

2018 Legislative Summit Summary Report

On February 6-7, Pat Drago, Carla Christianson, Jeanne Tanke, Nancy Vaughn, and Nicki Junkins attended the annual Legislative Summit in Tallahassee. Below is a summary report of 2 day event submitted by the attendees.



Top row left to right: Pat Drago, Carla Christianson; Bottom row left to right: Nicki Junkins, Jeanne Tanke and Nancy Vaughn

ADVOCACY TRAINING

League members spent the afternoon in an in-depth training on bill tracking and discussing key legislation, the leagues' position and strategies to engage legislators on our positions. A few members suggested new bills to monitor! Stephanie Owens gave us a wealth of information about the process, the players and where to find information on every piece of legislation as it progresses or dies in the session.

KEYNOTE: PULITZER PRICE WINNING SPEAKER LUCY MORGAN

The keynote speaker for the evening was Lucy Porter the Pulitzer Prize winning journalist who covered the Florida legislature from 1986 to 2006. She shared a lot of insights into the pros and cons of how our legislative body operates as well as some interesting anecdotes about her time in Tallahassee. Pictured below are Lucy Morgan and League Members who attended the banquet.



ELECTION LAW CAUCUS

Michelle Levy went over all the bills the League is tracking that focus on election law. She mentioned there was no bill proposing that 18 year old citizens automatically would be registered so the State League decided to support the National Popular Vote bill. It will not go far this year but we are encouraged to keep supporting it going into the next session.

There were many bills but the ones I felt most strongly about and lobbied for were the following:

- The League opposes HB59, HB61 and SB430 which are attempting to raise the needed percentage of voters to pass a Constitutional Amendment from 60% to 66 2/3%.
- We also are opposing SB1742 and HB 7001 would require a supermajority of 3/5 to pass any increase in taxes.

GUN SAFETY CAUCUS

- Patti Brigham mentioned several onerous bills: HB 1419 Authorizes religious institution to allow concealed weapons (including on school campuses)
- The companion SB 1048 prohibits the concealed handgun on school property during school hours or during any time when curricular or extracurricular school-sponsored activities are taking place but that amendment is not included in the House Bill.
- HB 553 / SB 740 is a massive agriculture bill (114 pages) that buried in line 2487 is an addition that would allow issuance of gun permit if the background check was not completed within 90 days! Language was added at the request of Adam Putnam (Commissioner of Agriculture and gubernatorial candidate).
- I found it of interest that a permit is required in Florida only to carry a gun, not to purchase one. The agriculture Department issues the permits.
- It was stressed that progress against gun proliferation will be most successful if it is emphasized that the availability of guns is a HEALTH ISSUE not a First Amendment Issue! 1300 children per year are killed with guns.

HEALTH CARE CAUCUS

The Health Care Caucus, led by Cecile Scoon, discussed priority legislation positions and talking points for meeting with legislators. Bills discussed were

- SB 1890 and its companion bill HS1429 which would prohibit a physician from knowingly performing a dismemberment abortion. The League strongly opposes this bill as it would undermine a women's rights. The League is joined by the nation's leading medical and public health associations in its opposition to such bills.
- SB 444 – the Crisis Pregnancy Center Bill. This bill supports clinics that seek only to pressure women into seeking abortions and do not fairly offer all the services for all of women's choices including abortion. The League strongly opposed this bill. A substitute version of this bill passed and will go to the governor.
- HB 108 and SB 283: Kid Care Financial Monitor and Control. Based on a review of the bills' language, proposed statues as written, place too much control in the legislature in a way that could prohibit flexibility that the Affordable Health Care Act needs to protect

the health of Floridians. After discussion with Rep. Nun's office, he asked the League to draft suggested language to address the issue.

NATURAL RESOURCES CAUCUS

Marty Sullivan headed up the LWVFL natural resources action team planning session for meeting legislators. He outlined the bills that the league is tracking. Look for action alerts from LWVFL to contact your representatives and let them know which bills to support which bills to not support. There were a number of people who had made appointments with their legislators to speak with them individually and also the lobby corps was there to aid and assist us in our mission.

EDUCATION CAUCUS

The Education Advocacy meeting heard from Sue Legg regarding bills before the legislature. Most important to work on were those that expanded the Corporate Tax Scholarship program for bullying. Also, heard from members around the state their concerns on the fragmentation of school districts through school choice proposals which were numerous. Before adjourning members discussed plans for a fall Public School Awareness promotion statewide. More to come on this after session.

