



A force for progress on the Emerald Coast since 1962

March / April 2015

"You're not obligated to win. You're obligated to keep trying to do the best you can every day."

*Marian Wright Edelman,
American Lawyer, Activist and
Educator*



National Women's History Month 2015



League is partnering with OCCSW and NWFSC for this special event. Details at right.



League of Women Voters is 95 years young!

It's League's 95th anniversary! Learn 6 ways the League has impacted your life positively at <https://tinyurl.com/nuhgah5>, and then take our quiz to test your knowledge and learn more about the ways League has improved our country at <https://tinyurl.com/oom6zdb>.



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

It's Women's History Month! League is celebrating women of character, courage and commitment at a special event co-sponsored by the Okaloosa County Commission on the Status of Women and Northwest Florida State College. Get the details below and RSVP before it fills up!

League also has a panel discussion lined up to explore alternatives to incarceration

for the county's youthful offenders. Again, see below for details.

Check the page 2 calendar for events in March and April, and if you are a Fort Walton Beach, Crestview, Laurel Hill or Shalimar resident, get ready to vote with League's Municipal E-Voter at <http://lwvokaloosa.org/E-votermuni2015/2015-MuniE-Voter.html>.

Mary Blackwell

Boots to Suits: Free Women's History Month Workshop

The Okaloosa County Commission on the Status of Women, in conjunction with Northwest Florida State College and the League of Women Voters of Okaloosa County, is sponsoring a free Women's History Month workshop. The event will be held from **11:00 am to 1:00 pm on Tuesday, 10 March, at Bob Hope Village, 92 Sunset Lane, Shalimar FL**, in the Bob Gates Welcome Center Conference Room.

Female veterans, their guests and the general public are invited to attend a

buffet lunch and panel discussion featuring several local female veterans who will provide their perspectives on transitioning to a civilian career after separating from the military. After lunch local estheticians will demonstrate professional make-up techniques on several participants to help you put your best foot forward.

The meeting is free, and the public is welcome. For more information call Diane Hodgins at 850-729-6485, or **RSVP to boots2suits@occsw.org**.

March general meeting: Juvenile Diversion Programs

What happens to youthful offenders in Okaloosa County? Are alternatives to incarceration available? Find out from League's panel of experts on **Saturday, 14 March, from 10:00 am to noon, at Woodlawn Baptist Church** (824 North Ferdon Blvd, Crestview).

Panelists include Dan Bears, DJJ Juve-

nile Probation Office; Jessica Milstid, Lutheran Services Florida (Teen Court & Children/Families in Need of Services); and Carita Smith, Lead Recruiter for Guardian ad Litem. Info about the Civil Citation program will also be on hand.

Please join us! The meeting is free and the public is welcome.

Okaloosa County Women's Wall of Honor

The Okaloosa County Commission on the Status of Women will hold its signature fundraising event, the Women's Wall of Honor, on **May 5th at 10:00 am in the Building 8 auditorium, University of West Florida, Fort Walton Beach Campus** (1170 MLK Jr Blvd, FWB).

For a donation of \$100, you can nominate a worthy woman for inclusion on the Wall, which recognizes special women in our

county for their everyday heroism. These wives, mothers, sisters, friends and co-workers improve our quality of life and our community.

Visit <http://www.occsw.org/wallofhonor.htm> to nominate your honoree on-line, or download the application form and return it with your check to OCCSW, P.O. Box 681, Niceville FL 32588. **The deadline for nominations is April 10, 2015.**

Voting trends in the US: A follow-up

In the last issue I reported on voting trends in the US that indicate – among other things – that affluent Americans turn out to vote at significantly higher rates than their lower-income counterparts, and that the policy preferences of voters and nonvoters are increasingly divergent. In the article I claimed “the United States has numerous barriers to voting that don’t exist elsewhere,” and that Voter ID laws have had a “chilling effect” on voter turnout.

A local longtime poll worker quickly disputed these allegations, correctly pointing out that mail-in ballots and early voting (including weekends) are available to all Florida voters, and that many forms of ID are accepted here. His bottom line: “There is no excuse for anyone in Florida to not vote if they want to do so.”

