



The Okaloosa Voter

A force for progress on the Emerald Coast since 1962

Sep / Oct 2016

"A man without a vote is a man without protection."

Commonly attributed to President Lyndon B. Johnson

"If voting changed anything, they'd make it illegal."

Commonly attributed to anarchist Emma Goldman

"Elections belong to the people. It's their decision. If they decide to turn their back on the fire and burn their behinds, then they will just have to sit on their blisters."

President Abraham Lincoln



Important Dates:

- 11 Oct: Registration **books close** for General Election
- 24 Oct–5 Nov: Early Voting, 7:00 am–7:00 pm
- 25–26 Oct at 7:00 pm: WSRE Rally 2016 televised General Election candidate forum (local channel 8/9; cable/satellite channel 23)
- 2 Nov: **Last day** to request vote-by-mail ballot
- 8 Nov: General Election
- 8 Nov: Vote-by-mail ballots due in the SoE's office **NLT 7:00 pm**



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

This issue of the *Okaloosa Voter* will go out before the Primary Election, so it's anyone's guess who our next representatives will be in the State Legislature, on the County Commission and in Congress. Write-in candidates (only one of whom is actually campaigning) shut one third of county voters out of those races. Let's hope the remaining voters turn out in big numbers to choose the best candidate.

Now it's on to the General Election! You'll notice there are multiple quotes heading up this edition. Do you believe

in American democracy, or are you an electoral cynic? Don't fool yourself: no decision **is** a decision—almost always the wrong one. *Not* voting isn't just a vote *for* the status quo, it also means someone else's vote will count double, so exercise your franchise!

In the meantime please join us on 8 Sep, for our first meeting of the new League year. We'll also be registering voters on 27 Sep, and briefing on the proposed Constitutional Amendments on 5 Oct. Read on for details.

Mary Blackwell

Back to League on September 8th!

Please join the League for lunch on Thursday, **8 Sep, from 11:30–1:00 at the Twisted Grape Wine Bar & Café** (1193 Eglin Pkwy, Shalimar). Our special guests will be current and former State Senators **Don Gaetz and Charlie Clary**, who will be discussing the challenges facing Okaloosa County in the 2017 Legislative Session.

The meeting is free and open to the general public. Attendees are responsible for purchasing their own meals. Each of our guests will have 15–20 minutes to speak, and then the floor will be opened to questions. RSVP to info@lwvokaloosa.org by 6 Sep.

We look forward to seeing you there!

27 Sep 2016: National Voter Registration Day

Volunteer today to help League register voters on September 27th. We'll be on NWFSC's Niceville campus from 9:00 am–3:00 pm signing up new voters and helping "old" voters check their status and update their addresses. If we get enough volunteers, we'll also register voters at the FWB campus. Email us at info@lwvokaloosa.org to volunteer.

Coming soon: 2016 General Election E-Voter

The Primary is over, but election season is still in full swing. The next E-Voter will be on-line before the end of September. Look for the link at www.lwvokaloosa.org after 15 Sep.

Proposed Constitutional Amendments for 2016

Four proposed amendments to the Florida Constitution will be on the November ballot. There's a quick review of them on the next page, but for more information please join League from **11:30–1:00 on 5 Oct at Two Trees Restaurant** (1955 Lewis Turner Blvd, FWB).

Over lunch we'll brief you on each of

the proposed amendments, including what a "yes" or "no" vote will mean for Florida citizens, how each amendment got on the ballot, who supports and opposes them and why.

Make plans to come and bring a friend! Attendees are responsible for buying their own meals. RSVP to info@lwvokaloosa.org by 3 Oct.

