

Democratic Women's Information Network



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Issues Newsletter May 11, 2009

The May **Downtown DWIN** lunch included a terrific presentation by **Carla Miller**, Ethics Officer for the City of Jacksonville. You can read her bio here: <http://www.cityethics.org/CarlaMiller> and if you missed the Folio front page story in February, you can read it here: http://www.folioweekly.com/documents/main020309_000.pdf

During lunch we talked about corruption, about the difference between laws and ethics, about making public records available on the internet and about how subpoena power would make the office more effective. But that's just the beginning. The ethics office can throw light on an issue but then the citizens must speak up. Ms. Miller praised the Young Democrats for their protest of the recent Trail Ridge Landfill no-bid contract and she quoted Bobby Kennedy:

"Laws can embody standards; governments can enforce laws — but the final task is not a task for government. It is a task for each and every one of us. Every time we turn our heads the other way when we see the law flouted — when we tolerate what we know to be wrong — when we close our eyes and ears to the corrupt because we are too busy, or too frightened — when we fail to speak up and speak out — we strike a blow against freedom and decency and justice." Robert F. Kennedy, June 21, 1961.

Public trust depends on government being open and accountable for the decisions they make. If you have a suspected ethics violation to report, call the **Ethics Office Hotline at 630-1015**.

We hope that Ms. Miller will do an encore of **Wicked School** for us at a DWIN general meeting very soon. If you want to know why it's called Wicked School you'll have to attend! I promise an entertaining and informative meeting.

Legislative Session Summaries

From Planned Parenthood:

During the final hours of the regularly scheduled session, our advocates in the legislature fought tirelessly to ensure that the expansion of the "Choose Life" license plate would not pass this session. The bill was never allowed a vote.

We were successful in ensuring that the critical family planning line item in the state budget remained intact! This program saves state dollars and helps Florida women prevent 62,000 unintended pregnancies each year.

Despite the hundreds of calls and emails that you made to key decision makers, the “crisis counseling” line item remained fully funded at \$2 million dollars. While a disappointment, we were successful in preventing the majority of these funds from being spent on advertising (including yellow page ads and billboards) which these dollars have been spent on in the past.

From the ACLU:

Many of the bills we tracked and opposed this session were important, but our energy was focused like a laser on defeating the voter suppression bills.

Here are some of the bills that we opposed, and thanks to you, were able to defeat:

- Mandatory ultrasounds, requiring doctors to perform an ultrasound on all women prior to receiving an abortion
- Religious license plates, which would have violated the Establishment Clause by creating government-sponsored religion
- Voter suppression

In what is being recognized as the largest group of organizations to ever come together in Florida to defeat a single piece of bad public policy, over 40 groups mobilized their members and created earned media — including editorials in every major Florida newspaper and The New York Times — to defeat the voter suppression legislation that was before the legislature.

The House and Senate bills, if passed, threatened to:

- Further limit the number of IDs that voters could use at the polls, without offering a reasonable alternative
- Further disenfranchise disabled voters by adding a four-year extension to the date when paper ballots were to be available for voters with disabilities
- Restrict voter registration efforts
- Impose unnecessary restrictions on petition-gatherers
- Force more voters to vote unnecessarily on provisional ballots, which have a high rejection rate

From Equality Florida:

It was another wild session up in the Tallahassee! We began the session by introducing four pro-equality bills:

- a repeal of Florida’s adoption ban
- a statewide civil rights bill that would make it illegal to fire someone because they are LGBT
- a statewide domestic partnership policy

- a bill to repeal abstinence only education in public schools

On March 16, over 700 people came to Tallahassee for the Rally in Tally for LGBT Equality. Stuart Milk, nephew to Harvey Milk and Florida resident, state legislators and LGBT grassroots leaders came together to rally the crowd. Afterward, hundreds of people lobbied their legislators on the need for pro-equality legislation.

The economic crisis made for an even tougher than usual year in Tallahassee. Many bills from both sides of the aisle were left by the wayside in order to balance the state's budget. When Commerce Committee Chair Senator Rudy Garcia declared the civil rights bill dead, our members sent over 2,000 e-mails and made hundreds of phone calls to his office in one afternoon. He felt the pressure, but the clock ran out before the bill could be heard.

May 10–16 is **National Women's Health Week**. The nationwide initiative encourages women to take simple steps for a longer, healthier, and happier life:

- Getting at least 2 ½ hours of moderate physical activity, 1 hour and 15 minutes of vigorous physical activity, or a combination of both, each week
- Eating a nutritious diet.
- Visiting a health care professional for regular checkups and preventive screenings.
- Avoiding risky behaviors, like smoking and not wearing a seatbelt.
- Paying attention to mental health, including getting enough sleep and managing stress.

For more information visit: <http://www.womenshealth.gov/whw/>