

*A force for progress on the Emerald Coast since 1962!*

**Nov / Dec 2012**

"Take 20 minutes out of your day, do what young people all over the world are dying to do: vote."

*Rick Mercer  
Canadian author*



### Absentee Ballot Alert

If you will be voting by absentee ballot, be sure to put enough postage on your return envelope. One stamp is not enough, and *ballots with insufficient postage will not be accepted!* Make sure your vote counts: use two stamps or take it to the Post Office.



**Early Voting:  
7:00 am – 7:00 pm  
27 Oct – 3 Nov**

at Shalimar Courthouse Annex, Niceville City Hall, SoE Office & Bob Sikes Library in Crestview



### 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.*

## Message from the President

We headline every issue of the Voter with a pertinent quote, and I chose this one with care. I spent 20 years in uniform myself, and have a niece stationed in Afghanistan right now. People have many excuses for not voting, but none can withstand scrutiny, especially considering the price we have paid and continue to pay for that right.

Voting in Florida is especially important, because our ~11.5 million registered voters (40%

Democrats, 36% Republicans and 24% independents) control 29 electoral votes. Those electoral votes and our large independent population make Florida the largest swing state. Do your homework (<http://www.lwvokaloosa.org/E-votergeneral2012/2012E-voter.html>) and do your duty.

**Be prepared. Be informed. Be a voter!**

*Mary Blackwell*

## Merit retention of justices and judges

All voters in Okaloosa and Walton Counties will see the Supreme Court justices and 1st District Court of Appeals judges who are up for merit retention this year.

One of the best metaphors for our Supreme Court justices and Appeals Court judges is that they are Florida's referees. It is not their job to root for one team or litigant over the other or to bring their personal ideology to their role. They are there to interpret the law.

Under judicial merit retention, the justices and appeals judges appear on the ballot in staggered terms. This year's election provides voters the opportunity to review three

Supreme Court justices. Voters covered by the 1st District Court of Appeals will also see four appeals judges on the ballot.

They all reached their positions originally after being carefully screened by Judicial Nominating Committees and appointed by Florida governors in a process known as judicial merit selection, so they are already vetted.

Research suggests many Florida voters are unclear of what judicial merit retention means. Often, they skip this section of the ballot. We urge you to vote the entire ballot.

**Be prepared. Be informed. Be a voter!**

## Okaloosa/Walton E-Voter now on-line

As you prepare to vote, be sure to check out the information at <http://www.lwvokaloosa.org/E-votergeneral2012/2012E-voter.html> in the E-Voter. For the first time we included Walton County races, since there is no League there and voters have limited resources.

We included links to candidate websites wherever available so you can do more in-depth research. We

especially urge you to prepare in advance for the eleven proposed constitutional amendments that will appear on the ballot. They are complex and will require some thought **before** Election Day.

Don't be that guy who walks into the precinct and keeps everyone waiting while he reads the ballot for the first time. **Be prepared. Be informed. Be a voter!**

## WSRE Rally 2012: General Election Edition

This issue will reach you too late to tune in for the televised candidate forum, so I hope you saw the notice on the website in time. If not, don't despair. WSRE always posts the videos in a timely fashion. Watch them: <http://www.wsre.org/rally/>.

You'll have to watch the first half hour of each night's program to see the races that apply to Okaloosa County. The three-way race for

U.S. Congress District 1 is the first item on the 25 October program, and the two-way race for Okaloosa County Commission District 1 is the first item on the 26 October program.

Be sure to watch both, because the new Congressional district encompasses all of Okaloosa County, and our county commissioners are elected at large.

## Legislative Priorities for 2013

The 2013 legislative session begins on March 5th, and we are already preparing. Our lobbyist and members in Tallahassee follow all the issues of interest to League, but due to limited resources, we always prioritize. Local Leagues across Florida submitted recommendations for the upcoming session, and here are the top three priorities:

- Government in Florida
- Social Policy in Florida
- Education in Florida

The count was extremely close, and members expressed interest in a number of areas. These included strengthening the Florida Commission on Ethics, campaign finance

## Are you ready to vote?

[VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org) has all the information you need to make sure you, and your families and friends, are ready, no matter what state they live in.

This election may be the most important election of our lifetime. It really isn't about the day-to-day battles between candidates. **It's about voters, like you.** This election will impact you and the people in your life. It's about your job, your health, your community, and your future. Voting is your chance to stand up for the issues you believe in, and make sure your family and friends do, too.

