



The Okaloosa Voter

A force for progress on the Emerald Coast since 1962

Sep / Oct 2014

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

*Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
American Preacher,*



General Election Voter Registration Book Closing: 6 October

Early Voting:

Monday, 20 October -
Saturday, 1 November
9:00 - 7:00 all days

General Election:

4 November, 7:00-7:00

Check your registration status, find your precinct or Early Voting locations and get all the election and voting information you need here:

<http://www.govote-okaloosa.com/>



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

OK, after years of voter turnouts just over 10%, you'd think I'd be happy with Okaloosa's 21% Primary turnout. We didn't match Walton County's 24%, but we did much better than Santa Rosa (15%) and Escambia (20%) Counties. However, overall this means only 20% of the Panhandle's registered voters turned out for the Primary that decided nearly all the local races.

The good news is we can thank some competitive races for boosting turnout in an off-year election. Incumbents did not fare well, so Walton and Okaloosa Counties will see some new faces on

their respective County Commissions and School Boards, as well on the First Circuit Court. Okaloosa County also has a new Clerk of the Court for the first time in over 20 years. I'm cautiously optimistic that the proposed constitutional amendments will provide a similar boost to the General Election turnout in November.

In the meantime please mark your calendars for the September and October general meetings, described below, which will help you cast an informed ballot on 6 Nov.

Mary Blackwell

Back to League: "Why Amendment 1?"

It's an election year, so we're jumping right in with a special discussion of proposed constitutional Amendment 1: the Florida Land and Water Conservation Initiative. How did this initiative get on the ballot? Why is it important? Who supports it? Who opposes it? Find out all about it before you cast your ballot.

Please join League from **6-8:00 pm on Thursday, 25 Sep, in the Destin**

Community Center (101 Stahlman Ave, opposite the Emerald Grand just over the Marler Bridge) for a panel discussion to address the amendment's background; explain what it would do; and provide all the answers you'll need to make an informed decision.

We look forward to seeing you at this free public event - and don't forget to bring a friend!

2014 proposed constitutional amendments explained

There will be three proposed constitutional amendments on the General Election Ballot. Don't wait until it's too late to do your research! Join League from **6-8:00 pm on Tuesday, 14 Oct, in the Brooks-Beal Center** (100 Beal Pkwy NW, FWB, at the corner of Yacht Club & Beal Pkwy) to learn all about these ballot initiatives.

There will be handouts plus ample time for questions. The event is free and open to the public, and parking is available right next to the building. Light refreshments will be served. Tell all your friends and mark your calendars today!

Be prepared. Be informed. Be a voter!

League available to brief on proposed amendments

If your group, organization or church wants to learn about the proposed constitutional amendments that will appear on the 4 Nov ballot, but your members don't want to wait for the League meeting on 14 Oct, you are in luck! League will be happy to present its briefing at one of your events.

The briefing takes about 30 minutes and covers the background of each amendment, identifies the supporters and opponents, and explains exactly what a "yes" or "no" vote will mean. Just call Mary (621-4088) or email (mary.blackwell@lwvokaloosa.org) to schedule a briefing.

Fair Districts Update

In 2010 Floridians approved the Fair Districts amendments to the state Constitution to ensure decennial redistricting would be nonpartisan. The Panhandle fared pretty well on the resulting map, but not so the districts on the peninsula. The gerrymandering was so flagrant that the Florida League sued to have the district maps redrawn. After a protracted legal battle, the court ruled in League's favor and ordered the Legislature to redraw the maps, which they did during a special session in August.

Circuit Judge Terry Lewis approved the new congressional maps and ruled that he would not order a special election in the affected districts. Instead the 2014 midterm elections will proceed using the state's existing maps, even though Judge Lewis ruled previously that two of the congressional districts were unconstitutional.

Judge Lewis likely made his decision based on Florida Secretary of State Ken Detzner's claim that the state couldn't organize special elections to fill the

seven newly drawn congressional seats until March 2015 at the earliest. But even that schedule "in all likelihood violates federal law requiring that members of Congress be elected on 4 Nov 14 and serve two-year terms."

Rather than throw the November elections into turmoil, Judge Lewis gave the Legislature's gerrymander another reprieve. Said the Florida League: "We are disappointed and plan to ask the appellate courts to review Judge Lewis' ruling."

General Election E-Voter: Yes, we'll publish an on-line candidate guide for the General Election by the end of September. It will include detailed information on all candidates in local races and general information on statewide and national races. We'll also have copies of the Florida League's Special Edition Voter to pass out at events, so make plans to attend the September and October meetings. (See calendar on the right.)

Big surge in no-party voters could reshape Florida politics

According to a recent article, unaffiliated voters account for nearly 90% of the growth in Florida's voter rolls since 2010, while the size of the two major parties has been stagnant.

In central and south Florida the no-party voters – combined with those who belong to minor parties – now outnumber Republicans in the large "swing" counties of Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm and Orange. NPA voters could potentially be decisive in a close 2014 race for governor – *but only if they vote*.

The decision to reject parties indicates many voters are turned off by partisan-

ship, but evidence indicates those who join a party are more likely to vote. Young people and Hispanics are most likely to reject the two parties, so some see this is a troubling trend. Florida League President Deirdre Macnab feels differently. "I see it as a good thing ... a sign of a more demanding electorate. It's an intriguing opportunity for candidates to persuade voters through the power of their ideas," she said. Read the entire article here: <http://www.tampabay.com/news/politics/stateroundup/big-surge-in-no-party-voters-could-reshape-florida-politics/2187226>.

Women's History Month 2015

"Weaving the Stories of Women's Lives" is the theme for National Women's History Month 2015.

According to the National Women's History Project (www.nwhp.org), the accounts of the lives of individual women provide strong role models, encourage girls and young women to think larger and bolder, and give boys and men a fuller understanding of the female experience.

2015 is also the 35th anniversary of the Women's History Movement and the National Women's History Project. Numerous scholars and activists provided the research and energy that has made the stories of American women from all cultures and classes more accessible and visible than ever before. During 2015, we recognize and celebrate the many ways that women's history has become woven into the fabric of our national story.

2014 Calendar

Why Amendment #1?

25 Sep, 6-8:00 p.m.

Destin Community Center, 101 Stahlman Ave, Destin
Learn all about Amendment 1 and what a "yes" or "no" vote will mean.

Proposed Constitutional Amendments

14 Oct, 6-8:00 p.m.

Brooks-Beal Center, 100 Beal Pkwy NW, FWB
Get the details on ballot initiatives before you vote.

WSRE Rally (General)

6 and 8 Oct, 7:00 p.m.

This televised candidate forum will showcase contested races in Okaloosa, Santa Rosa and Escambia Counties. Tune in to WSRE on satellite channel 23 or Cox channel 9 on Monday, 6 Oct, for the Okaloosa races.

Spotlight on the 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 or just waiting for the power to go off? 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 youthful offenders handled in our county? Find out at this meeting.



"The Simple Dollar" website has published a free *Guide to Financial Independence for Women*. Access it at <http://www.thesimpledollar.com/guide-to-financial-independence-for-women/>