



# The Okaloosa Voter

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

**Nov / Dec 2013**

"The only way to make sure people you agree with can speak is to support the rights of people you don't agree with."

*Eleanor Holmes Norton  
American Attorney, Educator  
and Politician*



**Count your blessings!**



Muharram, Thanksgiving, Chanukah, Christmas and Kwanzaa are almost here, so now is the time to reflect on how lucky we are to be here to celebrate another year with our families, and to remember those who can't be home for the holidays and those who have lost loved ones in the last year.

Why not end this year by "paying it forward?" It doesn't take much. Just throw another dollar in the collection plate, send a care package to the troops, donate to a charity, or perform a random act of kindness. You'll quickly realize it truly is better to give than to receive.



**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

I'm not sure where the time goes, but it's the last issue of the Voter for 2013. My family has just marked several big milestones, some with grief, others with joy, and at least one with both. As I reflect on those anniversaries it becomes very apparent how important my family is to me, and how lucky I am to be part of such a big, happy clan. I was well over 30 years old before I realized that most other people did **not** share my experience.

So count all the blessings in your life and be thankful. Don't take your family, friends and loved ones for granted, and don't ever pass up a chance to let them know how much you care. Ask yourself each day how you can be a better person and how you can make life better for everyone around you. Change is inevitable, but progress is not, so be part of the solution! My best wishes to everyone for a wonderful and blessed holiday season.

*Mary Blackwell*

## Spotlight on mental healthcare in county jails 16 Nov

Last June ThinkProgress reported that giving patients better mental health care both reduces the prison population and saves us money (<http://thinkprogress.org/health/2013/06/27/2224171/mental-health-care-prison-population/>).

Saving taxpayer money is a top priority, so now is a good time to see how our County Courts and jails deal with defendants and prisoners who have mental health issues. To that end, League assembled a panel

featuring County Mental Health Court Judge Patricia Grinsted, Okaloosa Jail Population Manager Paul Farnsworth and Susan Priddy of Corizon Health, the jail's contract medical services provider. They will discuss the issues on **16 Nov from 10:00-noon** at Shalimar Town Hall, #3 Cherokee Rd (across Eglin Pkwy from the Post Office).

The meeting is free and open to the public, so please join us! Refreshments will be served.

## Florida to use unreliable data to purge voter rolls

In mid-October Florida Secretary of State Ken Detzner wrapped up the ironically named "Project Integrity Tour," meant to inspire confidence in plans to use the SAVE (System Alien Verification for Entitlements) database exclusively to purge the state's voter rolls, even though other federal agencies use multiple databases to verify citizenship. According to Florida League President Deirdre Macnab, "Homeland Security has already warned that this database is not a foolproof means of verifying the voter rolls."

Registering to vote as a non-citizen is a crime, and non-citizens should not vote. However, haste makes waste, and eligible citizens should

not be removed due to inaccurate and unreliable information.

The League of Women Voters supports the state's 67 independently elected Supervisors of Elections. They and their staffs are on the front lines of every Florida election, and they know what works. They update our voter rolls every day to keep our database clean, accurate and efficient.

League believes the problem in Florida is not the voter rolls, but rather that not enough citizens are voting. We must find more effective ways to facilitate active voter turnout, not erect roadblocks. Florida has work to do.

## "First Call" to LWVUS Convention, 6-10 June 2014

The Convention 2014 webpage has launched at [www.lwv.org/member-resources/convention-2014](http://www.lwv.org/member-resources/convention-2014). Local, state and national League leaders will meet in Dallas for this event to hear nationally-known speakers, learn about the issues important to League and the nation, participate in training sessions, and join in the discussion and networking that

make League a strong and vital force in our democracy. Check the website for more information.

### Holiday Party

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

## Common Core standards: Get the facts

As mentioned in the last issue, we've recently seen Common Core and PARCC (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) all over the news here in Florida, as groups and individuals take stands for and against these new educational standards and tests. However, before you decide to love or hate these new educational reforms, get all the facts.

Common Core was developed by a bi-partisan coalition of governors and educators from across the country who all agree that there must be national standards of excellence in place for our schools to improve. Common Core raises

standards and emphasizes the use of information to solve problems, rather than basic memorization of facts. The PARCC tests will measure students' proficiency on these skills.

The aim of Common Core is to reduce remediation rates at colleges and universities and prepare students for jobs that require higher levels of thinking than any previous generation needed. Forty-five states have already begun implementing Common Core, and it is time Florida joined them in saying "yes" to higher standards, better-prepared students, and an enriching future for our children and grandchildren.

