

THE VOTER
JULY/AUGUST 2019

League of Women Voters North Pinellas County
2019 Legislative Priorities

1. Education
 - *Educate ourselves, our Education Action Group, and the larger local community regarding charter schools, vouchers, and school issues that perpetuate and sustain unequal school funding.*
2. Environment
3. Health
4. Juvenile Justice
 - *Support court review of all youth direct filed to adult court*
5. Poverty
 - *MANDATE the use of all the funds from the Sadowski Housing Trust Fund to be used only to promote affordable housing*
 - *Expand childcare subsidies for low income families and qualified pre-school programs for all*
 - *Expand Medicaid program*
 - *Expand and adequately fund TANF and SNAP programs*
 - *Expand mass transit programs especially for low income*



In League,
Karen Marie Karinja, President

If you haven't visited our North Pinellas League website recently, check it out at www.lwvnorthpinellascounty.org and our Facebook page. They are both updated, and the website is easier to navigate. There is lots of information for members and for anyone interested in voting rights and our democracy.

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION GROUP



Dear friends and clean air lovers,

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) released its draft plan for how the state proposes to spend \$166 million from the national Volkswagen Environmental Mitigation Trust (VW Settlement). This presents a tremendous opportunity to expand electric buses and EV charging infrastructure, of which there is some, but not nearly enough!

Other states have already invested in existing clean transportation initiatives. [Colorado has already awarded over \\$14 million for 24 new electric buses](#), while [Virginia has invested over \\$12 million for new electric buses](#).

The FL plan dedicates 15% of available funding, the maximum allowed, towards electric vehicle charging infrastructure, but the state has signaled it favors investing in diesel vehicles in its plan, leaving the door wide open for further pollution in our communities. At a time when electric buses produce zero emissions and are **more cost-effective** -- [the lifetime ownership of electric buses saves up to \\$250,000 compared with diesel and gas counterparts](#) as a result from massive savings from maintenance costs and not having to use dirty fuels -- this plan fails to meet the standards of creating clean and healthy communities.

In response, , Sierra Club's Florida Chapter Director Frank Jackalone released the following statement:

"The Florida Department of Environmental Protection is missing a major opportunity to clean up transportation in Florida by favoring the funding of diesel buses over clean transportation like electric buses in this plan. Our state is on the frontline of climate change impacts, so it should also be a leader in taking bold action to combat climate change. Dedicating 15 percent of the Volkswagen Settlement money for electric vehicle charging infrastructure -- as this plan does -- is good but it's not enough. It's just the tip of the iceberg of the investments needed to tackle transportation emissions in a state that could be underwater in just a few decades."

All public comments must be submitted via email to VWMitigation@FloridaDEP.gov by 5:00 PM EST, Friday, August 16, 2019.

<https://www.sierraclub.org/press-releases/2019/07/florida-s-volkswagen-settlement-funding-plan-missed-opportunity-for-clean#>

Dave Sillman

LWVNP Environmental
Action Group Co-Chair

COMMITTEE FOR CARBON FREE FLORIDA

We had a terrific call last week

1. 10 people volunteered to write a letter to their local paper. Look for their names below AND THE TEMPLATE LETTER which we want you to change. KNOW SOMEONE who has an EV? Share it with them and ASK THEM to write one too!
2. Agreed on new name: Committee for a Carbon Free Florida (subhead Using Solar and Clean Transportation).
3. Had good suggestions for new ideas to our strategy: encourage utility scale solar (Heaven exploring); protect net metering (Heaven providing more info); encourage mandate on solar for NEW residential (will get Mayor Stoddard from City of South Miami to report on how their action is going)
4. Tweaked our legislation action item to be: ask Legislature to pass a law "requiring utilities to file an electrification plan for transportation" For FURTHER DISCUSSION
5. Suggestion to reach out to Florida Solar Energy Center for help with EV expansion

Please share them with us when they are published so we can send out!

HERES THE LETTER: (reference links below!) CUT AND PASTE!!!

