



The Okaloosa Voter

A force for progress on the Emerald Coast since 1962

Nov / Dec 2014

"Democracy is not just the right to vote, it is the right to live in dignity."

*Naomi Klein.
Canadian journalist and author*



Happy Holidays

Never let the things you want make you forget the things you have.



This edition of the Okaloosa Voter is brought to you in honor of Jennie Langham, former resident and current force to be reckoned with.



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

Well it's all over – even the crying – for 2014 midterm elections. Thank you all for voting. Florida's 50% turnout for the Midterms was so much better than the Primary showing, perhaps due to the controversial amendments on the ballot. Whatever the reason, citizens exercised their franchise, and that's what keeps our democracy strong. To see how the 2014 turnout compares to past elections, check it out here:

<http://doedoe.dos.state.fl.us/voting/voter-turnout.shtml>.

Special thanks to all of you who supported Amendment #1 and opposed

Amendment #3: League believes our state will be better served as a result.

Now that the politicking is over, we can all settle in to enjoy the holidays. Our traditional Thanksgiving harvest celebration has evolved to include giving general thanks for all our blessings throughout the year. In that vein, I am thankful to be part of such a committed and welcoming community. I wish you all a happy and healthy holiday season, and I look forward to working with you in the New Year.

Mary Blackwell

November general meeting: Homeless Shelter for FWB

Opportunity, Inc., Immediate Past Chair Judy Byrne Riley will be the guest speaker at our 18 November general meeting. Okaloosa Walton Homeless Continuum of Care/Opportunity, Inc. is the local organization that looks out for our homeless residents by acting as a clearinghouse for services and offering emergency shelter.

Opportunity, Inc.'s mission is to eliminate homelessness, and its vision is a community without homelessness. Next on the "to do" list: a permanent homeless shelter in Fort Walton Beach.

Why? Because Florida has the third largest population of homeless persons of any state in the country. Over 1,500 homeless people were identified in Okaloosa and Walton Counties in 2013.

Over 44% of them were children under age 18. And winter is coming.

That's the bad news. The good news is last summer the local nonprofit Community Solutions of the Emerald Coast (formed under the aegis of the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce) finally identified an appropriate site for a permanent homeless shelter at the city's old wastewater treatment plant on North Beal Extension.

Please join League at **6:30 pm on Thursday, 20 Nov, in the Chandler Center, Room 801, Niceville United Methodist Church** (across from the Community Life Center on Helms St) to learn about the progress on this vital community initiative. We look forward to seeing you at this free public event.

Meet the County Commissioners

You have an opportunity to meet and hear from your two new County Commissioners, thanks to the Condo Alliance of Okaloosa Island.

Commissioner Trey Goodwin will address CAOI members and guests from **5:30-6:30 PM on Wednesday, 12 Nov**, at Sea Oats condo (1114 Santa Rosa Blvd, Okaloosa Island), and Commissioner Carolyn Ketchel will be

guest speaker at the CAOI meeting on **Wednesday, 10 Dec, from 5:30-6:30 PM** in the El Matador condo first floor lounge (909 Santa Rosa Blvd).

You just missed "Hops with Heroes," the latest installment of Commissioner Nathan Boyles' quarterly meetings with constituents, but we'll be sure to let you know about the January meeting as soon as it's scheduled!

2014 Midterms in the rearview mirror

If you're anything like me, you are breathing a sigh of relief now that the political ads will stop piling up in your mailbox and intruding during your favorite TV shows. Well don't get too cozy! The pundits are now analyzing every detail of what happened.

The big news of course is that both the Senate and House of Representatives are now under Republican control. Will that mean an end to gridlock? Time will tell. In the meantime every pundit out there has an opinion!

