



The Okaloosa Voter

A force for progress on the Emerald Coast since 1962

March / April 2016

"Too often we ... enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought."

John F. Kennedy



Working to Form a More Perfect Union, the 2016 National Women's History Month theme, presents the opportunity to honor women who have shaped America's history and its future through their public service and government leadership. Details at <http://www.nwhp.org/>.



League of Women Voters of Florida 2016 Council

The LWVF biennial Council of Leaders is scheduled for 29-30 April in Orlando. Check our website for details.



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

In the last Voter, I called your attention to our appallingly low voter turnout. The *Washington Monthly* read my mind and just published an article called "Vote from home, save your country" (<https://tinyurl.com/humhxq5>), which touts Universal Vote by Mail (UVBM).

League does not have a position on UVBM, but our local SoE said he would implement it tomorrow if the legislature

approved it. Alas! While it holds great promise for increasing voter turnout, UVBM is not a political favorite among candidates or elected officials. Read the article and let me know what *you* think! You can also check out this new on-line resource: <http://openstates.org/>

Happy Women's History Month, and don't forget to vote on March 15th!

Mary Blackwell

2016 Legislative Session Debriefing

The current Legislative Session ends on 11 March. Please join us at **noon on Election Day, 15 March, for lunch with Rep. Matt Gaetz**, who will provide a wrap-up of the business our elected officials conducted on our behalf this year.

The meeting will be held at the Twisted Grape (1193 Eglin Pkwy, Shalimar, next to PFCU). The public is welcome, and attendees are responsible for purchasing their own lunches. For more info call Mary Blackwell (850-621-4088), or RSVP to info@lwvokaloosa.org.

March 2016 E-Voter on-line!

The Presidential Preference Primary and Municipal Elections for Destin and Valparaiso will be held on **Tuesday, 15 March**. Are you ready to vote? Get all the info you need to cast your ballot at <https://tinyurl.com/z9sv6eb>. Be informed. Be prepared. Be a voter!

To get all the info you need to make an impact in 2016, check out <http://www.youramerica.com/#guide>.

Inside Florida's Department of Children and Families

When we hear about the DCF, most of us think only about child abuse prevention. While this is an important DCF mission, the Department provides many other services aimed at promoting and preserving stability in vulnerable Florida families.

League invites you to join us for lunch from **11:30-1:00 on Monday, 28 March, at Two Trees Restaurant** (1955 Lewis Turner Blvd, FWB), when

Phyllis Gonzalez, the Circuit 1 Community Development Administrator for the DCF will brief us on the full range of services available in our community, and what we can do to help our kids and their families.

The meeting is free and the public is welcome. Attendees are responsible for purchasing their own lunch. Call Mary Blackwell (850-621-4088) For more info, or **RSVP to** info@lwvokaloosa.org.

2016 Annual Meeting

Attention Members: Planning for our 2016 Annual meeting is underway. As soon as our invited speaker confirms, you will be notified of the date and location. Members will be electing the Slate of Officers for 2016-17, approving our Bylaws, Local Program and Nonpartisan policy, and/or voting on any

recommended amendments to those documents.

Review our governing policies now at <http://lwvokaloosa.org/members.html>, and suggest any changes you'd like our members to consider at Annual Meeting.

LWVF's Capitol Report for mid-session 2016

This session ends 11 March. Bills that didn't pass committee by 1 March are likely dead. Highlights follow.

FRACKING

SB 318 (Oil and Gas Regulation) failed to make it out of the Senate Appropriations Committee last week. It's not clear when or if Senator Lee will schedule another vote, so SB 318 is on life support.

EDUCATION

SB 830 (School Choice) includes requirements for better background checks and more transparency for charter providers, which is good. What's bad is the provision allowing the State Board of Education to authorize High Impact Charter Networks (HICN), which will erode local control. The constitutional amendment to create a separate charter system won't make it to the ballot, but the HICNs will likely become law. Local School Districts will have no real oversight of these networks. Where is the accountability?