As a resident of XXXXX, and an Electric Car owner, I can personally attest to the fact that owning a clean electric or plug-in hybrid car is the smart economic choice – my family and I have seen the savings firsthand. Between never stopping to buy gas or needing oil changes, we will save an average of \$10,000 in fuel and maintenance costs over 10 years on our all-electric car. Besides helping our family save money, we are helping all of us to a cleaner, cooler, healthier future while protecting our fragile coasts by reducing the demand for offshore oil drilling.

Some criticize electric cars, using arguments from battery issues, to range, to savings. Because electric Vehicles (EV's) are new, some people may be confused by these arguments. But the facts are clear. The Union of Concerned Scientists has confirmed that EV's produce less than half the carbon of fossil fuel cars, even when powered by fossil fuel power plants. *If you charge with renewable energy, like many owners with rooftop solar, your driving can be virtually emissions free.*

The price of batteries is falling, and technology to recycle and reuse them is improving rapidly. About 80 percent of charging is done at home or the workplace, and Florida has about 3,500 public charging stations now. New ones are added and easily accessible by apps like PlugShare or the monitor on your electric car dashboard. The proof is in the attitude of those like me who own an EV. A recent CarMax Survey showed that virtually all EV owners would buy another one. It's the key to a healthy and smart future.

You can test drive one during National Drive Electric Week, September 14-22, 2



Reference links for EV Letter to Editor

EVs produce less than half the carbon of fossil fuel cars:

<https://www.ucsusa.org/clean-vehicles/electric-vehicles/life-cycle-ev-emissions>

80 percent of charging is done at home or the workplace:

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2019-02-14/the-world-still-doesn-t-have-enough-places-to-plug-in-cars>

Save an average of \$10,000 in fuel and maintenance costs over 10 years on all-electric car: electric vehicle vs. gas-powered vehicle fact sheet:

<https://cleanenergy.org/>

HERE'S THE STRATEGY we discussed on the call!

1. Program Goals for next two years

- Increase use of solar
- Increase use of clean transportation, EV's and Transit

2. Strategy

Solar:

- Continue Co-op program partnership with Solar United Neighbors
- Encourage cities and counties to use and be aware of [SOLSMART.org](https://www.solSMART.org) federal program (free) to reduce permitting fees and speed approval
- Explore reaching homebuilders to encourage construction WITH solar

EV's and Transit:

- Report card by county on charging stations per capita
- Letters to the Editor campaign from happy EV owners
- Legislative action to pass a law giving utilities compensation for building charging infrastructure

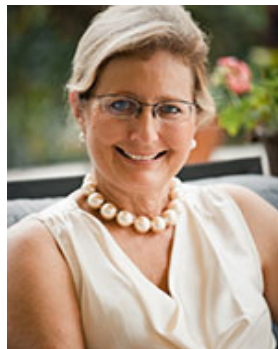
Some important things NEED your thought and discussion.

- We are looking at Re-naming this committee to: LWVFL Committee for a Carbon Free Florida
- Why? Because we want to be able to inform, act, educate and learn about solar, electric cars, transit, and any other ideas YOU, our volunteers bring forward.
- Look at the strategy above and be ready with critiques and ideas.

Thanks for helping us improve our future. Never doubt for a moment that your voice and mind can help shape history. Individual like us are who write and shape history. Jump IN!

Your co-chairs: Deirdre Macnab, Mary Dipboye. Maxine Connors

PS Let's get these LETTER TO THE EDITORS OUT THERE!!!!
Let's go CARBON FREE FLORIDA!!!!



LEAGUE MEMBERS:

Don't miss out...Bond with new friends...Make a difference through Voter Services

BUILD VOTER SERVICES ACTION FRAMEWORK—No downtime this summer! We continue to educate and register voters. We are also finalizing our plan of action for the next 18 months. External deadlines may guide our work. But our priorities will determine how we invest our limited time and money in 2019-2020.

