



The Okaloosa Voter

A force for progress on the Emerald Coast since 1962

May / June 2014

"Freedom unexercised may become freedom forfeited."

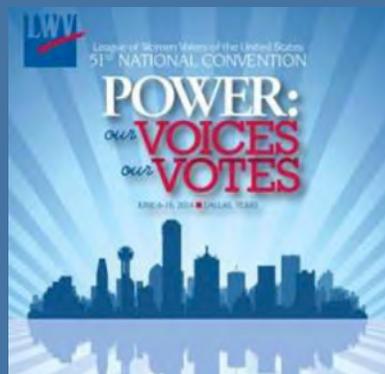
*Margaret Chase Smith
Former U.S. Senator and
Representative from Maine*



Don't miss the 15th annual State of the County Report on Saturday, 3 May, from 10:00-noon at the FWB Chamber of Commerce. Details at right.



LWVUS Convention 2014



Florida League wants **you** at National Convention. We need more members as delegates June 6-10 at the Omni Dallas Downtown Hotel, Dallas TX. Contact us at info@lwvokaloosa.org if you'd like to go. To learn more, sign up for the webinar, *Get the most out of Convention: Power the League at all Levels*, scheduled for 2:00pm CDT on Wednesday, 14 May. Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/lcput49>.



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 will focus on the outcome of the recent League of Women Voters of Florida Legislative Summit and Council of Leaders, and the "double our membership" drive.

You'll notice that this Voter has a special attachment: an invitation for you to join League. If you read the Voter, you know what League is all about. Our community needs leaders like you to make a difference, so please consider returning

your completed membership form and check. We also welcome your donations, but we really want *you!*

I'm always fond of reminding our readers that democracy is not a spectator sport, so get in the game! It's also good to remember that change is inevitable, but progress is not, so join League in strengthening our democracy and making our wonderful community even better!

Mary Blackwell

15th Annual State of the County Report

League is partnering with the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce to present the 15th annual SOTC on Saturday, 3 May, from 10:00-noon in the Chamber conference room at 34 Miracle Strip Pkwy SE, FWB.

This year's event features Sheriff Larry Ashley, County Commission Chair Kelly Windes, and School

Board Chair Rodney Walker, who will each report on their area of responsibility. There will be ample time for citizens to ask questions.

The public is welcome at this free meeting, so bring a friend and join us to hear from our elected officials and ask them about the issues that are important to you. Light refreshments will be served.

LWVOC 2014 Annual Meeting

Please join me in congratulating our new officers and board members for 2014-15:

- President: Mary Blackwell
- 1st VP: Rev. Rod Debs
- 2nd VP: Stan Berg
- Treasurer: Diane Hodgins
- Secretary: Steven Pepper
- Board members: Amber Sweeney and Barbara Smith

Thanks to everyone who attended, and special thanks to our wonderful speaker, Linda Sumblin, who provided great information on the services at CareerSource Okaloosa Walton (formerly JobsPlus).

In addition to electing new officers and approving the budget, we also laid out next year's event schedule. Stay tuned for details!

Report from the 2014 Legislative Summit & Council

Okaloosa League members Diane Hodgins and Carol Davis attended this year's combined event in Tallahassee. Following are some highlights from their trip report.

The first evening was spent in LWV issues briefings and lobby training. It was a short but intense session to introduce and explain the five bills members would focus on when they met with legislators:

- Yes to affordable health care expansion for low wage workers
- Yes to in-state tuition for certain undocumented immigrants
- Yes to legislation to protect Florida's water resources
- No to voucher expansion for corporate tax credits
- Yes to on-line voter registration

Attendees were coached on how to conduct a good legislative interview

before departing for the House Chamber, where Leaguers were introduced and recognized from the floor with a standing ovation. Diane reported the moment was a "very powerful" testament to League's influence and impact.

On Day 2 members heard from various officials, including Secretary of State Ken Detzner, Secretary Wansley Walters of the Juvenile Justice System, Senator David Simmons and Representatives Lori Berman, Bobby Powell, Karen Dentil and Heather Fritzenhagen. Other speakers included clean energy proponent Susan Glickman and Planned Parenthood representative Beth Swicker. Diane and Carol spent the afternoon lobbying Senators Gaetz and Evers and Representatives Broxson and Gaetz.

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Report from the 2014 Legislative Summit & Council (cont'd)

(Continued from page 1)

John Moran provided a presentation on the Springs Eternal Project, which photographically documented various Florida springs since the 1980s to demonstrate the impact of environmental degradation. (We hope to bring Mr. Moran here in September to raise awareness.)

Council commenced on Day 3, with discussion/approval of the budget and the Consensus Report on Charter Schools/Statewide Study on School Choice. Approved action items included:

- Support LWVF President's bid to run for LWVUS President.
- Publish poster to advertise League's voter registration

State of the Florida League

LWVF President Deirdre Macnab made the following remarks at the recent Council of Leaders.

What does all of our work do?

- A successful lawsuit in past weeks protected Florida voters from being purged within 90 days of a Federal election.
- A 31-year campaign for the Fair Districts amendments reduced gerrymandering by finally setting clear rules for drawing political districts in 2010.
- Roadblocks to voting were eliminated after League demanded reinstatement of early voting days – including the Sunday before Election Day – following long lines and delays for voters in 2012.
- A national, precedent-setting League victory in court last year struck down unconstitutional restrictions on voter registration.
- The Legacy Amendment is on this November's ballot, helped by 25,000 petitions collected by Leaguers all across Florida.
- League's JUST SAY NO campaign in 2012 persuaded Florida voters to reject 7 of 9 bad amendments on the ballot – including one that would have eroded judicial independence.
- League helped halt the Legisla-

services

- Request Secretary Detzner issue a requirement for ADA compliant restrooms in polling places.

