

**LWV**

# THE OKALOOSA VOTER

Join today for \$15 in 2015!

*A force for progress on the Emerald Coast since 1962*

**Nov / Dec 2015**

"One sees clearly only with the heart. What is essential is invisible to the eyes."

*Antoine de Saint-Exupéry,  
French Writer and Aviator*



Celebrate the holidays with League at Mary's house (1562 Glenlake Circle, Niceville) from 2-4:00 pm on 13 December. Bring a side dish to share.



**We want you in League!**

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



### 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

I'm not entirely sure where this year has gone, but it sure did go fast. The good news is you still have time to join your local League for only \$15! Use the enclosed form or join on line here: <http://www.lwvokaloosa.org/JoinUs.html>.

If you missed the Solar Choice meeting last week, you can get information about it at our website as well. And don't miss the November 3rd meeting

(details below) that will round out our "Fall Focus" on Florida's natural resources. Help us put the "conserve" back into conservative!

Finally, I hope all of you will consider joining League at my house for some holiday cheer on Sunday, 13 Dec, from 2-4:00 pm. I can't wait to meet you!

*Mary Blackwell*

## Protecting Florida's Natural Resources

The Panhandle has the highest stream density in Florida, is home to more biodiversity than any other comparable region in the entire country, and boasts a UNESCO-designated Biosphere Reserve. As one of the fastest growing counties on the Gulf Coast, Okaloosa faces coastal development and accelerated erosion that threaten our natural sand hills and longleaf pine and wire-grass ecosystems. If you are worried about preserving our natural resources and quality of life as we grow, please join us from **5:30-7:30 pm on Tuesday, 3 Nov, at the Destin Public**

**Library** (150 Sibert Ave, Destin) as we address these and other local environmental concerns.

Featured speaker Chuck O'Neal is Chair of the Natural Resources Committee of the League of Women Voters of Florida. He is well versed in the many policy and fiscal challenges Florida faces as it struggles to preserve its great water and land resources – which are the foundation of Florida's beauty and its economy. The event is free and open to the public. We look forward to seeing you there.

## Juvenile Justice System Improvement Project Update

In July the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) introduced the Juvenile Justice System Improvement Project (JJSIP) to Okaloosa County. This national initiative aims 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.

So how is JJSIP implementation coming along in our community? Hear all about the project's local rollout at our January meeting in Crestview. Representatives from DJJ, the judiciary and local law enforcement will be on hand to report their progress. The location and date are TBD, so watch the website and 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 on **29 Oct 2016**, the first day of early voting for the Presidential Election.

In addition to bringing out the vote, proceeds from the race will benefit local charities. Won't you lend a hand?

League needs volunteers to help plan and conduct the race. 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](mailto:info@lwvokaloosa.org) to volunteer today.

Our democracy is strongest when citizens participate, so be a part of it!

## LWVF 2016 Legislative Priorities

The 2016 Legislative Session will begin on Tuesday, 5 Jan. In preparation, the Florida League has published the following priorities for League advocates to discuss with their legislators.

### Election Law

- Oppose any efforts to limit convenient voter registration or to limit access to the polls by limiting early voting locations, days or hours.
- Support pre-paid absentee ballot returns to the Supervisors of Election and oppose infringement or restrictions on the absentee ballot process.

### Education

- Oppose efforts to expand corporate tax credit scholarships that fund private and religious schools with no proven benefit to students.
- Require greater fiscal management and accountability of charter school contracts, with oversight by local school boards.
- Address proposals to change the statewide assessment program. Assure that assessments apply to every Florida student educated with public funds, with results reported at appropriate intervals related to children's development.

### Health Care

- Expand health care access and coverage for low-income, uninsured and underinsured Floridians.

## Redistricting Update

It has taken multiple lawsuits and three special sessions to address redrawing legislative and congressional districts, so this is really a moving target.

In October a federal court threw out a lawsuit filed by two Florida Republican Party officials who claimed the Fair District amendments violated the constitution because they had a "chilling effect" on their free speech and petition rights.

## Solar Choice Passes Florida Supreme Court Hurdle

Florida's Supreme Court has ruled that the Floridians for Solar Choice ballot initiative is unambiguous and single-subject, clearing the legal hurdle for the amendment to be placed on the 2016 election ballot if all 683,149 required signatures are collected and verified before 1 Feb 2016. More than 183,000 have been confirmed, and another

- Accept federal funding to expand health care access and coverage and offset the costs of uncompensated care to hospitals and providers.
- Restore full funding for critical health care programs and services that were cut by the 2015 state budget.