HELP GET OUT THE VOTE—The culminating goal is helping more voters make informed choices in each election. We are assessing options to turn out the vote: more early voting sites, greater use of vote by mail, parties at the polls, reminders to vote, PSAs, and help with rides to the polls on Election Day.

EDUCATE VOTERS—Voters need information to make good choices. Our League will study ballot issues and candidates' stands on issues in partnership with the St. Pete League and the State League. We will use the online voter guide, social media, and printed copy to inform voters.

REGISTER VOTERS—We wish to engage more first-time voters such as youth, English as Second Language (ESL) adults, returning citizens, and low-wage workers, to make democracy serve Florida's residents better.

AFTERNOON AND EVENING MEETINGS—More options with our monthly meeting times—at either 1:00 PM or 6:30 PM on the first Tuesday. See schedule and sites on the League's website.

THERE'S MORE—Not driving anymore? We can help you connect to our work sessions via Skype on your iPad or laptop. Not able to find our League's Facebook community or Voter Services resources online? We'll show you where to go and how to open/amend materials. Don't want to obligate to same-time-each-week schedules? That's cool. You can drop into projects—some big, some small, some tiny—all with clear starts and finish lines.

The next Voter Services meeting is September 3rd, 6:30pm at Jason's Deli, Fresh Market Plaza



LWVNPC OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS 2020

Officers

President	2018-2020	Karen Karinja
1st Vice-President	2019-2021	Eliseo Santana
2nd Vice President	2018-2020	Beth Hovind
Treasurer	2018-2020	Gayla Larson
Secretary	2019-2021	Stephanie Bolden

Elected Board Member

- Miriam Benitez-Nixon 2019-2020
- Nikki Fleming 2019-2020
- Doris Reeves-Lipscomb 2019-2020

Appointed Directors 2018-2020

Marti Folwell

LWV North Pinellas County
PO Box 3623 Seminole, FL 33775
727-447-1564

www.lwvnorthpinellas.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/LWVNPC/

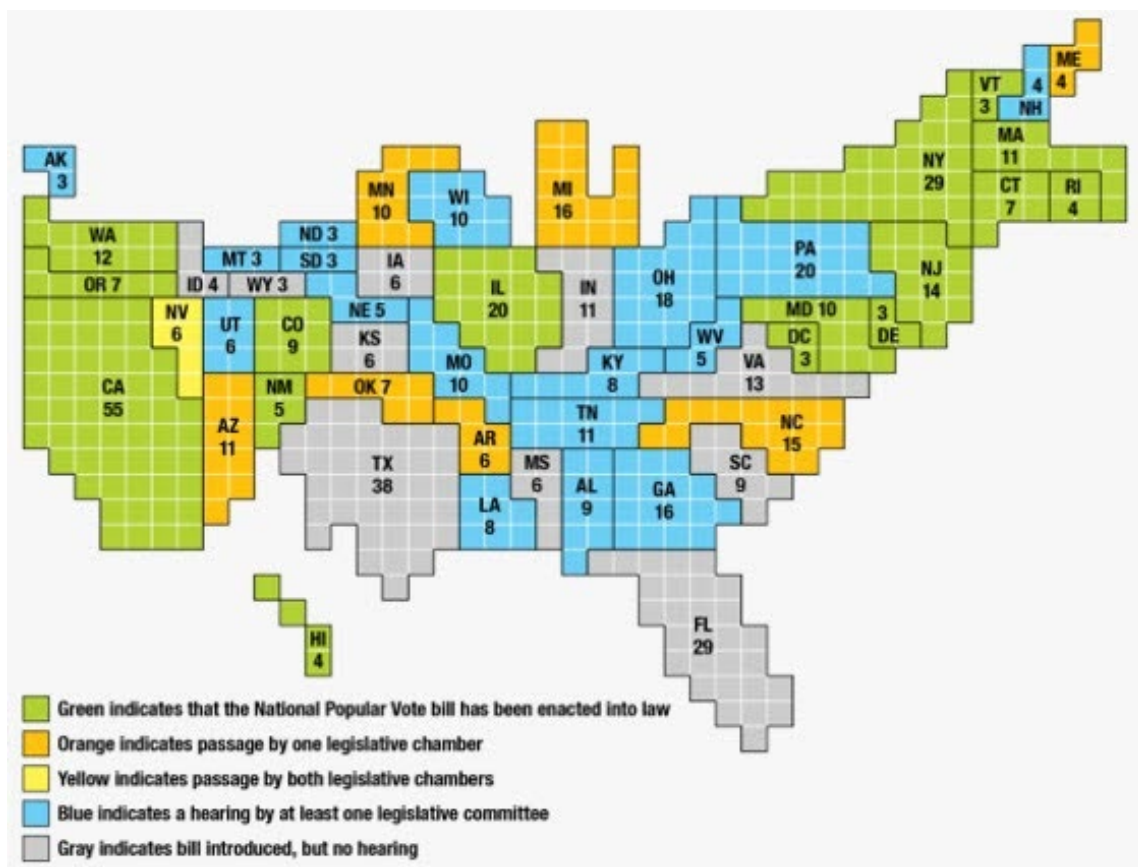
National Popular Vote!