PROTECTING STATE LANDS

SB 1290 (State Lands) would eliminate critical protections for state parks and aquatic preserves. The Senate Appropriations Committee approved the bill, which is now headed for the Senate floor. Companion HB 1075 is still in committee.

Final Redistricting Update (and a look back)

In December Leon County Circuit Court Judge George Reynolds approved the League's recommended Senate map, and the Senate dropped its appeals. As a result, all 40 Florida State Senators will be competing for re-election this year from their newly drawn districts.

It took four years and multiple lawsuits, but the Legislature finally learned it could not ignore the Fair Districts amendments approved by Florida voters in 2010 – or the League of Women Voters!

This was a huge victory for Florida's citizens and League. Anti-gerrymandering was part of the Florida League's original program in 1939. Reapportionment reform first became a legislative priority in 1945, and League unsuccessfully attempted to get revised apportionment plans approved in 1959,

GUN SAFETY

SB 300 (Open Carry) was killed when Senator Diaz de la Portilla refused to hear it in committee. Then Senator Gaetz attempted to resurrect it by amending the Open Carry language onto SB 612 (Slungshot). He withdrew the amendment the next day, so Open Carry is likely dead for this session.

HEALTHCARE

SB 1722 (Termination of Pregnancies) and its companion HB 1411 are both awaiting floor votes. State funding is NOT used to fund abortions, so the bill's title is misleading. The purpose is to defund Planned Parenthood, by implementing medically unnecessary restrictions that will effectively close Planned Parenthood Clinics.

Legislators often decry federal government over-reach, but that doesn't extend to interference with women's healthcare. Planned Parenthood total services comprise 42% STD/STI testing and treatment, 34% contraception services, 11% other kinds of women's health treatment, 9% cancer screening and protection, 3% abortion services, and 1% "other." So now 97% of Florida's Planned Parenthood patients will likely lose access to their preferred healthcare provider to prevent 3% from obtaining abortions.

1962 and 1964. Eventually League convinced the Legislature to accept single-member districts in 1981, and sued to force all senators to run for re-election the following year. Sound familiar? Read all about those early efforts in *"Recollections: a history of the League of Women Voters of Florida 1939-1989,"* (UF archives) located here: <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AM00000174/00001/12j>.

League re-engaged on the issue with every decennial census from 1980 forward, but it was the founding of Fair Districts Florida on Valentine's Day 2008 that marked the beginning of the successful campaign to amend Florida's Constitution to require fair redistricting.

So the drama of the 2012 redistricting is finally over. Florida's citizens won. Now brace yourself for the 2020 census and the next round of redistricting!

2016 Calendar

5-12 March: Early Voting

For the Presidential Preference Primary and Municipal Election

Find Early Voting locations:

<https://tinyurl.com/gw2fo66>

15 March: Presidential Preference Primary and Municipal Election

Find your Election Day poll: <https://tinyurl.com/h6zky25>

Legislative Session Debrief 15 March, noon

Twisted Grape, 1193 Eglin Pkwy, Shalimar
Rep. Matt Gaetz will address the outcomes from the 2016 Legislative session.

Inside the DCF

28 March, 11:30-1:00 pm
Two Trees Restaurant, 1955 Lewis Turner Blvd FWB
Learn about the range of services available in our community from DCF Circuit 1 Community Development Administrator Phyllis Gonzalez.

LWVOC Annual Meeting

April, date/time/location TBD
Members: be on hand to shape your League's future and take part in all our election year activities. Details coming soon.

17th Annual State of the County Report

21 May, 10:00 am to noon
FWB Chamber of Commerce, 34 Miracle Strip Pkwy SE, FWB
Hear from your elected officials and get answers to your questions. Panel includes Superintendent of Elections Paul Lux, Superintendent of Schools Mary Beth Jackson and County Commissioner Trey Goodwin.

20-27 Aug: Early Voting

For the Primary Election

30 Aug: Primary Election

24 Oct-5 Nov: Early Voting

For the General Election

29 Oct: Make Democracy Run 5k

Details coming soon!

8 Nov: General Election