As far as Florida voters are concerned, he is absolutely correct. But several other states do have restrictive voter ID laws, and our own Legislature tried to reduce early voting hours a few elections ago – until they got some stiff pushback from voters and the Supervisors of Election.

Wrap-up of January/February General Meetings

Did you miss the January and February general meetings? Here’s a rundown.

Clean Energy

Susan Glickman of the Alliance for Clean Energy reported that the cost of installing solar panels has dropped by 80% since 2008, making it more cost-effective than natural gas. Improvements in storage batteries also promise the capability to store energy for use at night or on cloudy days. Are you interested in solar energy for your home, but can’t afford installation costs? Check out Floridians for Solar Choice

Travel with League

This spring in Washington DC! 8-12 April 2015

Meet Florida elected officials, see the Capitol and Supreme Court, tour the White House and much more. It’s a trip you won’t want to miss! Get more info: <https://tinyurl.com/o2bhj58>.

Cuba trips are back!

April, May, Sep, Oct Nov, Dec 2015
Experience Cuba firsthand and learn

League in general opposes restrictive voter ID laws for several reasons:

- League opposes barriers to voting.
- In-person voter fraud is almost non-existent (<https://tinyurl.com/kgnmgsp>).
- These laws appear to be racially motivated (<https://tinyurl.com/l3l4418> and <https://tinyurl.com/lpnsjhh>).

League also claims – as I did – that these laws would have a “chilling effect” on voter turnout. However, I did not find any data tying lower turnout to voter ID. In fact, some preliminary data from the 2014 election appear to show that states with a voter ID requirement “had the highest turnout rates; the two states where no ID is required – MD and NC – had the lowest.” You can read about this this single study here: <https://tinyurl.com/ptchcym>.

So the good news is voter ID does not appear to be hurting voter turnout; the bad news is turnout is still low. Making it easier to vote doesn’t translate into more voters. Motivation is the key, and the “only way to do that is to have candidates, initiatives, and politics that get Americans excited and invested.” (<https://tinyurl.com/o6ykrtrb>)

(<http://www.fl solarchoice.org/>) initiative to allow more homes and businesses to generate electricity using solar power.

E-Voting & E-Registration

Supervisor of Elections Paul Lux reports that 20 states are already offering voter registration on-line, with zero fraud (per the Bipartisan Policy Center (<http://bipartisanpolicy.org/>)). Florida Supervisors of Election are on board (<https://tinyurl.com/p88gctk>), but the Legislature is NOT. Voting officials are grappling with E-Voting security concerns, so that that won’t happen soon.

about the history, culture and changing political landscape of a country once forbidden to Americans! Get more info: <https://tinyurl.com/n43g35x>.

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

Visit America’s last frontier! View breath-taking glaciers, visit a native village, and much more. Get more info: <https://tinyurl.com/phbz95y>.

2015 Calendar

Boots to Suits

10 March, 11:00 am-1:00 pm
Bob Gates Welcome Center, Bob Hope Village, 92 Sunset Lane, Shalimar
Female veterans, their guests and the public are invited to a buffet lunch and panel discussion featuring several local female veterans, who will provide their perspectives on transitioning to a civilian career. RSVP to boots2suits@occs.org.

Juvenile Justice Process, Diversion Programs

14 March, 10:00 am-Noon
Woodlawn Baptist Church, 824 N Ferdon Blvd, Crestview
Find out how youthful offenders are handled in our county from our panel of experts, including representatives from DJJ’s Probation Office, Teen Court and the Guardian ad Litem program.

Women’s Wall of Honor Deadline: 10 Apr

Nominate someone today at <http://occs.org/wallofhoron.htm>.

LWVOC Annual Meeting

11 Apr, 10:00 am-1:00 pm
Café Bienville, 314 Bayshore Dr, Niceville
Members: please join us to elect new officers and update the Bylaws. Get details here: <http://lwvokaloosa.org/members.html>.

Candidate University

22 Apr, SoE Offices
Learn about the process of running for public office at this free, three-hour course. Morning and evening sessions are available. Contact Bridget Krebs (689-5600) to register
NLT 15 April.

16th Annual State of the County Report

2 May, 10:00 am-Noon
Greater FWB CoC, 34 Miracle Strip Pkwy SE, FWB
Bring a friend and join us to hear from our elected officials and ask them about the issues that are important to you.