



Felon Rights Restoration

Florida is one of only three states that strips all individuals with past felony convictions of their civil rights, including their fundamental right to vote, even after completion of their sentences. Among the civil rights lost is not only the right to vote, but also the right to serve on a jury and to hold public office. Restoration of civil rights is also necessary to obtain certain occupational licenses.

Individuals with a past conviction must have their civil rights restored through the executive clemency process. Only the Governor and two members of the cabinet, sitting as the Board of Executive Clemency, have the power granted by the Florida Constitution to restore civil rights. The entire process is complicated and takes years. Even then, since the decision rests in the sole discretion of these politicians, there is no guarantee that an individual's rights will be restored. Close to one million Floridians are affected by this civil rights ban.

A broad, non-partisan coalition was organized in March 2003 to launch a campaign to restore civil



rights for all Floridians with past felony convictions, upon completion of their sentences. The Florida Rights Restoration Coalition ("FRRRC") now comprises over 57 local, state and national member organizations. The FRRRC is also dedicated to achieving permanent constitutional reform to end the disenfranchisement of close to one million Floridians. The LWV Florida liaison to the FRRRC is State Board member Nancy Mitchell. Our speaker Susan Watson, Northwest Regional Director of the ACLU of Florida, will discuss the requirements, process, problems and the ACLU involvement in the mission of the coalition.

In April 2007, the Governor and Cabinet revised the Rules of Executive Clemency to automatically restore the civil rights of more felons who have completed their sentences. In the first eight months following the change, almost twice as many felons have had their rights restored as in any previous year. Many offenses, for which restoration of rights was

either excluded or delayed for a period of years, are now eligible for restoration after verification that all qualifying conditions have been met. Restoration of rights allows ex-felons to seek employment in many occupations previously closed to them; however, poorly defined restrictions, such as a requirement that the person not have committed an act or crime of moral turpitude, can close many occupations to persons whose act or offense may have nothing to do with the requirements of the desired occupation. The Governor's Ex-Offender Task Force Report of January 18, 2007, found that of an estimated 7.6 million jobs, **at least 39.2% appear to be subject to criminal background checks or restrictions based on criminal history.**

The Florida Rights Restoration Coalition launched an online search tool that enables people with past felony convictions in Florida to search state records and find out if their civil rights, including their voting rights, have been restored. The online search tool is available on both websites: www.restorerights.org and www.aclufl.org. [see LWV Pensacola Bay Area Summer Voter, page 5.]

Sources:

Florida Senate Interim Report 2008-114: Rules for Restoration of Civil Rights for Felons and Impacts on Obtaining Occupational Licenses and Other Opportunities, December 2007.

Governor's Ex-Offenders Task Force Final Report to the Governor, November 2006.

Governor's Ex-Offenders Task Force Analysis of State's Responses to Executive Order 06-89, January 18, 2007.

General Meeting
Saturday, November 15, 2008
Coffee at 9:00 am, 9:30 am program
First Presbyterian Church, 33 E. Gregory St.

Felon Rights Restoration

**Speaker: Susan Watson, Northwest
Regional Director ACLU of Florida**

President's Message

Elections will be over by the time this newsletter reaches you, but please take time to congratulate all our League members who volunteered to help educate voters this year.

In the past few weeks, members have distributed thousands of special Florida Voter issues, containing amendment pro/cons and other information, throughout the area.

As part of our education program, the Voter Services



Committee and volunteers met with a variety of civic groups to present nonpartisan amendment information.

We topped that off with two program meetings last month to allow voters a chance to participate and ask questions before going to polls. Both meetings were well

attended, and guests brought a lot of smart, insightful questions to the forum.

Just recently, we cosponsored the final political rally on WSRE TV. Rally officials contacted the League to thank members and volunteers for a great job in formulating questions and the tireless efforts of those who coordinated the event itself.

On the local front, Sharon Barnett, the League's Charter Committee Chair, has completed a comprehensive "White Paper" that addresses the need for a new Pensacola City Charter.

Thanks to Sharon's efforts, the League has played a key role in inspiring the City to consider revamping the Charter. Last year, the City's Charter Committee asked Sharon to research and write the paper to assist in that process.

Kudos to Sharon for all her hard work keeping up with Committee processes and compiling detailed and complex information into City governance recommendations that emphasize, in the Paper's words, "adequate policymaking and action, checks and balances, broad-based participation by the citizens, clear enforceable provisions, and a prescribed review process."

The final product details Charter historical background and legal issues and offers a series of recommendations on points to consider for any new Charter. Sharon presented the paper on behalf of the League to the City's Charter Committee on October 31, and it is posted on our website (www.lwvpba.org).

Also on the move, the Social Services Committee, chaired by Paula Montgomery, is meeting regularly and moving forward with local social concerns.

The Committee is currently working on issues related to domestic violence. The League hopes to partner with Pensacola's 100 Black Women in coming months to sponsor a program on intrafamily abuse.

In the coming months members can look forward to participating in a new national League consensus that's on the horizon. The US League is preparing a study on direct (popular) election of the President.

Delegates at the 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 text of the Compact, which describes the way the NPV will operate, is now available on the LWVUS Web site. In addition, the LWVUS NPV Study Committee is researching and writing background materials. The deadline for the NPV consensus is May 1, 2009.

And last but not least, please join other Leaguers and guests for our Holiday Party on Sunday, December 7, at the new home of John and Janet deLorge. Details are on page 4 of this Voter. PLEASE JOIN US!