NPVIC Bills Enacted in Four States

The new tally for NPVIC bill passage across the country is very good. Four new states passed NPVIC bills – Delaware, Colorado, New Mexico and Oregon -- for an additional 24 electoral votes. Two other states came very close, Nevada and Maine, but failed in the final moments. In Nevada, the governor vetoed the NPVIC bill after it had passed both chambers, reportedly due to last-minute lobbying from casino owners. They were concerned that passage would mean Nevada would no longer be a “swing” state and that revenue to their establishments from presidential entourages would be reduced. In Maine, NPVIC failed in the House where several Democratic legislators didn't understand NPV. Leaders in both states report that more education of key influencers is needed, which they will address next year.

The National Popular Vote bill will take effect when enacted into law by states possessing 270 electoral votes (a majority of the 538 electoral votes). It has been enacted into law in 16 jurisdictions accounting for 196 electoral votes, including 5 small jurisdictions (DC, DE, HI, RI, VT), 8 medium-sized states (CO, CT, MD, MA, NJ, NM, OR, WA), and 3 big states (CA, IL, NY). All that is needed to activate the Compact is an additional 74 electoral votes.

On the map below, each square represents one electoral vote (out of 538).



pg. 1 lwvpoverty@gmail.com |More at: <http://tinyurl.com/lwvpoverty> | Sign-up: <https://www.lwvfl.org/issue/poverty/>

Poverty - Test Your Knowledge

Take this short quiz to test your knowledge of the facts about poverty. The US Government measures poverty via a 1963 threshold of annual income with increases in food costs adjusted by the consumer price index (CPI). Does not take into account government benefits received or cost of living (housing, transportation, childcare) by locality. For example, a family of 4 is considered "poor" by Dept of Health and Human Services if joint annual income is \$25,750 or less in 2019.

Could your family of 4 survive in your County for \$26,000 this year?



(\$250 above the poverty line) See: <https://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty-guidelines>

Circle your answers below.

1. More than 40% of Americans between the ages of 25 and 60 will live in poverty for at least a year of their lives. (True / False)
2. One in 5 children in the United States is living in poverty (True / False)
3. White children make up the largest percentage of children living in poverty today. (True / False)
4. Close to 60% of poor children have a parent who works full time and year-round. (True / False)
5. People receiving welfare assistance, tend to stay on welfare over their lifetime. (True / False)
6. The minimum wage of 50 years ago would be \$15.29/hr. in 2014 dollars, adjusted for inflation. (True/ False)
7. Low income parents are less interested in their children's education than middle- and upper-income parents. (True / False)
8. Poverty has little effect on children due to their resiliency. (True / False)
9. People living in poverty are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol. (True/False)
10. Low-income voters in FL vote half as much as high-income voters (True / False)

Answer Key:

