



The Okaloosa Voter

A force for progress on the Emerald Coast since 1962

Sep / Oct 2013

“The standard you walk past is the standard you accept.”

*Lt Gen David Morrison
Chief of the Australian Army*



Remember the dream: 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington

I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

Martin Luther King Jr.
August 26, 1963



Renew your membership now!



The new League year begins in September, and your member invoices have been mailed. Our state and county need League to keep our democracy strong. So please return your invoice and check as soon as you receive it. Thank you!



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

This issue's quote has a video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QaqpoeVgr8U>. Lt Gen Morrison taped his message in June as a result of an investigation into unacceptable behavior by Australian soldiers. His message is clear and unambiguous: each of us has a duty to enforce standards, and if we ignore unacceptable behavior, we are in fact condoning it.

I thought of this as I watched the commemoration of the 1963 March on Washington, when 250,000 people of every creed and color and all

walks of life gathered to urge our nation to do the right thing regarding civil rights for all Americans. As Dr. King reminded us then, the long arc of the moral universe bends toward justice, but it doesn't bend on its own. It needs brave people to stand up and be counted.

It is often difficult and even frightening to do the right thing, but turning a blind eye means you are part of the problem. I am grateful for the courage of those marchers in 1963, and I pray each of us will have the courage to emulate them.

Join us for "back to League" on 21 Sep

Our first general meeting for the 2013-14 League year will be held in conjunction with the fall Coastal Cleanup on **Saturday, 21 Sep**.

This semiannual event sponsored by the Okaloosa County Environmental Council will take place from 8-10:00am. Please join us behind the Surf Dweller Condo on Okaloosa Island (554 Coral Ct off Santa Rosa Blvd) for the cleanup, and then come to our meeting afterwards at the Surf Dweller to learn all about the current Water & Land Legacy

Campaign to secure permanent funding to protect our state's natural resources, and to collect petitions to put the Florida Water & Land Conservation Amendment on the Nov 2014 ballot. Read the proposed amendment here: <http://floridawaterlandlegacy.org/pages/126/the-florida-water-and-land-conservation-amendment/>.

We look forward to seeing you at the clean up **and** the meeting. Both events are free, and both will have cold drinks on hand for attendees!

School Choice meeting on 26 Oct

Did you know our county has four charter schools and one contract school? As part of the Florida League's statewide study on School Choice, we will be hearing from a panel of county charter school representatives from **10:00-noon on Saturday, 26 Oct**, at Niceville City Hall (208 N. Partin Dr).

Do our charters measure up to the state constitutional requirement to provide a "high quality" education for Okaloosa County students? And

do they really save money? We must be doing something right, since Collegiate and Niceville high schools were rated the #1 and #2 best performing public high schools in Florida for 2012.

Please join us on 26 Oct to ask questions and learn if and how our charters offer a genuine alternative that ensures a quality education for our children. The meeting is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.

Spotlight on mental healthcare in county jails 16 Nov

Okaloosa County already contracts out healthcare for its correctional facilities, and in June Florida's 1st District Court ruled that the state may do likewise. A recent study by the University of Southern FL shows giving patients better mental health care both reduces the prison population and saves us money, so now is a good time to see how our County Courts and jails deal with defendants and prisoners who have mental health issues.

We assembled a panel including County Mental Health Court Judge Patricia Grinsted and representatives from the County Jail and its contract medical services provider to discuss the issues on **16 Nov from 10:00-noon** at the Courthouse Annex extension on Lewis Turner Blvd. Join us to learn how this affects you and our county.

The meeting is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.

Isn't it time you joined League?

How long have you been on our mailing list? How many of our meetings have you attended? Did you use the E-Voter last year to learn about the candidates and the many ballot initiatives before the General Election? Do you want our democracy to remain strong?

Well, so does League. What are you waiting for? Send your check made out to LWVOC for \$50 (individual), \$75 (household), or \$100 (Susan B. Anthony member) to Rod Debs, Treasurer, 303 Anchors Pl, Niceville, 32578. Democracy is not a spectator sport – join today!

Common Core standards under attack

Remember the LWVUS nationwide study of the federal government's role in education in 2011? Half our membership met several times over the course of two months to discuss the issue papers produced by the LWVUS Education Study committee and reach consensus.

