

Nov / Dec 2011

"May your walls know joy, may every room hold laughter, and every window open to great possibility."

Mary Anne Radmacher
American Author and Artist



Happy Holidays!

The League extends its best wishes to everyone for a warm and wonderful Thanksgiving, a joyous holiday and a happy and prosperous new year!



Are you prepared for the 2012 elections?

Florida Election laws have changed, so be sure your voter registration is up-to-date before you cast your ballot. Don't be left out this presidential election year! Check your voter status or get registered today by checking in at <http://www.bereadytovote.org/>



League's Mission:

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Seasons Greetings from the President

When did it become unacceptable to wish your friends and neighbors a happy holiday season? Why has it become popular in some circles to interpret this cheery, inclusive greeting as a secular attack on the Christian holiday of Christmas?

Christians are unlikely to forget the "reason for the season," and I prefer to think of "Happy Holidays" and "Seasons Greetings" as the polite

way to extend the warmth of the season to everyone, regardless of religious affiliation, or lack thereof. Considering the sluggish economy and high unemployment rate, I also believe everyone needs warmth and inclusion now more than ever.

So it is without apology that I wish you all peace, happiness and joy this holiday season and in 2012.

Mary Blackwell

Mandatory Minimums: Good or Bad? Find out 19 November

Are mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses effective in discouraging illegal drug abuse? What are the economic and social ramifications for our community?

To find out, please join League for lunch on Saturday, 19 Nov, to hear Greg Newburn of [Families Against Mandatory Minimums](#) and [State Attorney Bill Eddins](#) discuss the pros and cons of mandatory minimums. Mr. Newburn will advocate

for fair and proportionate sentencing, and Mr. Eddins will discuss the State Attorney's position and the drug laws. Join us to learn more about this important issue.

The event will be held from noon to 2:00 p.m., at [Two Trees Restaurant](#) (1955 Lewis Turner Blvd, FWB). Cost is \$13 (including tax & gratuity). Space is limited – please RSVP by [email](#) or call 621-4088 no later than Wednesday, 16 Nov.

LWVUS Privatization Study

This study's purpose is to identify parameters and policy issues to be considered regarding proposals to transfer federal, state or local government services, assets and/or functions to the private sector. It will review the community impact of such transfers, and identify strategies to ensure accountability, transparency, and preservation of the common good. The following study papers are available for review on

the [website](#):

- Subcontracting Public Education
- Privatization of Prisons
- Privatization of a Publicly Owned Waste Water Treatment Plant
- Deregulation of Railroads
- The Legal Framework of Transparency and Accountability within the Context of Privatization

Watch the [website](#) for consensus meeting updates.

Candidate University is back!

The [Okaloosa County Supervisor of Elections Office](#) is offering its popular [Candidate University](#) in a condensed format. The program is designed to educate those seeking to run for public office – or any member of the public interested in learning about the process – of the appropriate procedures and documents required to run for office.

Candidate University normally consists of a three-hour curriculum focused on the fundamentals of becoming and being a candidate. The upcoming crash course version is formatted for 90 minutes. Participants will be introduced to each step involved in the process including pre-filing, collecting petitions

and qualifying. Campaign pitfalls will also be discussed. All participants will receive a certificate upon completion of the program.

The Fort Walton Beach session will be held from 11:30am-1:00pm on Monday, 14 Nov, in the 3rd floor conference room of the Water & Sewer Building (1804 Lewis Turner Blvd). The Crestview session will be held from 5:30-7:00pm on Tuesday, 15 Nov, in the 3rd floor conference room of the Buddy Brackin Building (302 Wilson St N).

To register for the program, email [Tiffany Rivera](#) or call her at 689-5600.

Privatization Study Summaries

Subcontracting Public Education

This paper examines an experiment with privatization conducted by Baltimore City Public Schools.

In 1992 Baltimore signed a 5-year contract with Education Alternatives Inc. Baltimore terminated the contract after 4 years, because EAI-managed schools cost 11% *more* to operate than district-run schools, and reading and math scores of EAI students dropped after the first and second years, while control group test scores increased. (EAI students caught up in the third year.) While overall teaching effectiveness was the same between EAI- and district-run schools, "the promise that EAI could improve instruction without spending more than Baltimore City ... has been discredited."

