



The Okaloosa Voter

A force for progress on the Emerald Coast since 1962

May / June 2017

"The world is my country—to do good is my religion."

*Isabella Beecher Hooker
American Suffragist*



To all parents:



and



"Encourage and support your kids, because children are apt to live up to what you believe of them."

Lady Bird Johnson



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

The 2017 legislative session is nearly over, and it's been a mixed bag so far. The Daily News recently asked the Legislature to "fund Florida's top priorities" (<https://tinyurl.com/kssdhky>), but our legislators have other ideas.

The good:

- Approval of Florida's entry into the Electronic Registration Information Center is moving forward.

The bad:

- Over \$200M in education funding hangs in the balance as the House and Senate make budget trade-offs.
- Lawmakers passed a bill to permit concealed carry of firearms on private school property.

The mixed bag:

- Healthcare prospects may improve—if lawmakers don't shift up to \$1.5B in expected compensation for treatment of low-income Floridians at "safety net" hospitals to other, non-healthcare-related priorities. And the mental health system is **still** woefully underfunded.
- Natural Resources: The House wants to create more barriers for solar energy in Florida. The Senate is trying to honor the intent of Amendment 4.

To keep up, follow our Action Alerts at <https://tinyurl.com/ml2ytl>, and use these tips (<https://tinyurl.com/mqsmfjk>) to make your voice heard!

Mary Blackwell

18th Annual State of the County Report: May 6th

Your League's 18th annual State of the County Report will be held from **10:00–noon on Saturday, 6 May, at the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce** (34 Miracle Strip Pkwy SE, FWB).

This year's panel features County Commissioner Graham Fountain, School Board Chair Lamar White, and Clerk of Courts JD Peacock. They will report on the activities of their respective offices

and address the current "state of the county" from their perspectives.

This free event allows citizens to meet their elected officials, learn how county business is being conducted, and ask questions about important issues.

The public is welcome, and coffee will be served.

We look forward to seeing you there! RSVP by 2 May to info@lwvokaloosa.org.

Attention Members: 2017–18 Planning Meeting

What issues would you like League to focus on next year? What topics would you like to see covered during the monthly general meetings? How do you think we can best work together to better our community?

Your League needs your input to make the biggest impact in our county. Bring your ideas to Mary's house (1562

Glenlake Circle, Niceville), at **2:00 pm on Sunday, 9 July**, and let's spend the afternoon developing a plan for the 2017–18 League year.

We'll provide the refreshments—you will provide the brainstorming! Email (info@okaloosa.org) or call (850-621-4088) to RSVP. We look forward to seeing you there.

Attention Members: 2017 LWVF Biennial Convention

The State League's biennial Convention will be held in Ft. Lauderdale in June (see calendar). Our local League gets 2 votes in plenary session, and we want to be fully represented as members from across the state conduct business.

Would **you** like to attend? It's a great opportunity to learn about League and participate in the process. To find out more, call Mary (850-621-4088) or email (info@lwvokaloosa.org). Don't miss out—call today!

Florida Constitution Revision Commission 2017–18

The Constitution Revision Commission (CRC) is a group of 37 members who carefully review and propose changes to Florida's Constitution. The CRC meets for about one year, traveling through Florida, identifying issues, performing research, and possibly recommending changes to the Constitution. Amendments proposed by the CRC will be placed on the 2018 General Election ballot, and would require 60% approval by voters to be added to the Florida Constitution.

Former Senator Don Gaetz (Niceville), former Representative Jimmy Patronis (Panama City) and 5 appointees from

Tallahassee comprise the Panhandle's representation on the CRC. You can see the complete membership list at <https://tinyurl.com/l8772xz>.

League encourages citizens to attend and participate in CRC public hearings. The next one scheduled in our area will be held on Wednesday, 3 May, from 4–7:00 pm in the Amelia Center Auditorium, Gulf Coast State College (5230 West Hwy 98, Panama City). Here's a map: <https://tinyurl.com/k8z5zus>; and here's request to speak at the meeting: <https://tinyurl.com/n5baxex>.

For more information, visit the CRC webpage: <http://flcrc.gov/>.

Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC)

With the full support of Supervisors of Election statewide, Florida lawmakers are poised to pass legislation entering our state into ERIC membership. So what is ERIC?

ERIC is a multistate partnership that uses a sophisticated and secure data-matching tool to improve the accuracy and efficiency of state voter registration systems. Through participation in ERIC, states can compare official data on eligible voters—such as voter and motor vehicle registrations, US Postal Service addresses, and Social Security death records—to keep voter rolls more complete and up-to-date and to prevent duplicate registrations (and “double voting”) between member states. ERIC was formed in 2012 with assistance from The Pew Charitable Trusts, and is owned, managed, and funded by participating states.

Change the world

American writer and novelist Michael Harriot recently said, “We are so often overwhelmed with complex issues and bad news that it is easy to forget the impact that a single individual can have on the world.” He suggested 5 ways to help make a change for the better.

- **Register to vote:** It's the “single greatest thing you can do to effect change in America.”
- **Vote:** Actually cast your ballot.
- **Contact your elected officials:** If an issue concerns you, call and email

Low registration rates and highly mobile populations can make it difficult to maintain the integrity of voter lists. Approximately 1 in 8 registration records nationwide is inaccurate or out of date, but states that participate in ERIC have increased the accuracy of their voter rolls, improved their election performance across several measures, and reduced their costs. Twenty states and the District of Columbia are active in ERIC, and more are expected to join in the coming years—including Florida!

How does ERIC save members money? Cleaner voter rolls mean less returned mail, fewer provisional ballots on election day, shorter lines at polling places, etc. ERIC membership also includes resources such as the Social Security death index and USPS data that states now buy on their own. Get details here: <http://www.ericstates.org/>.

someone about it. Get communication tips at <https://tinyurl.com/kkd3e5k>.

- **Fight injustice:** Report misconduct anytime you see it, especially to your local newspaper and TV station.
- **Help someone:** Volunteer your time. Find a suitable volunteer opportunity at:
 - » <https://VolunteerMatch.org/>
 - » <http://www.AllForGood.org/>
 - » <https://www.DoSomething.org/us>

Start with the “man in the mirror,” and begin making a positive impact today.

Calendar

Constitution Revision Commission (CRC) meeting

3 May: 4–7:00 pm
Amelia Center Auditorium, Gulf Coast State College, 5230 West Hwy 98, Panama City
Attend and participate in this hearing to recommend changes to the Constitution.

18th Annual State of the County Report

6 May: 10:00 am–Noon
Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce, 34 Miracle Strip Pkwy SE, FWB
Learn about the county business from a County Commissioner, the School Board Chair and your Clerk of Courts.

1st Circuit Community Alliance Meeting

12 May: 10:00–noon
NWFSC Chautauqua Rm 103, US Hwy 90 W, Defuniak Springs
Find out how this important organization supports the (<https://tinyurl.com/zq3cm6w>) vulnerable children and families in our community.

LWVF Biennial Convention

9–10 June
Westin Ft. Lauderdale Beach Resort
Members: call Mary (850-621-4088) if you want to attend. Check <https://tinyurl.com/kcuyszz> for details.

LWVOC Planning Meeting

9 July: 2–4:00 pm
Mary's house, 1562 Glenlake Circle, Niceville
Bring your ideas and help set our schedule for 2017–18.



Florida's 2017 Legislative Session ends 5 May.

Stay on top of the issues with LWVF's weekly Capitol Report at <https://tinyurl.com/kdxt5xs>. They provide in depth information into the committee rooms, chambers and hallways of the Florida Capitol, with updates on League's priority issues and suggestions on advocacy efforts.