Wrap-up: 2016 proposed constitutional amendments

Amendment 1: Rights of Electricity Consumers re: Solar Energy Source

A "yes" vote would:

- Establish a constitutional right in lieu of current statutory authority
- Create the assumption that solar power users are subsidized by utility customers
- Allow local governments to impose fees and regulations on solar users
- Jeopardize continuation of net metering
- Potentially require those who install solar to subsidize large utilities' solar expansion

A "no" vote would:

- Maintain a consumer's statutory right to own or lease solar equipment on his/her property to generate electricity for own use
- Increase the potential for new solar policies to be established to open Florida's solar market
- Reduce likelihood of additional charges on solar customers

Amendment 2: Use of Marijuana for Debilitating Medical Conditions

A "yes" vote would:

- Create a constitutional right for people with specific "debilitating" conditions to use marijuana with physician certification
- Require parental consent for minors
- Permit caregivers to assist patients with marijuana treatments
- Require caregivers to undergo a background check and forbid them from using marijuana themselves

A "no" vote would:

- Not impact current Florida limited medical marijuana laws
- Have no effect on current laws prohibiting recreational use of marijuana
- Not allow patients with debilitating chronic or non-terminal conditions access to medical marijuana as a prescribed treatment by their doctor

Amendment 3: Tax exemption for totally and permanently disabled first responders

A "yes" vote would:

- Authorize the Legislature to grant a property tax exemption on homestead property to first responders who are totally and permanently disabled from injuries sustained in the line of duty
- Allow the Legislature to decide

whether the exemption should provide full or partial relief from property taxes

- Require a determination that responder's disability was caused by his or her service in the line of duty
- Have an undetermined impact on local property tax revenues

A "no" vote would:

- Not extend property tax exemptions to first responders who became totally and permanently disabled in the line of duty
- Not have an impact on local-government tax revenue

Amendment 5: Homestead tax exemption for certain senior, low-income, long-term residents; determination of just value

A "yes" vote would:

- Ensure low-income seniors qualified for city- or county-approved property tax exemption do not lose that exemption if the value of their home exceeds the \$250,000 limit
- Retroactively include seniors who received the exemption starting in 2013
- Decrease property tax revenues for cities and counties that grant exemptions
 - » 2016-17 \$2.3 million
 - » 2017-18 \$500,000
 - » 2020-21 \$4.2 million
- Give lower tax rates to certain citizens based solely on age and duration of occupation

A "no" vote would:

- Retain current property tax exemption for low-income seniors
- Not provide retroactive tax relief
- Not cost cities and counties additional revenue

For more information—including ballot summaries and which organizations support and oppose them—go here:

- <https://tinyurl.com/2016-Amd1>
- <https://tinyurl.com/2016-Amd2>
- <https://tinyurl.com/2016-Amd3>
- <https://tinyurl.com/2016.Amd5>

\$16 in 2016!

Join us and become part of the solution! Now through 30 Nov, pay **just \$16** for a one-year membership good through 31 Dec 2017. Join today at <http://lwvokaloosa.org/JoinUs.html>.

Important Election Dates

Back to League

8 Sep: 11:30 am–1:00 pm
Twisted Grape, 1193 Eglin Pkwy, Shalimar
Join us for lunch and learn about the biggest challenges facing our county in the 2017 legislative session from current and former State Senators Don Gaetz and Charlie Clary. RSVP to 621-4088 or info@lwvokaloosa.org.

Voter Registration

27 Sep: 9:00 am–3:00 pm
NWFSC, Niceville campus
Help register new voters. To volunteer call 621-4088 or email info@lwvokaloosa.org.

Proposed Constitutional Amendments

5 Oct: 11:30 am–1:00 pm
Two Trees Restaurant, 1955 Lewis Turner Blvd, FWB
Find out all about the 4 ballot initiatives. RSVP to 621-4088 or info@lwvokaloosa.org.

24 Oct–5 Nov: Early voting for the General Election.

25-26 Oct at 7:00 pm:
WSRE Rally 2016 televised General Election candidate forum (local channel 8 or 9; cable/satellite channel 23).

29 Oct at 7:30 am: *Make Democracy Run 5k* starting at Johnny O'Quigley's Alehouse, 1025 Industrial Dr, Crestview. Details coming soon!

8 Nov: General Election

Join LWVF's Juvenile Justice Committee

The JJC will consider evaluating any or all parts of the juvenile system, working with legislative and administrative entities, sharing information, educating all Local Leagues and studying LWVF positions to provide informed recommendations for consideration at Convention. Contact lwvfexecutivedirector@gmail.com to be added to the JJC mailing list and stay tuned for future updates.