dr. Don Freeman*.
- 21 Saturday, 9:00 am coffee, 9:30 am program TBA, **General Meeting** open to the public, IHMC,

Contributions in memory of Dr. Charles (Chuck) Thomas, husband of Dr. Rosemary Hays-Thomas have been received from Gloria Dawson, Janet deLorge and Vivian Faircloth.

CURBING GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS — TWO APPROACHES

By Eleanor Revelle (LWVIL and LWVUS Climate Change Task Force Member)

Facing the growing evidence that burning fossil fuels is contributing significantly to global climate change, policymakers are evaluating strategies for reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. They have two general approaches to consider.

Cap-and-Trade

With a cap-and-trade system, policymakers set a limit on the quantity of a pollutant (e.g., CO₂) that can be emitted in a given period. The total emissions allowed under this cap are divided into permits representing the right to emit a given amount (e.g., one ton of CO₂). The permits are then allocated to the sources covered by the program (e.g., power plants). At the end of the compliance period, each source must report all emissions and surrender an equivalent number of permits.

Since the number of permits is limited, they have financial value. Companies able to reduce their emissions at low cost can sell the permits they don't need to companies for whom the cost of reducing emissions is high. Each company has the flexibility to choose how to meet its emissions target, but market incentives encourage them to develop new, cleaner technologies. Over time, the cap is lowered to achieve more aggressive emissions-reduction goals.

Carbon Tax

A carbon tax is imposed on fossil fuel suppliers at a rate that reflects the amount of carbon that will be emitted when the fuel is combusted. The tax is included in the price of the coal, oil, and natural gas supplied to wholesale users and ultimately is passed on to consumers in the price of electricity, gasoline and other energy-intensive products. By raising the price of carbon-based energy, the tax creates incentives to reduce energy use, stimulates demand for more energy-efficient products, and promotes a shift to cleaner fuels and renewable energy.

Emissions Certainty

The strength of the **cap-and-trade** approach is that it sets firm limits on emissions. The cap is set at a level designed to achieve a desired environmental outcome (e.g., a reduction of CO₂ emissions to 80 percent of 1990 levels by 2050).

A **carbon tax** allows the quantity of emissions to fluctuate as the demand for energy rises or falls. Allowing emissions to vary from year to year gives firms the flexibility to abate less and pay more in taxes when abatement costs are unusually high (and vice-versa when abatement costs are low). In order to achieve climatic goals, the tax rate can be adjusted over time to attain greater emissions reductions.

Price Predictability

The advantage of a **carbon tax** is that it fixes the price of carbon emissions. It creates a permanent incentive to reduce emissions, thereby encouraging investment in alternative fuels and energy-efficient technologies that have high up-front costs.

Under a **cap-and-trade** system, the price of emissions permits may vary considerably from year to year. An especially cold winter, for example, could increase the demand for energy and cause a spike in the price of permits. This volatility could weaken incentives to invest in cleaner technologies.

For illustrative purposes, this paper focuses on a cap-and-trade system for carbon dioxide (CO₂). To address volatility, most cap-and-trade proposals include cost-control mechanisms.

- Safety valve—establishes a ceiling on the price of permits. If the price reaches this level, the government can sell additional permits at this price to the capped entities.
- Circuit breaker—freezes a gradually declining emissions cap if the permit price rises above a predetermined level.
- Banking—allows companies to save unused allowances for future years.

- **Borrowing**—allows companies to borrow permits from future years and pay them back, with interest, later.
- **Offsets**—allow companies to cover some of their emissions by purchasing credits created by carbon mitigation projects (e.g., tree planting) from sources outside the cap-and-trade system.

These mechanisms (with the exception of banking) could delay emissions reductions and undermine the integrity of the cap.

Environmental Effectiveness

The impact of a **cap-and-trade** system depends on a number of factors. How stringent is the emissions target? How will baseline emissions be measured and a corresponding and appropriate number of emissions permits be determined and distributed? Will the cap be applied economy-wide or only to certain sectors? Does it include cost-control measures that are likely to break the emissions cap?

The impact of a **carbon tax** depends in large part on whether the tax rate is set high enough to create real market incentives to develop and adopt climate-friendly technologies. Although a carbon tax does not establish a firm limit on emissions, it applies economy-wide and provides a constant incentive for companies to make carbon-saving investments. The tax rate can be increased over time to provide stronger incentives to reduce emissions.

Equity

Under many **cap-and-trade** proposals, a substantial portion of the emissions permits are to be distributed free to the capped entities. Research indicates that only a modest portion of the permit value is needed to offset the costs of the cap, but the full amount is passed along in increased prices to consumers. This would disproportionately affect lower-income households because they tend to spend a larger fraction of their income than do higher-income households and because energy products make up a bigger share of their spending.

A **carbon tax** directly raises substantial revenues.

These could be used in part to fund "progressive" tax-shifting policies that would reduce the burden of higher energy costs on lower-income groups.

Simplicity and Transparency

A **cap-and-trade** system requires new institutions (e.g., a system to allocate permits, markets where firms can buy and sell permits, a means of monitoring emissions and trades). Auctioning permits rather than distributing them free could help promote simplicity and transparency.

A **carbon tax** can be levied and collected via existing institutions with experience in enforcing compliance. It is simpler and less expensive to administer and enforce than a cap-and-trade system. Its underlying premise—the price of energy should include the environmental costs associated with its production—is transparent and readily understood.

Produced by the LWVUS Climate Change Task Force

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The Voter Volume 58 Issue 5

Established in 1949, the Pensacola Bay Area League of Women Voters is a non-partisan political organization that encourages citizens to play an informed and active role in government. At the local, state and national levels, the League works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. Any person of voting age, male or female, may become a member.

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Published by the League of Women Voters of Pensacola Bay Area approximately 9 times a year. Phone: 850-458-5806

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P.O. Box 2023 Pensacola, FL 32513

Here We Stand

The LWVF will support tax legislation that:

- Focuses more on ability to pay
- Does not jeopardize local services
- Addresses Florida's infrastructure deficit
- Enhances Floridian's quality of life
- Removes unfair tax exemptions that hinder the State's or local governments' ability to serve Floridians.

The LWVF will oppose tax legislation that:

- Does not provide true, fair tax relief to Floridians
- Further burdens the State's or local governments' ability to serve Floridians

LWVF Program Planning

Every two years, state and local Leagues participate in the LWVF Program Planning process by making recommendations concerning program issues. The Program Planning process is an important League tool for identifying issues for study and maintaining our grassroots tradition. Join other League members on February 21st to participate locally. Waiting until the Convention to gather support for issues often results in limited discussion and incomplete information.

Furthermore, raising issues at Convention instead of through the Program Planning process dilutes the voices of Leagues that do participate in the process. We encourage all Leagues to participate in the formal Program Planning process early! «

The League of Women Voters is where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement.



League of Women Voters ®
of the Pensacola Bay Area
P.O. Box 2023
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