## Florida should expand Medicaid coverage

With Legislative committee weeks already underway in Tallahassee, and the 2014 session just around the corner, it's time for lawmakers to re-address Medicaid expansion. Expanding Medicaid eligibility is a moral and economic imperative that will dramatically reduce the number of Florida citizens without coverage, provide a much-needed shot in the arm to our flagging economy, and make our state more competitive for business and investment.

In October Ohio joined 24 other states in accepting federal money for Medicaid expansion. Republican Governor John Kasich said that the state needed to extend Medicaid coverage to "reclaim its share of federal taxes to support jobs here in Ohio – jobs that will be created in other states with our money if Ohio does not extend coverage." Unfortunately, Florida's leadership has yet to reach the same conclu-

sion. By refusing to expand Medicaid, they have forced citizens to watch our tax dollars leave Florida to pay for healthcare coverage in other states.

Under the Affordable Care Act, states that expand Medicaid eligibility will receive significant federal funding. In Florida this would amount to an estimated \$51 billion over the next 10 years, facilitating creation of over 120,000 new jobs.

Nearly a dozen Republican governors – including Jan Brewer in Arizona, Rick Snyder in Michigan and Tom Corbett in Pennsylvania – have opted to expand Medicaid. League encourages Florida's elected leaders to follow suit: accept the federal money and ensure that Florida's most vulnerable citizens have access to quality, affordable healthcare. Urge your state representative to expand Medicaid eligibility now!

## League's Election Improvement Agenda

LWVUS has released a new report, *Election Improvement Agenda* ([http://www.lwv.org/files/LWV%20ElectionImprovementAgenda-Final\\_0.pdf](http://www.lwv.org/files/LWV%20ElectionImprovementAgenda-Final_0.pdf)), which identifies central challenges facing our complex and outdated election system and provides a targeted action plan for overcoming the fallout from recent voter suppression attempts and the Supreme Court ruling that gutted the Voting Rights Act.

This comprehensive report showcases the best of what League volunteers and activists have done to overcome the challenges voters face nationwide. It also includes our key federal, state, and local advocacy and education priorities to protect and expand the vote even as we strive to grow our winning

voter registration and education programs. League's suggestions to improve the polling place experience for voters include:

- Secure online voter registration
- Permanent and portable statewide voter registration
- Expanded early voting
- Improved polling place management
- Electronic streamlining

League believes these improvements would let voters know they are the central actors in our nation's democratic system, just as customers are central to any business enterprise. Please read the report and keep in mind these key priorities as we work to support and serve voters in 2013 and 2014!

## 2013-14 Calendar

### Mental Healthcare in county jails

**16 Nov**, 10:00-noon  
Shalimar Town Hall (#2 Cherokee Rd, Shalimar)  
Learn how we provide mental healthcare for prisoners in our county from a panel including County Judge Patricia Grinsted, Okaloosa County Jail Inmate Population Manager Paul Farnsworth and Susan Priddy of Corizon Health, the jail's contract medical services provider.

### Need a Patient Navigator?

Get help signing up for Obamacare. Contact Kara Bryant of Families Count.  
Phone: 850-941-7156  
Toll Free: 888-390-5131  
[navigator@familiescount.net](mailto:navigator@familiescount.net)

### Travel with League

**9-10 Nov**: Join League for a two-day kayaking trip and experience the pristine Peace River, wildlife, landscapes, flora and fauna with an experienced guide! Spend the night enjoying a campfire under the stars. To register or ask questions contact:  
[LWVOffice@gmail.com](mailto:LWVOffice@gmail.com).

### Florida on the Line

Listen to a recording of last month's call covering the influence of money on U.S. politics, featuring Dave Levinthal from the Center for Public Integrity ([www.publicintegrity.org](http://www.publicintegrity.org)). Dial 605-475-4895 and use access code 643895#. Dial # when prompted for a reference number.



### \$3 Million Question

In October SCOTUS heard oral arguments in *McCutcheon v. FEC*, dubbed by many the "next *Citizens United*." Check out the LWVUS blog post at [www.lwv.org/blog/3-million-question?utm\\_source=LeadersUpdate&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=LU20131031](http://www.lwv.org/blog/3-million-question?utm_source=LeadersUpdate&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=LU20131031), which recaps the argument and outlines what the future of campaign finance reform could look like once the case is decided.