- Question 1:** (True)
- Question 2:** (True)
- Question 3:** (True) Of children in the US who live in poverty:
42% are White
29% are LatinX
25% are Black
4% are Asian
- Question 4:** (True)
- Question 5:** (False) Of the poor receiving benefits, more than 50% stop receiving benefits after a year; 70% within 2 years, and 85% within 4 years
- Question 6:** (True) Currently, in 2019, the minimum wage in FL is \$8.46
- Question 7:** (False) Low income parents share the same concerns as their higher income counterparts yet have less ability to impact and have access to education programs.
- Question 8:** (False) It is a fact that poverty can impede learning, and contribute to social, emotional and behavioral problems, poor physical health, mental health, poor self-esteem. Greater risk if younger and living in persistent poverty. See:
<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/chasing-the-dream/collections/busted-americas-poverty-myths/>
- Question 9:** (False) Drug use is equally distributed across income levels. Alcohol abuse is more prevalent among the wealthy than the poor.
- Question 10:** Although voters classified as living in poverty in Florida vote at a rate of 12.7% - Florida's high-income voters (income > \$100,000/yr) still only vote at a rate of 20.3%. (source: US Census Bureau, 2018 surveys: <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/demo/tables/voting/Florida.xlsx>)

SOURCES: How Poverty is measured: <https://poverty.ucdavis.edu/policy-brief/supplemental-povertymeasure-better-measure-poverty-america>

or

<https://www.irp.wisc.edu/research/povertymeasurement>

<https://www.justharvest.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Just-Harvest-Poverty-Myths-Stereotypes-fact-sheet.pdf>

Consult the PBS Series from 2016 re: Poverty:

<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/chasing-the-dream/collections/busted-americas-poverty-myths/>

and see: US Census Bureau is source for questions re: voting rates

<https://www.epi.org/research/poverty>

BIOS for the newly elected Board of Directors and Committees

Secretary, Board of Directors: Stephanie Bolden, PhD

A professional fishery biologist, Stephanie has worked in management and research for over 28 years and has authored numerous articles for scientific journals and the Federal Register Notices. She is treasurer of a national fisheries professional organization and is well versed in electronic communication. She was appointed a LWVNP board member last year and co-chairs the Environment Committee.

Board Member: Miriam Benitez-Nixon

A native of Bronx, NY, Miriam had a career in legal administration prior to moving to Florida in 2010. Bilingual in Spanish and English, she is on the board of the Episcopal Church Diocese of Southwest Florida, assists her church thrift shop, and is a SHINE Medicare counselor. She served on the planning team for the chapter's 'Celebrating 70' where she prepared the program and has been an active member of the Poverty Task Force and the Voter Services committees.

Voter Service Chair: Doris Reeves-Lipscomb

A policy analyst for the Health and Rehabilitative Services Committee with the Florida House of Representatives and a state legislative representative, Doris has also worked as Deputy Director, State Legislation, AARP in DC. She served as Assistant Secretary, Department of Professional Regulation in Tallahassee and was Executive Staff Policy Coordinator for the Honorable Lawton Chiles and Honorable Buddy MacKay. She founded *Groups-That Work, LLC*, to help non-profits with strategic planning and improve performance. She also contracts to design and facilitate on-line learning communities.

Education Co-Chair and Nominating Committee Chair: Nicole Fleming

'Nikki' taught science for more than 12 years in two Pinellas County middle schools and has served as a department chair, STEM teacher, staff trainer and grant writer. She is now an administrative assistant to RKM Technology managing communication, accounting and trust management. A certified high school teacher with a degree in Marine Biology, she has also been a substitute teacher in all subjects K-12. She is active with the Poverty Task Force and Voter Services and served on the nominating committee, 2019.



Education Co-Chair: Barbara Meloche, PhD

Barbara taught grades 1-6, became a school principal, and coordinated K-12 curriculum at the district level. She taught in three Michigan school districts, was a literacy consultant, and led an intervention program with teachers and staff to improve school goals. She was district curriculum coordinator in several areas. She later worked with Michigan State University coordinating student interns and their mentors and was liaison between the university and school principals regarding their student teachers.