

Alumna's Love of Politics Has Led to Life of Public Service

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Anna Eskamani, a graduate of the MPA/MNM dual degree program,, was recently appointed to the State Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters of Florida. Her interest in that organization began when she was an undergrad at UCF in 2008. She worked with local League leadership to offer a reduced membership rate for students, and she helped increase campuswide student membership.



Protecting voters, educating and engaging voters, reforming money in politics, and defending the environment are just some of the goals of the League of Women Voters. The nonpartisan group traces its roots to 1920, six months before the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, giving women the right to vote after a 72-year struggle, according to lwv.org.

When Eskamani was a new student at UCF, she quickly became engaged in civic organizations, leading to her work as a campus organizer. Eskamani credits the learning environment at UCF for taking her from an “activist to an administrator.” It wasn’t enough, she said, to just learn how to organize a protest, but to grasp the bigger picture of how to effect real change and lift community efficacy.

Her interest in politics began when she was just 10 years old, Eskamani said. Born and raised in Orlando, she was transfixed by the 2000 presidential election results.

In that year, Al Gore and his running mate, Joe Lieberman, won the nation’s popular vote by more than half a million ballots, but lost the electoral college vote by five electoral votes. Florida’s voting process, in particular, took center stage in the hotly disputed results.

For 36 days following the election, a legal battle ensued that captivated jurists, attorneys, political scientists, journalists and late-night talk show hosts. Eskamani kept track of the reports on television and in the newspapers and said the whole process helped fuel her interest in politics.

In fact, Eskamani is currently back at UCF pursuing her Ph.D. in public affairs (public administration track), and is also an adjunct professor in women and gender studies. By her own account, she is “very, very busy. I’m here, there and everywhere.” She is also the senior director of public affairs and communications for Planned Parenthood of Southwest and Central Florida.

“Anna is a very sharp person with interest in community and public service with enormous potential in the future,” said Naim Kapucu, professor and director of the UCF School of Public Administration. “She is committed to do what she can as a leader for public service to build relationships, all in an effort to ensure that every idea is respected, heard and considered. She cares about a participatory environment built upon relationships rooted in a mutual commitment between the leader and those who follow.”

Eskamani’s parents were born in Iran, and they moved to the Orlando area separately where they met and married. Growing up, Eskamani was aware of the power that politics has to change lives. “My mom always wanted to go back to Iran and see her sister,” Eskamani said, “but was never able to because of the political climate there.” Her mother died in 2014 without accomplishing her dream and perhaps informed Eskamani’s view that “politics ... is not always in the best interest of the people.”

However, groups like the League of Women Voters keep a watchful eye over crucial parts of the political process, Eskamani said. Recently, when Hurricane Matthew threatened the Florida coast, the League – along with the Florida Democratic Party – filed suit to extend the voter registration deadline. A key part of their argument was the hurricane had forced the cancellation of several citizenship ceremonies and would have prevented the new citizens from voting in the November elections.

At the time of this interview, Eskamani was keeping up-to-date on UCF voter registration efforts – another of her passions. “Many young people are not being taught the process,” Eskamani said. “Civics does not happen automatically. We must teach each other. Visit your county supervisor of elections web page and find out how to get registered.”

The most important thing a student or young voter can do, Eskamani added, is to familiarize themselves with the candidate and their platform – the declared policy of their political party or group. “Ask yourself, ‘How do you want to define our nation?’”

Written by Camille Murawski
