LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF VOLUSIA COUNTY

TEAM REPORT
Natural Resources
Submitted by Pattie Gertenbach

September 10, 2026 Meeting:

Election Sign Recycling

It is that time of year again – Election Signs Everywhere.

We are very lucky here in Volusia County for the efforts lead by Suze Peace, with lots of help from her husband, Fred, over the years in organizing local election sign recycling. Suze has been working on this for 10 years!! Attached are this year's flyers, and below, in Suze's words, a brief history of what it took to get the local sign recycling program up and running:

It's 2026 and midterm elections are heating up. Campaign signs are quickly multiplying. It is noted that political signs are regulated by Florida Statute 106.1435, which mandates that candidates "shall make a good faith effort to remove all of his or her signs" within thirty days after the election or face a fee for their removal. So, what happens to those signs? That's what I wanted to know after the blitz of the 2016 presidential election.

Back story. I contacted FDEP (Florida Department of Environmental Protection) Recycling Division of Solid Waste, and they told me they had no solution. I then learned all the unwanted signs in our county ended up in the landfill, learning also, that no one can predict how many years it takes this plastic to biodegrade, if ever. I decided to act.

I started at the top with a meeting with the Supervisor of Elections, Lisa Lewis, and the Director of Solid Waste, Regina Montgomery. Both really liked my idea of recycling election signs. Lisa in her position had the authority and the means to communicate the message directly to the parties and candidates, that we would be recycling the unwanted election signs. Regina found a recycling company and listed the project under the auspices of Keep Volusia Beautiful. I then met with the heads of the Republican and Democratic Parties. This project is nonpartisan and both parties were agreeable to recycling the unwanted signs. We do NOT remove signs from the roads. The signs are removed by the party people, FDOT, or Code Enforcement, and collected.

So, in 2018, 1.799 tons of signs were recycled by Southard Enterprises. In 2020, 2.276 tons. In 2024, 2.3 tons of signs were recycled by GEL Corp.

The story now. This year, FCC Environmental is doing the recycling and there are two county dropoff locations, one in Orange City and the other at the Tomoka Landfill in Port Orange. Also, there is a countywide dropoff for signs at the Volusia County Fairgrounds, November 20th and 21st from 2-5pm. And super-great news, Flagler County will be recycling their unwanted political signs with us!

The LWVVC has been a part of this project since the beginning. In 2018, Nancy Vaughn and Peter Sigmann were helping me throw the first batch of unwanted signs in the dumpster at Southards! Other members who have participated for years are Libby Hilderbrandt, Pattie Gertenbach, Joyce Palmer, and Lucy Christman. Also, a huge thanks goes to Lisa Lewis, Edda Rosado, Regina Montgomery, Christie Miller, and Michael Nahirny.

Fyi, the polypropylene (#5) plastic signs are trucked to K&W Plastics in Troy, Alabama, where they are melted down into pellets and upcycled into paint buckets, benches, fences, and boardwalks!

For more information, please contact me.

Suze Peace, Chair of the 2026 Volusia County Election Sign Recycling Project

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Hot Topic – Data Centers

We have decided for our Hot Topic this coming year (April 2027) to be Data Centers. This is a huge topic – I read multiple articles DAILY, so we should focus on the consumption of resources. How much power do they use? How much water do they use? Recently, the County Council decided to pursue a permanent ban rather than a temporary moratorium on large scale data centers in unincorporated areas due to concerns about electricity and water use. Defenders of the centers claim they use about as much power as a large office building, and that some centers are turning to recycling wastewater. A lot to research. We will be looking at various sources for speakers.

NRAT members will: look into a controversial center in Palm Coast; research counties that have put in moratoriums; talk with members of the County Council; look into contacting FPL; contact Stetson professors; watch webinar by 1000 Friends about data centers.

Possible date: April 17th 10-noon. Think about a venues.

Other Business

- Upcoming LWV meetings: September 17, October 6th, November 14th.
- Get the word out about Vote411.
- April 15th NSB Citizens Residents Coalition Inc educational forum - Our Cities Our Choices about Home Rule at Brannon Center.
- Central Florida Public Media story about flooding adjacent properties in West Volusia: 'This isn't a lake': Inside one battle for better stormwater management in Volusia County