Deborah

Voter Service Report

THANKS AGAIN for a job well done! The Voter Service Committee is indebted to all of you who assisted during this extremely busy election season. Your participation resulted in informing voters on the qualifications of candidates through questions written by the League for Rally 2008 on WSRE-TV. The League provided questions for both the August and October programs. Special accolades to the Leaguers who wrote questions, assisted at WSRE, distributed election materials and made presentations to community groups: *Kathy Barber, Sharon Barnett, Mary Bishop, Ed Boddy, Betsy Bowers, Charlotte Crane, Janet deLorge, Betty Enfinger, Vivian Faircloth, Gene Feicht, Barbara Goggins, Miriam Jennings, Fran Jones, Kathy Kerr, Elizabeth King, Carolyn Kolb, Susan Metzger, Deborah Nelson, Bob Ogden, Gene Pettis, Dave Robau, Ellen Roston, and Enid Sisskin.*

The League distributed 6000 LWVF Special Election Edition guides in Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties and responded to more than 50 telephone requests for explanations of the proposed amendments. Calls to the Escambia Supervisor of Elections for ballot explanations were directed to the League. Additionally, League members spoke to more than 15 groups, providing pro/cons on the proposals.

THE LEAGUE SHOULD BE PROUD

LWVUS received national attention in the run-up to the election. CNN used League materials to answer questions of voters. The League website, www.411.org, was used extensively throughout the nation by groups and individuals seeking information on registration, voting, polling places and related issues. Mary Wilson, LWVUS President, was interviewed often on issues prior to the election.

LWV FLORIDA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES - 2009

The LWV board has selected Legislative Priorities for the 2009 Regular Session of the Florida Legislature. The priorities were selected using input from local Leagues, the LWV Board and other sources.

GOVERNMENT IN FLORIDA:

Florida Constitution: Issues for action include promoting a citizen statutory initiative process and an independent reapportionment process.

Finance and Taxation: Issues for action include promoting equitable tax policy reform.

Election Law: Issues for action include promoting the integrity of the process for matching voters to the statewide data-base under HAVA and the automatic restoration of voting rights for ex-felons.

SOCIAL POLICY IN FLORIDA:

Financing & Delivery of Healthcare: Support measures to implement Florida health care in a manner consistent with the LWVUS position on health care reform.

EDUCATION IN FLORIDA:

Civic Education: Promote civic education in the schools

Accountability: There is currently an ongoing LWV study of the accountability system that measures the achievement of all students whose education is provided by public expenditures.

City of Pensacola Charter Review Commission

At the request of the City of Pensacola Charter Commission, *Sharon Barnett* was asked to write a White Paper for use by the Commission. This informative, detailed professional work is available on the local League website at www.lwvpba.org. The League extends sincere thanks to Sharon for this contribution.

Calendar



November

- 13 Thursday, 4:00 pm, **Education Committee** meeting at Azalea Trace, third floor meeting room. Contact Barbara Goggins for information 478-2953.
- 4 Tuesday, 5:30 pm **Board Meeting** at Tryon Branch Library, 9th Ave. Members welcome.
- 8 Saturday, 2:00 pm **New Member Orientation**, Holy Cross Episcopal Church on North Ninth Ave.

General Meeting

at First Presbyterian Church, 33 E. Gregory St.

Saturday, November 15, 2008,

9:00 am coffee, 9:30 am program

"Felon Rights Restoration"

Speaker: Susan Watson, Northwest Regional Director ACLU of Florida

- 17 Monday, 10 am **International Relations Committee**. Azalea Trace, **Great Decisions**, Leader: *Gene Feicht*. **Foreign Aid: New Players, New Goals**, Contact Gene Feicht at 479-3352
- 18 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. Contact Mary Gutierrez, gutmry@cox.net

December

- 2 Tuesday, 5:30 pm **Board Meeting** at Tryon Branch Library, 9th Ave.
- 7 Sunday, 2:30 -4:30 pm **Holiday Social** (See page 4 for details.)

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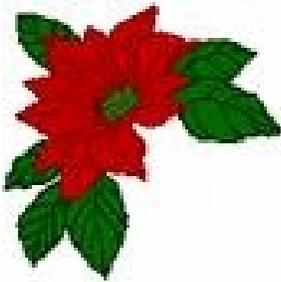
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LWV Florida Website: www.lwvfla.org

LWVUS Website: www.lwv.org

P.O. Box 2023 Pensacola, FL 32513



Join the League as we celebrate the Holidays

When: Sunday, December 7

Time: 2:30 to 4:30 PM

Where: Home of John & Janet deLorge

2928 Sundance Lane

Cantonment, FL

Bring: Finger food and/or wine to share with League friends.

You and your guest are welcome!

Directions: Follow I-10 West to Exit 7 (Pine Forest Exit-Pine Forest Road #297); turn RIGHT up hill; one block after you go under light at Nine Mile Road turn LEFT on #297A. Follow 297A for approximately 2 miles; cross bridge and immediately turn LEFT on #97 at caution light. Follow 97 for 3/4 mile to WINDSONG on left. Turn LEFT to 2928 Sundance. It is the first house.

For additional information or directions call: 607-9170, 712-2774 (cell) or 478-2581 (to leave message)



League of Women Voters ®
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November 15, First Presbyterian Church

The League of Women Voters is where hands-on work to