Regardless, 2014 was a groundbreaking election for American women. In addition to the "first" detailed in the inset, Brooklyn-born daughter of Haitian immigrants Mia Love is Utah's new 4th Congressional District Representative, and the first black female Republican to serve in Congress. Joni Ernst became the first woman to represent Iowa in the US Congress **and** the first female combat veteran elected to the Senate. Shelley Capito is West Virginia's first female Senator. Gina Raimondo is Rhode Island's first female governor, and New York's new 21st District Representative, 30-year-old Elise Stefanik, is the youngest woman ever elected to Congress.

State League Roundup

LWVF's 2015 Convention is coming to Delray Beach!

Next May 15-17, enjoy the sun and the sand as you join League members from across the state to discuss important organizational decisions! Delray Beach, known as "Florida's Village by the Sea" is a wonderful, beachfront community on the Atlantic Ocean, and the perfect spot for the League's 2015 Convention!

Call for Nominations!

LWVF is seeking nominations of qualified individuals to serve on the 2015-17 State Board. If you know someone who is dedicated to League and would make a great state board member, please download and complete this form http://origin.library.constantcontact.com/download/get/file/1103316066537-1305/Nom_Comm_Form_2015-2017.pdf as soon as possible and send it to donmickey.castor@verizon.net.

LWVF Executive Director, Jessica Lowe-Minor, has accepted another

challenge, and she is taking her talents to another Florida organization. We are thankful for the progress she made possible for League. We are pleased, however, to open up a fabulous opportunity for the right individual to become our next LWVF Executive Director. If you know someone who's qualified, please forward the job description: <http://www.thefloridavoter.org/files/download/925>.

There were some notable firsts for men as well. Tim Scott is the first African-American from the South elected to the Senate since Reconstruction – and the first to be elected to both House and Senate. Republican Alex Mooney is the first Latino elected to Congress in West Virginia's history.

So the good news is that Congress is more diverse and inclusive than ever. The bad news is that attack ads comprised 45% of all political ads during the campaign. In states with the closest races, it was far more than half. The worst fights were in North Carolina, Kansas, Iowa, Michigan and Colorado. I guess this is a "good" example of taking two steps forward and one step back.

100 women in Congress!

Democrat Alma Adams won a special election for North Carolina's 12th Congressional District, making her the 100th woman in Congress. This is the first time in American history that the number of women sitting in Congress has hit triple digits. Check out the numbers: http://www.slate.com/blogs/xx_factor/2014/11/05/there_are_100_women_in_congress_for_the_first_time_ever.html.

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Discover Cuba with League!

Visit Cuba and learn more about the island nation by joining a *Sisters Across the Straits* delegation. This is your chance to experience Cuba firsthand, and learn about the history, culture and changing political landscape of a country once forbidden to Americans! Trips are planned for 8-14 Dec, 12-18 Jan and 16-22 Feb. Get more info here: <http://www.thefloridavoter.org/events/sisters-across-the-straits>, and contact lwwffoffice@gmail.com to reserve a spot.

2014 Calendar

Spotlight on the Homeless 18 Nov, 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Opportunity Inc. Board Chair Judy Byrne Riley will update us on the status of the proposed Homeless Shelter in FWB.

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.



Travel with League

Piña Coladas in Miami! 5-8 Feb 2015

Enjoy a VIP South Beach art experience, an exclusive tour of the Perez Museum, an unforgettable sightseeing cruise, and a performance by the Miami City Ballet. Get info: [tps://docs.google.com/document/d/1e5Drp11U93oN2v_ed_drkKAHd_j_KI3rGSqFhs5eLcM/edit?pli=1](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1e5Drp11U93oN2v_ed_drkKAHd_j_KI3rGSqFhs5eLcM/edit?pli=1)

Politicos in Paradise! 15-16 May 2015

You're invited to LWVF's Convention in Delray Beach to shape the 2015-17 program. Sign up or get more info: <http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07e9g5cn4qb926e267&llr=jhigmrdb>

Visit Alaska's wild coast! 15-22 June 2015

Visit America's last frontier! Explore Juneau and the Mendenhall Glacier, pan for gold and enjoy the wildlife. Sign up or get more info: <http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07e9guzk7x7f062218&llr=jhigmrdb>