In addition to information on early and absentee voting, use [VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org) to set up your **personalized voting guide** that will include up-to-date information you need to cast your ballot, including

## How many presidential candidates are there?

Everyone knows about incumbent President Barack Obama and former Governor Mitt Romney. Did you know that 10 other parties qualified to put their nominees on the Florida ballot? In addition, there are six sets of write-in candidates.

You can see all the candidates in the Okaloosa/Walton E-Voter here: [http://www.lwvokaloosa.org/E-votergeneral2012/2012E-voter\\_national.html](http://www.lwvokaloosa.org/E-votergeneral2012/2012E-voter_national.html), where you'll also find links to their websites.

LWVUS has also prepared a Voters' Guide to the presidential candidates who met the following criteria:

- The candidate must have made a public announcement of her/his intention to run for President;
- The candidate must qualify for

reform and Sunshine laws; restoring education funding for K-College; ending unfunded mandates for schools; implementing the Affordable Care Act and supporting women's rights. Most Leaguers are also concerned about water quality and water conservation.

The next step will be visiting our legislators to let them know how we feel about these issues and find out where they stand. If you have a particular question you'd like to ask, please forward it to me ([mary.blackwell@lwvokaloosa.org](mailto:mary.blackwell@lwvokaloosa.org)) by 10 November and we'll add it to the list. If you want to come along for the legislative interviews, call me at 621-4088.

your polling place, and important deadlines to remember.

### Where will you be on Election Day?

If you'll be away from your polling place due to travel, work, school or other reasons, you'll need to take advantage of early voting or cast an absentee ballot to vote.

Voting brings us together as Americans – **it is the one time when we are all equal.** It doesn't matter if you're rich or poor, young or old, liberal or conservative; Election Day is your opportunity to support your community and have a say in America's future. Voting allows you to have an impact on these critical issues and the policies that will be debated in the coming years, so if you or a loved one needs to vote early or request an absentee ballot to vote this year, take action **now**.

the ballot in enough states to win a majority of electoral votes; and,

- The candidate must meet the Presidential Election Campaign Fund Act's minimum contribution threshold requirements for qualifying for matching funds as of October 1, 2012.

Responses were received from all four Presidential candidates who met the criteria. These include: Gary Johnson (Libertarian), Barack Obama (D), Mitt Romney (R) and Jill Stein (Green). The Presidential information is now published at <http://onyourballot.vote411.org/race-detail.do?id=10242286#.UII714VvMrg>

You can also download a PDF version from the E-Voter here: [http://www.lwvokaloosa.org/documents/2012-LWVUS\\_PresCandResponses.pdf](http://www.lwvokaloosa.org/documents/2012-LWVUS_PresCandResponses.pdf).

## 2012-13 Calendar

### Lunch with Matt Gaetz

**29 Nov, 11:30-1:00pm**  
Location: Two Trees Restaurant, 1955 Lewis Turner Blvd, FWB. Rep. Gaetz will provide a preview of the upcoming session. The meeting is open to the public, but seating is limited to 25 and cost is \$15 per person, payable in advance. Confirmations will be sent to the first 25 people who RSVP **with their check** to LWVOC, P.O. Box 4546, FWB 32549.

### Holiday Party

16 Dec, 1-4:00pm  
Location: 1562 Glenlake Circle, Niceville. Members are invited to bring a friend and side dish to share some holiday spirit.



### Face the Facts USA

Because the fact-to-noise ratio in America is so off the charts – and the League knows that facts matter – you might be interested in this website. It offers daily short emails and information that slice through the hyperbole, spin and slant that gunk up the biggest issues facing America today. It presents researched and vetted facts in a compelling, easy-to-digest way. Check it out at <http://facethefactsusa.org>.

### “Like” LWVUS on Facebook and Twitter

With election season heating up, we're seeing an uptick on the LWVUS social media channels – and we're now within striking distance of 15,000 Facebook fans and 2,000 Twitter followers! Help us reach these milestones by liking us on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/leagueofwomenvoters?ref=ts>) and following us on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/LWV>) and by sharing our Facebook page and Twitter feed with your networks, and asking them to like us too. Together, we can expand our reach!

### LWVUS Blog

Tired of aimlessly cruising the Internet? Check out “Right Now: Voices of the League,” to get the latest at <http://www.lwv.org/blog>.