One of the (many) things study participants discussed was the Common Core standards. One of the things we liked best about them was the fact that they did **NOT** come from the federal government. Rather, they were the brainchild of state governors and corporate leaders anxious to ensure our schools provide the educated workforce we'll need in future to compete in

the global marketplace. That's right: the federal government did not develop these standards; it just endorsed them after over 40 states adopted them independently.

Make no mistake: the Common Core standards are rigorous, and students will be challenged; but the states adopted them voluntarily without prompting from DC. Now the feds are on board, and suddenly the states are balking. Do we want our students to measure up or fall behind? Before you jump onto this politically motivated bandwagon, please check out the Common Core for yourself. You'll find them here: <http://www.corestandards.org/>.

Women's Hall of Fame inducts new members

The Okaloosa County Women's Hall of Fame gained three new members in August, when it inducted Rogene Anchors Hasty, Sara "Sam" Seevers and the late Mary Burnette.

Fourth generation Okaloosa native Rogene Hasty received the Pioneer Award in recognition of her lengthy community service as Crestview's first Newcomer Greeting Hostess, and her professional contributions as Executive Director of Crestview's Chamber of Commerce.

Destin Mayor Sam Seevers won the Contemporary Award as a highly active community leader. She served on the Destin City Council from 2002-10, and was elected first female Destin mayor in 2010. She is current president of the Okaloosa County League of Cities and is frequently recognized for her volunteer activities.

Mrs. Burnette was honored with the Education Award for her pioneering work as the first African-American teacher in Okaloosa County. She oversaw start-up of the county's segregated schools and later led the fight for school integration. She also lobbied successfully for a local Head Start Program in 1967, and directed it for 22 years.

The Women's Hall of Fame honors and recognizes women who have made significant contributions to improve quality-of-life for county citizens. The Okaloosa County Commission on the Status of Women sponsors the Hall of Fame, and holds the annual induction ceremony each August in conjunction with Women's Equality Day.

For more information, go to: <http://occs.org/halloffame.htm>.

Are you a climate change denier?

If we were to make a list of important issues being clouded by political infighting, climate change would be near the top. So let me get this over with: Climate change is happening, and humans are causing it.

Regardless of where you fall on the political spectrum, it is a fact that the vast, overwhelming majority of **scientists** who study this particular field agree upon these fundamental scientific truths, because of the

vast, overwhelming evidence supporting them. While you're entitled to your own opinion, you are not entitled to your own facts. Evidence (<http://climate.nasa.gov/evidence>) must trump ideological opinions.

The discussion now must focus on what – if anything – we should be doing about climate change. See League's environmental positions: <http://www.thefloridavoter.org/resources/issues/natural-resources>.

2013-14 Calendar

Back to League

21 Sep, 10:00-noon
Surf Dweller Condo (554 Coral Ct, FWB)
Join us after the Coastal Cleanup on Okaloosa Island to learn about the Florida Land & Water Legacy campaign. We'll discuss the importance of efforts to put a conservation amendment on the Nov 2014 ballot, and collect signatures for the citizen's petition.

School Choice

26 Oct, 10:00-noon
Niceville City Hall (208 N. Partin Dr)
Learn about our county charter schools. How well do they perform? Are taxpayers getting their money's worth, and are students getting a quality education? Join us and find out from our panel of experts from the charters.

Mental Healthcare in county jails

16 Nov, 10:00-noon
County Courthouse Annex Ext (1940 Lewis Turner Blvd, FWB)
Learn how we provide mental healthcare for prisoners in our county from a panel including County Judge Patricia Grinstead and representatives from the County Jail and its contract medical services provider.



Travel with League

27-29 Sep: Join League for three days to enjoy historic sites, lush botanical gardens, Duval Street and so much more of what beautiful **Key West** offers. Try snorkeling and bird watching in Dry Tortugas National Park! Sign up: <http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?l=JhigmrDab&oeidk=a07e70xnIsoc53d0169&oseq=>.

14-20 Oct: Explore **Cuba** on a *Sisters Across the Straits* delegation this fall. See Havana, Cienfuegos and the lovely countryside; meet fellow Leaguers; build relationships with Cuban women. Find out more: <http://www.thefloridavoter.org/events/sisters-across-the-straits>.