Members rejected a bid to have the LWVF board endorse legalized marijuana, as well as one to oppose legislation that weakens state's current pension plan.

Florida Legislature poised to refuse \$51 Billion: League has been advocating for the Legislature to accept the \$51 billion in federal dollars to expand Medicaid coverage to nearly 1 million Floridians, but the bill has not been heard in either chamber. This refusal will hurt our most vulnerable citizens. Phone your representative today and register your support for this initiative.

ture's efforts to sell "Florida Forever" wilderness.

The Florida League has grown 30% in the past five years and is now far more reflective of our state and its great diversity, including more men, young people and minorities. Unfortunately national League membership continues to decline, and no men, no young people and no minorities are on the upcoming national slate.

If you are already a member, please consider joining us as a Florida delegate in Dallas this June to show your support for a 21st century League for a 21st century population and world. Be a part of history: The nation needs League at full capacity to ensure America continues to reach its full promise as we work together to address the challenges of voter suppression, campaign finance abuse, privatization of our schools and degradation of our waterways and environment.

If you are not yet a member, there is no time to lose! The Florida League's numerous successes demonstrate that when we work together, we can move the world forward. Join us, and let's move Florida to a better future!

Okaloosa County Women's Wall of Honor Induction

In 2004 the Okaloosa County Commission on the Status of Women established the Wall of Honor to recognize women who have been nominated by their family, friends and peers for their contributions toward improving the welfare of all county residents.

In 2014, 19 new names will be added to the Wall, which is located

on the Library's second floor at UWF- Emerald Coast (Bldg 8, 1170 MLK Jr Blvd, FWB). Each new member's picture and a summary of her contributions will also be placed in the Wall of Honor Commemorative book at the Wall site.

Please join us at this free event on Tuesday, 6 May, at 10:00am to recognize these deserving ladies.

2014 Calendar

Okaloosa County Women's Wall of Honor Induction

6 May, 10:00 a.m.

UWF Auditorium, Bldg 8, 1170 MLK Jr Blvd, FWB
Recognize women who sacrifice to help members of our community.

WSRE Rally (Primary)

August, Date TBD

This televised candidate forum showcases contested local races in our county.

Okaloosa County Women's Hall of Fame Induction

26 Aug: 7:00 p.m.

NWFSC, 100 College Blvd, Niceville, Rm 133-34 SSC
Honor outstanding county women who have impacted our community.

Preserving Florida's Springs & Aquifers

September, Date TBD

Learn how to preserve our precious water resources.

Proposed Constitutional Amendments

October: Date TBD

Get the details on ballot initiatives before you vote.

WSRE Rally (General)

October: Date TBD

This televised candidate forum showcases contested local races in our county.

Spotlight on: Homeless

November: Date TBD

Opportunity Inc. Board Chair Judy Byrne Riley will update us on Continuum of Care activities and services.

Holiday Party

December: Date TBD

Update on Commercial Green Energy

January: Date TBD

Is Florida exploiting renewable energy? Find out.

E-Registration for Voters

February: Date TBD

Learn about what's next for Florida voter registration.

Juvenile Justice Process, Diversion Programs

March: Date TBD

How are young offenders handled? Find out here.

Annual Meeting

April: Date TBD

16th Annual State of the County Report

May: Date TBD



**League of Women Voters
of
Okaloosa County**

Not a member yet? What are you waiting for? Join today!

If you've been reading the *Okaloosa Voter*, or visiting our website at LWVOkaloosa.org, you know League is the organization where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic progress.

It's an election year, so in addition to our regular general meetings, we'll be busy with workshops on the ballot amendments, voter registration events and candidate forums. The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan, national grassroots organization that does not support or oppose political parties or candidates – we strive to educate voters so they can make informed choices. League is where individuals like you are actively engaged in creating positive change on the local, state and national levels.

You can be part of it by joining the Okaloosa League today, serving as a leader and working to shape the important issues that keep our community strong. I invite you to add your voice to over 100,000 League members and supporters nationwide, because democracy is not a spectator sport, and we need your help to keep our democracy strong!

Membership in the League of Women Voters of Okaloosa County is open to all women **and men** 18 years or older, and includes membership in the LWV United States and LWV Florida. Annual dues are \$100.00 for the Susan B. Anthony Membership; \$75.00 for a household membership (two-person); \$50.00 for an individual membership; and \$25.00 for students. **Dues are not tax-deductible**, but your contribution to the LWVF Education Fund marked for Okaloosa County **is fully tax-deductible**.

Help put an end to political apathy! Join us to become part of the solution by filling in the form below and returning it with your check. The Emerald Coast needs leaders like you to ensure our community remains a strong, safe and vibrant place to live. With your help, we can make democracy work for everyone. **Become a member today.**

Mary W. Blackwell
President, League of Women Voters of Okaloosa County

Membership Form

Yes, I want to join League and get involved!

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Susan B. Anthony Membership \$100.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Membership \$50.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Additional Family Member \$25.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Student Membership \$25.00 |

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____ Phone _____

**Please make your check payable to LWVOC and mail to:
Diane Hodgins, LWVOC Treasurer, 1752 Nancy Ward Cove, Niceville FL 32578.**

- I can't join right now, but I would like to make a tax-deductible donation.*

Please make your check payable to LWVF-EF, indicate "Okaloosa County" on the memo line and mail it to the LWVOC Treasurer at the address above.