



A force for progress on the Emerald Coast since 1962

May / June 2015

“Service is the rent we pay to be living. It is the very purpose of life and not something you do in your spare time.”

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



16th Annual State of the County Report



League and the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce are partnering for this event. Details at right.



2016 is just around the corner!



League is already gearing up the Presidential Election year. Keep an eye on the website calendar and the Voter and help us make democracy work.



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

For those who pay attention to such things, you’ll see I’ve quoted Marian Edelman again. Last issue she enjoined us to keep trying to do our best always. This issue she reminds us that life’s purpose is to serve.

Most of you already understand service, as parents, citizens and members of our community, but what are you doing each day to make the world a better

place? You may not have much time or money, so think of the little things that mean so much. Each morning you have a choice to greet the day with a smile or a frown, and the decision you make will affect everyone around you. So, put on that smile and remember that much is expected from those to whom much has been given, so quit complaining and spread good cheer!

Mary Blackwell

16th Annual State of the County Report

Do you have questions for your local elected officials? Are you interested in how the county conducts its business? Well here is your chance to meet those officials and ask them about issues that concern you! League’s State of the County Report is scheduled from **10:00 am to noon on Saturday, May 2nd.**

Once again the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce will host

the event in its Conference Room (34 Miracle Strip Pkwy SE).

Get updates about what’s going on in county government and get answers to your questions on the spot. The 2015 SOTC panel includes Tax Collector Ben Anderson, County Commissioner Carolyn Ketchel and 1st Circuit Judge Terry Ketchel. The event is free and open to the public Coffee will be served.

Okaloosa County Women’s Wall of Honor

The Okaloosa County Commission on the Status of Women will add 10 new names to 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).

The Wall of Honor recognizes special women in Okaloosa County for their everyday heroism. These wives, mothers, sisters, friends and co-workers improve our

quality of life and our community.

This year honorees are Valerie Bogar, Velma Conyers, Jean Hood, Sherry Marcolongo, Tammy McGaughy, Donna Pattison, Louan Rathke, Margaret Schwartz, Sherry Smith and Dood Wood.

Please join us to recognize the 2015 honorees at the induction ceremony, which is followed by a reception. RSVP here: <http://occsww.org/wallofhonor.htm>.

Get ready to *Make Democracy Run*

As noted in the last issue, motivation is the key to increased voter turnout, and we need “candidates, initiatives, and politics that get Americans excited and invested.”

Your League has taken this to heart, so we will be sponsoring an initiative to get the attention of county voters: we are staging a 5/10k race in Crestview

on the first day of early voting for the 2016 General Election. League’s *Make Democracy Run* event is intended to be a community celebration of our proud American heritage and right to vote, as well as an opportunity to support local charities. We also hope to make it part of Crestview’s Centennial event calendar. Stay tuned for details on how you can be a part of it.

Capitol Report

League is working on several key issues this session. Here's an update on how things have progressed to date.

Online Voter Registration:

Online voter registration is an LWVF priority issue. Establishment of such a system would provide easy access, increased accountability and significant cost savings. Bills are moving forward in the House and Senate, and should be heard in the last week of session.

Fracking:

LWVF efforts to establish a regulatory framework and conduct a study to determine environmental impacts have been thwarted. Hydraulic fracturing, aka fracking, is a method of drilling for oil and natural gas. The legislation moving forward doesn't cover the fracking operations typical in Florida's karst geology and protects company "trade secrets" (the chemical compounds injected into the substrate during drilling operations) from public disclosure. League opposes this damaging legislation.

Public Service Commission Reform: Both House and Senate have passed

"Close the Gap"

The Florida Legislature is heading for a special session, because the House won't agree to accept federal funds to expand Medicaid. This is important for at least two reasons: (1) because the state's budget won't balance without those funds; and (2) this is money Florida taxpayers have already remitted to the federal government for this purpose. If we don't accept it back, all of Florida's money will go to other states, and Floridians will be on the hook to cover the difference.

That's why League supports the Senate's plan to return Florida's federal taxpayer money to Floridians and expand health care coverage. This will offset the loss of LIP funds (which used to cover hospital costs for the uninsured), close the \$1 billion budget shortfall, and protect Florida's safety-net hospitals.

Accepting the federal funds will

- Prevent the cost of uncompensated care from being shifted to business and the insured (an 8% increase in premi-

legislation that would make a series of changes dealing with the Florida Public Service Commission, including limiting Commissioners to three consecutive terms, requiring annual ethics training and trying to protect utility customers from rate increases based on changes in billing cycles. League has supported this long overdue reform to the PSC and is excited to see it move forward!

Water policy, springs, trails, Amendment 1:

The House Water Policy bill establishes water cleanup plans, sets deadlines for establishing minimum flow levels for springs and sets timelines for springs cleanup. The House bill aligns with the Senate companion, which also would establish a water advisory council to review water projects, and the SunTrail bike trail network within the Florida Department of Transportation.

While the LWVF supports elements of each bill, the policies have weakened significantly as the legislative process has unfolded.

Check out www.thefloridavoter.com for more info about League's advocacy,

ums and health care costs, an estimated \$1,200 per person in 2014);

- Assure health care coverage for 800,000 low-income working Floridians;
- Reduce uncompensated care costs;
- Add a \$5 billion annual revenue stream to Florida's budget;
- Create jobs; and
- Support a healthy Florida economy and workforce (hospitality, agriculture, construction, maintenance, office workers, etc.).

Traditional Medicaid has been a nightmare of red tape, ballooning state costs and few choices for enrollees, but Florida's privatized and successful alternative – introduced by Governor Bush – has contained costs, curbed fraud and saved taxpayers \$118 million per year. The Senate's plan builds on this successful program.

Act NOW - Florida and Floridians can't afford to wait! Contact Representative Gaetz and ask him to support Medicaid expansion. Then call Senator Gaetz and thank him for his support.

2015 Calendar

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.

Women's Wall of Honor Induction Ceremony

5 May, 10:00 am
Bldg 8 Auditorium, UWF-FWB, 1170 MLK Jr Blvd
A reception will follow the ceremony. RSVP today at: <http://occs.org/wallofahonor.htm>.



Discover Cuba with League 14-20 Sep, 12-18 Oct, 9-15 Nov and 11-18 Dec

Seize the opportunity to visit Cuba and learn more about the island nation just 90 miles from our shores. Experience Cuba firsthand and learn about the history, culture and changing political landscape of a country once forbidden to Americans. Get more info at: <https://tinyurl.com/n43g35x>.



LWVEF Clearinghouse

shares studies and research conducted by some of the 800 national, state and local Leagues. This great resource features League studies in more than 50 subject areas. See what's available here: <https://tinyurl.com/n7g524l>.

LWVUS Constitutional Amendment Study

will explore what constitutes an appropriate and well-crafted constitutional amendment. The Century Foundation's 1999 paper, *Great and Extraordinary Occasions: Developing Guidelines for Constitutional Change*, presents eight guidelines for constitutional amendments. Check it out here: <https://tinyurl.com/kw3woeh>