### Gun Safety

- Oppose Bills (HB 4001/SB 68) that would make it legal for those with concealed weapons permits to carry firearms on all Florida public college and university campuses.
- Oppose Bills (HB 19/SB 180) that would allow Florida School Boards and Superintendents to designate employees to carry concealed firearms, for security purposes, on school grounds at K-12 schools.
- Oppose HB 41/SB 130. It is already illegal to discharge a firearm recklessly on any residential lot, and such Bills would create exceptions.

### Land and Water

- Properly implement Amendment 1 – restore funding to Florida Forever and exclude existing agency operating expenses.
- Pass comprehensive water quality and quantity Bills that concentrate on cleaning-up pollution at the sources and conserving our aquifer with no net additional withdrawals.
- Pass Bills that ban fracking in the state of Florida.

Then Judge Terry Lewis accepted the Congressional district map submitted by the FairDistricts Coalition, since legislators could not come up with a suitable alternative.

At press time legislators were still grappling with the Senate district map and preparing for the 2016 session. It remains to be seen whether or not this map will also be settled in court.

100,000 await verification.

The ballot proposal is designed to expand solar choice by removing barriers that limit solar ownership models, and more than 65 businesses, associations, conservative groups, faith communities, clean energy and environmental organizations now comprise this diverse coalition.

## 2015-16 Calendar

### Protecting Florida's Natural Resources

**3 Nov**, 5:30 pm, Destin Public Library, 150 Sibert Ave, Destin  
LWVF Environmental Committee Chair Chuck O'Neal will discuss local environmental concerns and the challenges facing our County.

### Juvenile Justice System Improvement Project

**Jan 2016, date/time 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: 18-24 Jan, 15-21 Feb**  
Experience Cuba and learn more about our closest island neighbor's history, culture and changing political landscape. Get more information here: <https://tinyurl.com/qhepcnk>.



### "Electing the President" 2016

LWVF teamed up with the Newspaper in Education Institute to produce this comprehensive guide designed to help voters, especially young and first-time voters, understand the presidential election process. Read it here: <https://tinyurl.com/pua5huk>.



### First Call: LWVUS 52<sup>nd</sup> National Convention 16-19 June 2016

Plan to join hundreds of engaged Leaguers for the LWVUS National Convention in our nation's Capital. Keep up with Convention news here: <https://tinyurl.com/qdvkvgx>. More info is coming soon.



**New members join now: only \$15 in 2015!**

If you've been reading the *Okaloosa Voter*, or visiting our website at [LWVOkaloosa.org](http://LWVOkaloosa.org), you know League is the organization where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic progress. League is a nonpartisan, national grassroots organization that does not support or oppose political parties or candidates – instead we strive to educate voters so they can make informed choices. League is where individuals like you are actively engaged in creating positive change on the local, state and national levels.

We'll soon be heading into a Presidential election year, which means we'll be busy with voter registration events, candidate forums, E-Voters and workshops on ballot amendments. You can be part of it by joining the Okaloosa League today, serving as a leader and working to shape the important issues that keep our community strong. In 2015 we'll be studying open primaries, collecting petitions for the Local Solar initiative and planning the *Make Democracy Run 5* and 10k races scheduled for the first day of early voting in 2016. Remember: Democracy is not a spectator sport, and we need your help to keep our democracy strong!

Membership in the League of Women Voters of Okaloosa County is open to all women **and men** 18 years or older, and we are offering a special **\$15 introductory rate** to new members during our 2015 membership drive. The membership is good through September 2016 and includes membership in the National and State Leagues. Dues are **not** tax-deductible, but your contribution to the LWVF Education Fund marked for Okaloosa County **is fully tax-deductible**.

**Help put an end to political apathy! Join us to become part of the solution** by filling in the form below and returning it with your check. The Emerald Coast needs leaders like you to ensure our community remains a strong, safe and vibrant place to live. With your help, we can make democracy work for everyone. **Become a member today: it's only \$15 in 2015!** Return the form below with your check, or go on-line to join us at <http://lwwokaloosa.org/joinus.html>.

Mary W. Blackwell  
President, League of Women Voters of Okaloosa County

### Membership Form

*Yes, I want to join League and get involved!*

- ~~Susan B. Anthony Membership \$100.00~~       ~~Individual Membership \$50.00~~
- ~~Additional Family Member \$25.00~~       ~~Student Membership \$25.00~~
- FIRST-TIME MEMBER**      **\$15.00** (good only for new members joining between 1 Jul-30 Nov 15)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your check payable to LWVOC and mail to:  
Diane Hodgins, LWVOC Treasurer, 1752 Nancy Ward Cove, Niceville FL 32578.

- I can't join right now, but I would like to make a tax-deductible donation.*

Please make your check payable to LWVF-EF, indicate "Okaloosa County" on the memo line and mail it to the LWVOC Treasurer at the address above.