The Baltimore School Superintendent cited the following lessons learned: anticipate conflict; secure buy-in of all constituencies beforehand; establish specific performance objectives with accountability mechanisms linked to funding; establish a reasonable timeframe for changes to occur, and manage expectations; agree to terms of severance; anticipate the need to renegotiate the contract, as flexibility is needed to resolve unexpected issues.

Privatization of Prisons

Many states—including Florida—have turned to private prisons to address the issues of prison overcrowding and the capital expense of building new prisons, and to reduce the cost of prison operations. Advocates argue that private prisons can achieve savings by purchasing in bulk, eliminating overtime and employee benefits, and reducing red tape. Opponents argue that a true and accurate comparison between public and private costs and services is difficult and complex, and does not provide a compelling argument for privatizing prison services.

Only a single case study was provided: a horror story of "racketeering, money laundering and conspiracy" in Pennsylvania that involved current and former judges who reportedly received \$2.6 million in kickbacks for sending thousands of juveniles to 2 private detention centers.

A 1999 meta-analysis¹ of 33 cost-effectiveness evaluations of private and public prisons from 24 independent studies (available on our

website) revealed that "private prisons were no more cost-effective than public prisons, and that other institutional characteristics—such as the facility's economy of scale, age, and security level—were the strongest predictors of a prison's daily per diem cost."

Another 1999 study² available from the American Behavioral Scientist concludes there is a "pendulum pattern" in public and private systems because "prisons ... cannot be managed as effectively as expected by the media, political elites, or general public regardless of whether they are entirely under government control or whether they involve extensive privatization."

¹ Pratt, Travis C. and Maahs, Jeff, "[Are Private Prisons More Cost-Effective Than Public Prisons?](#)" Crime and Delinquency, 1999.

² Schneider, Anne Larason, "[Public-Private Partnerships in the U.S. Prison System](#)," American Behavioral Scientist, 1 Sep 99.

Privatization of a Publicly Owned Waster Water Treatment Plant

Since 1972 the EPA has invested more than \$67 billion in federal funds into publicly owned wastewater treatment works (POTW) across the country. A 1992 executive order directed federal agencies to remove regulatory barriers to privatizing POTWs under their control. This paper is a case study of the first POTW privatized under that executive order.

In 1995 a contractor purchased the POTW in Franklin OH in an agreement that gave the state the option to buy it back in 20 years. Additionally, all plant personnel were retained. The city's rates for wastewater disposal were reduced by 23% during the first year of the contract, and with the exception of energy and chemical costs, future rate increases were limited to increases in the rate of inflation.

The pace of economic development in the area increased after the sale. Stabilized wastewater treatment fees were reportedly a primary incentive for expanding operations of 3 area paper industries and a subsequent increase in jobs. This was closely followed by an expansion of the water distribution system from ~4 million gallons per day up to 10 million. Franklin now has another public/private POTW.

Depending on the terms of the contract, EPA and/or OMB review and approval may or may not be required to sell POTW assets.

2011-12 Calendar

Fair & Proportionate Sentencing Laws

Nov 19th, Noon-2:00
Greg Newburn of Families Against Mandatory Minimums and State Attorney Bill Eddins will discuss mandatory minimum sentencing over lunch at Two Trees Restaurant (1955 Lewis Turner Blvd). RSVP by [email](#) or call 621-4088

Holiday Party

Dec 18th: 2-4:00 pm

Privatization Study

Study and consensus results are due 1 May 2012, so meetings will be scheduled soon. Watch your email and the [website calendar](#) for details.

Healthcare Reform: What will it mean?

Jan: Find out what's really in the Affordable Care Act, and how it will affect you personally.
(Date/time/location TBD)

2012 Presidential Preference Primary

Jan 31st: Democracy is not a spectator sport. All registered Republicans: Make your voices heard at your polling place.

Human Trafficking

Feb: It's a modern day scourge primarily affecting women and children. Find out what you can do about it in Okaloosa County.
(Date/time/location TBD)

Beach Nourishment

March: Is it sustainable in the long run, economically and environmentally? Is it best for our County? Listen to both sides and decide.
(Date/time/location TBD)

Status of Children in Okaloosa County

April: It's Child Abuse Prevention Month; come learn how our County is meeting the challenge.
(Date/time/location TBD)

Annual Meeting

Apr 28th, 10:00am-1:00pm
(Location TBD)

State of the County Report

May: Local elected officials report and take questions from citizens.
(Date/time/location TBD)