

LWV

THE OKALOOSA VOTER

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A force for progress on the Emerald Coast since 1962

Sep / Oct 2015

"If heroism were without risk, everyone would be a hero."

*Leonard Pitts,
American Journalist*



LWVUS Constitutional Amendment Study

The LWV Constitutional Amendment Committee has completed its study of the issues and prepared study guides and consensus questions. Local Leagues must present the results of their consensus meetings by 1 Dec. Watch the calendar for local study dates and be a part of it!



We want you in League!

Join now through 30 Nov for only \$15. Get details at <http://lwvokaloosa.org/JoinUs.html>.



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

We lost two Civil Rights Movement icons in August, one right here in Okaloosa County. First it was Julian Bond, founder of the NAACP; then it was Amelia Boynton, who led marchers over the Edmund Pettis Bridge in Selma on Bloody Sunday in 1965.

At Mr. Bond's memorial service the head of our local NAACP noted that Mr. Bond once said the difference between a moment and a movement was

sacrifice. Then he challenged each of us to make some sacrifices.

No one can deny the sacrifices made by Mrs. Boynton and Mr. Bond. Neither can we deny that there is still much work to be done. So I also challenge each of you to examine your lives and make some sacrifices to ensure our children inherit a better world.

Mary Blackwell

Back to League: Okaloosa County 2016 Roundup

Please join us for lunch at **11:00 am on Wednesday, 23 Sep, at Two Trees Restaurant** (1955 Lewis Turner Blvd, FWB). Guest speaker County Commission Chair Nathan Boyles will address the top issues facing our County in 2016. Be sure to attend and let Commissioner Boyles know what

issues/programs are important to you.

League general meetings are free and open to the public; however, attendees must pay for their own lunches. Attendance is limited, so please RSVP by 21 Sep to info@lwvokaloosa.org. We'll see you there!

Juvenile Justice System Improvement Project Update

In 2011, the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) was selected to participate in the Juvenile Justice System Improvement Project (JJSIP), a national initiative to reform the juvenile justice system by translating "what works" into everyday practice and policy to improve outcomes for all youth who touch the system.

Hall introduced the program and the research that indicates how juvenile offenders and their communities will profit from this approach both literally and figuratively, as troubled youth are turned around and become productive members of society.

A July meeting at Crestview's Patriot

League will be assembling some key players to discuss the project in October, so stay tuned for details.

Help us *Make Democracy Run*

Plans are moving forward for the **Make Democracy Run** event to celebrate our proud American heritage and right to vote. This 5/10k race will be held the first day of early voting for the 2016 General Election.

We need volunteers for our planning committee. You don't need to be a League member to be on the race planning committee – but you **can** join for only \$15! Call 621-4088 or contact us at info@lwvokaloosa.org to volunteer today. Can't wait to hear from you!

Attention Seniors:

The Institute for Senior Professionals at NWFSC has studied how seniors may be able to improve 911 contacts when they're alone and need emergency help. A trifold brochure summarizing the study's conclusions is on the ISP website (nwfsc.edu/ISP) for downloading and printing. You can also call 850-729-4998 to request a copy. It's a worthwhile read for all of us.

Disappointing special session. AGAIN.

Last issue we reported on the disappointing results of the special session to adopt a budget. Sadly, the special session to redraw districts also ended unsatisfactorily. Once again the House and Senate could not agree on a final map, so they ended special session without a compromise map completed. This would effectively abdicate the final decision to the courts.

At a 25 Aug hearing with Judge Terry Lewis, the Senate requested another chance at a redraw (i.e., another special session), while the House insisted

Judge Lewis draw the map or choose between the current Senate and House versions of the map, which were prepared in the most recent special session. The plaintiffs just want the process moved along, since the House and Senate are at an impasse. Judge Lewis has asked the Florida Supreme Court for direction, as none of this is in his jurisdiction.

Bottom line: we still don't have districts finalized. As Florida League President Pam Goodman has noted, "this is a moving target, so stay tuned."

Florida democracy ranks 11th out of 51

The Center for American Progress, a public policy research and advocacy group, just conducted a comprehensive analysis of the Health of State Democracies. Florida ranked 11th out of 50 states and the District of Columbia.

States were rated on accessibility of the ballot; representation in state government; and influence in the political system. Florida received a B+ (2nd place) in the Influence category and a B- (11th place) in Accessibility, where

voting wait time and implementation of "motor voter" needed improvement. Unfortunately Florida earned a D (39th place) for Representation, where ex-felon disenfranchisement and elected representation for "communities of color" were unfavorably highlighted.

The good news is Florida's rating handily bested the three larger states: California (#22), Texas (#40) and New York (#44). Get all the details here: <http://www.healthofstatedemocracies.org/>.

Turning Point Suffragist Memorial

LWVUS has partnered with the Turning Point Suffragist Memorial Association (TPSMA) to create a memorial that celebrates the proud history of the successful struggle for women's voting rights and its relevance today.

The memorial will be located in the Occoquan Regional Park in northern Virginia, near the former location of the Occoquan Workhouse, where dozens of suffragists were incarcerated in 1917 for picketing the White House. Public outrage at the inhumane treatment of those brave women became one of the

significant turning points in the fight for the 19th Amendment. Other critical milestones of the fight for women's suffrage will be commemorated on markers throughout the park. The goal is to educate and inspire present and future generations to continue the fight for equal rights.

Funds for the memorial must be raised privately. Learn more at the TPSMA website (www.suffragistmemorial.org). Donations can be made through the website or by mail to TPSMA, 5400 Ox Road, Fairfax Station, VA 22039.

LWVFL Study on Open Primaries

The planned study is still taking shape, but aims to get a handle on the role primaries play in shaping election results. As noted in the last issue, states have a range of options when deciding what kind of primary to use.

At one end of the spectrum is the closed primary, which permits only registered party members to vote. On

the other extreme is the open primary that allows all voters to cast a ballot in the primary of their choice, regardless of their own affiliation.

Open systems tend to be popular among voters, but there is still no hard evidence that they actually increase voter turnout. Stay tuned as we bring these and other issues into focus.

2015 Calendar

Back to League

23 Sep, 11:00 am, Two Trees Restaurant, 1955 Lewis Turner Blvd, FWB

County Commission Chair Nathan Boyles will talk about the top issues facing our County. RSVP by 21 Sep to mary.blackwell@lwvokaloosa.org.

Juvenile Justice System Improvement Project

Date/Time/Location TBD

DJJ, OCSO and Circuit 1 representatives will discuss implementation of this initiative to reform the juvenile justice system and how it will impact Okaloosa County. Join us to learn about this promising effort to "divert" juvenile offenders **before** they become lost in the system.



Travel with League

Cuba: 14-20 Sep, 12-18 Oct

Experience Cuba and learn more about our closest island neighbor's history, culture and changing political landscape. Get more info at: <https://tinyurl.com/n43g35x>.

Seneca Falls: 21-25 Oct

See the legacy of women's suffrage in a fun-filled, 3-day trip encompassing museums, galleries and historical sites. Get more info or register at <https://tinyurl.com/prmvxxt>.



Okaloosa County Centennial Tour: 17 Sep

Learn about our county on this half-day His"TOUR"ial. The tour includes the Destin Fishing Museum, Heritage Park & Cultural Museum, Air Armament Museum, a boat ride and more. Lunch and light morning refreshments are also included in the \$15 tour price. For more info contact tammysjourneys@gmail.com (850-243-3809) or srushing@co.okaloosa.fl.us (850-651-7647).