



PRESENTATION TO THE 2016 SEMINOLE COUNTY LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION

December 16, 2016

League of Women Voters Seminole County welcomes the 2017 Florida Legislative Delegation to our community, a community that encompasses a wide variety of outlooks, beliefs, and experiences. Thank you for coming to hear our concerns; please take our comments back to your legislative committees, and share our views as you work to improve the lives of our citizens.

For some time, League has focused attention on the issue of gun safety; not because we are anti-gun, but we are pro-a safe citizenry. You might be surprised to know League members own guns; but we believe that gun ownership comes with responsibilities.

We do not believe we are doing all we can to protect our communities from gun violence. Closing the background check loophole and maintaining gun free zones are two major aspects of gun safety that we support. Educating gun owners on safe storage practices and keeping children away from firearms are additional areas we believe all parents and concerned citizens can agree upon.

Just this month, the issue of Gun Safety took on a more personal turn, when a 14-year old child who had attended school with my granddaughter at Sanford Middle School, took her own life with a firearm. No child should experience the sadness, loss and pain her classmates now feel, and I am sure her family are blaming themselves for not recognizing how she felt and for not preventing her from accessing their weapons.

Please work to reduce access to firearms for those who are emotionally unprepared to use them responsibly, and to keep them out of the hands of those who wish to hurt our society, as the shooter at Pulse Nightclub did just less than a year ago.

Please do not allow guns on our college campuses, where young people live in close quarters, are often under stress and sleep deprivation, and where emotions tend to run high with romantic and scholastic rivalries. Why add another stressor to the equation? Why add a way to permanently scar a young person's life, and those with whom they come in contact? Why add another potential danger to a relatively safe environment, and make the lives of the campus security personnel less secure?

We are counting on you, our legislators, to keep us safe.

On another topic, the League of Women Voters request the Seminole delegation to support improved fiscal and operational oversight of charter schools.

We believe it is important that all charter and private schools receiving any tax payer dollars be accountable to the public to the same degree as public schools, and fiscally end the self-dealing opportunities and fiscal mismanagement of some charter schools, especially in the area of real estate transactions and other charter services and ensuring the independence of charter boards from charter management companies.

We encourage the legislature to revise the sole focus of state accountability of high stake test scores to other measures that accurately reflect student achievement that meet the needs of diverse students and improve access to high quality academic and career programs for all students.

We request the legislature to restore **local** control of the districts authorization to levy 2.0 mills for capital outlay funding for school facilities, construction and renovation.

And we ask the legislature to eliminate the growth of corporate -tax credit scholarships to private schools and require private schools currently receiving these scholarships to participate in the state accountability.

In addition, the Seminole League looks forward to meeting with our State legislators prior to session regarding our other Legislative priorities of Election Law, Health Care and Natural Resources.

Thank You for this opportunity to be heard.

Respectfully,

Zelda M. Ladan,

Speaking for League of Women Voters Seminole County