LEGISLATIVE BRIEFINGS

Sixteen legislators, from both sides of the aisle, shared their insight on current legislation and fielded questions from the audience. The top three issues discussed included expanding school choice, health care, guns and safety. In most instances, the legislators' positions mirrored party lines. With regards to school choice and vouchers, Republicans favored legislation that directs more state funds to charter and potentially private schools and Democrats expressed concern over the privatization of education and the shifting of dollars out of the public school system. Legislators who spoke included: Sen. Victor Torres, Jr., Sen. Jose Javier Rodriguez, Sen. Annette Taddeo, Rep. Lori Berman, Rep. Bob Rommel, Rep. Robert Asencio, Rep. Richard Stark, Rep. Carlos Guillermo Smith, Rep. Wengay 'Newt' Newton, Rep. Byron Donalds, Rep. Ben Diamond, Rep. Randy Fine, Rep. Joe Howard, Rep. Joe Gruters, Rep. Joe Geller, and Rep. Robert 'Bobby O' Olszewski.



Sen. Annette Taddeo (D-40)

Rep. Byron Donalds (R-80)

CRC PRESS CONFERENCE

On the steps of the capitol, nearly 200 members of The League of Women Voters of Florida joined with 18 partner organizations to count down the "worst of the worst" proposals to amend Florida's Constitution. Partners included: American Civil Liberties Union Florida, Anti-Defamation League, Common Cause Florida, Florida Policy Institute, Florida Education Association, Florida Alliance of Planned Parenthood Affiliates, Progress Florida, Florida NOW, For Our Future, Florida PTA, Florida AFL-CIO, Sierra Club, Southern Poverty Law Center, Florida Public Defender Association and Florida First Amendment Foundation



Solar Co-op Press Conference

A press conference was held on the steps of the capital building with LWFVL Solar Action Team chair Deirdre Macnab officiating. Guest speakers included Sierra Club's Phil Compton from Ready for 100 who reinforced the importance of renewable energy. Deirdre highlighted the successes of the solar co-ops throughout the state, continuing to forge ahead with six new co-ops scheduled to open in the next two months. Continuing to truly make Florida the sunshine State.



MEETINGS WITH LEGISLATORS

On Wednesday, we stopped in Senator Hukill's office. She was in a meeting and we asked her assistant to extend our appreciation for her participation in the panel discussion on student debt hosted by the AAUW and the League of Women Voters of Volusia County. We were able to speak with Senator David Simmons briefly. We thanked him for speaking at our September General Meeting and his continuing support of public schools. We also had a chance to stop by the House Chamber and observe the House in action as legislators discussed HB 7055.



Left to right: Jeanne Tanke, Nicki Junkins, Lindsey Swindle (aide to Sen. Dorothy Hukill), Nancy Vaughn, Carla Christianson. On the right is a picture of action on the floor of the House.

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK AWARDS

At Wednesday night's Gala at the Tallahassee Women's Club, we honored two lawmakers for their outstanding contributions in legislation to implement Amendment 4 this past Session. This has contributed immensely to Florida's huge growth in rooftop solar! It was an honor to present the 2018 Making Democracy Work Award to **Sen. Jeff Brandes** and **Rep. Lori Berman**.

Awards for work on The Restoration of Ex-felons Rights petition gathering:

1st Place - LWV of Miami-Dade County

2nd Place - LWV of Broward County

3rd Place - LWV of Tallahassee County

Awards for outstanding solar work done by Leagues who promoted solar co-ops were very exciting. **LWV of Volusia County** was honored along with LWV of Space Coast, Seminole, Miami Dade and more.

Prior to Summit, we took nominations from local League members for the Advocacy in Action award. This award goes to Leagues who have gone above and beyond in advocacy efforts in the community. These Leagues exhibit the grit and determination that the League is known for!

1st Place - LWV of Miami-Dade County

2nd Place - LWV of Palm Beach County

3rd Place - LWV of Alachua County

Honorable Mentions

LWV of Broward County

LWV of Collier County

LWV of the Space Coast



Nicki Junkins, Nancy Vaughn, Jeanne Tanke
Carla Christianson enjoy the evening.



Nancy Vaughn with Deirdre Macnab, Nicki
Junkins, and Pam Goodman accepts to Solar
Action Award