



A force for progress on the Emerald Coast since 1962

July / August 2017

“Don’t be afraid of death; be afraid of an un-lived life. You don’t have to live forever, you just have to live.”

*Natalie Babbitt
American Author*



“Freedom has its life in the hearts, the actions, the spirit of men and so it must be daily earned and refreshed—else like a flower cut from its life-giving roots, it will wither and die.”

*Dwight D. Eisenhower
34th President of the USA*

“In the truest sense, freedom cannot be bestowed; it must be achieved.”

*Franklin D. Roosevelt
32nd President of the USA*



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 had hoped that my message for our summer issue would be filled with good news, and mostly it is. However, I’d be remiss if I failed to mention the passing last month of community leader and former League member Bill Garvie. He is the inspiration for the leading quote on the left, just as he was and is an excellent example of a life well lived. Vaya con Dios, Bill—we will miss you.

You can read all about the results of the 2017 Legislative Session and the LWVF Annual Convention on page 2, but page 1 will be devoting to looking forward.

You are all invited to my house for your local **League’s 2017-18 Planning Meeting on 9 July** (details below).

League members and non-members: This is your opportunity to make your voice heard and shape our calendar for the coming year, so don’t miss it!

Next, instead of getting caught up in the continuous negative news cycle, be the change you want to see in the world by getting (more) active in our community. A recent article bemoaned a perceived (<https://tinyurl.com/ybolyhxx>) lack of empathy among many Americans for those less fortunate than themselves. I can’t say if that’s true nationwide, but that hasn’t been my experience here in Okaloosa County, where many people work hard every day to make life better for everyone. Be a part of it!

Mary Blackwell

Attention: 2017–18 Okaloosa League Planning Meeting

As your **local** League, we believe in keeping our focus on issues with a local impact, so we devote our monthly general meetings to hot topics affecting Okaloosa County and its citizens. What issues would **you** like League to focus on next year and address at our meetings? How do you think we can best work together to better serve our community?

Your League **needs your input** to make the biggest impact in our county, so join us at 1562 Glenlake Circle, Niceville, from **2–4:00 pm on Sunday, 9 July**, and let’s spend the afternoon developing a plan for the 2017–18 League year. We’ll provide refreshments and **you** will provide the ideas! To RSVP email info@okaloosa.org or call 850-621-4088. See you there!

Florida Constitution Revision Commission (CRC)

The 37-member Constitution Revision Commission reviews and proposes changes to Florida’s Constitution. The CRC meets for ~1 year, traveling the State of Florida to identify issues, perform research, and possibly recommend changes to the Constitution. CRC-proposed amendments would be placed on the 2018 General Election ballot, and would require 60% approval by voters to be added to the Constitution.

You may submit proposals *in legal language* (<http://flcrc.gov/Proposals/Submit>), but if you aren’t a lawyer, use the “Submit a Comment or Idea” button at <http://www.flcrc.gov/>. You can also review the proposals submitted so far at <http://www.flcrc.gov/Proposals/Public>, and you can watch videos of previous CRC meetings at <https://tinyurl.com/y8zfrskb>. Whatever you do, this is our state’s Constitution, so stay on top of it!

Onward and upward: LWVF has moved!

After several decades in an older home (with all the attendant maintenance issues!) on Beverly Court, your state League has moved across town, taking a fresh and new direction along to its new office space.

The new LWVF office address is
League of Women Voters of Florida
2507 Callaway Rd, Suite 102A
Tallahassee FL 32303
Don’t be a stranger!

Legislative Session 2017

Your League was busy in Tallahassee during this session, advocating both for and against 86 different bills. As noted in the last Voter, results were mixed. Here is a breakout, organized by League's 2017 legislative priorities.

Education: League supported 9 of 16 bills, of which 1 passed. However, so did 2 of the 7 bills League opposed.

Election Law: League supported 24 of 28 bills under consideration, 2 of which passed. The 4 bills League opposed all died in committee.

Gun Safety: 23 bills were considered and 2 that League opposed did pass. Ten we supported died, as did 11 we opposed.

Healthcare: 3 bills were on the table, all opposed by League, and all 3 died.

Natural Resources: League supported

7 bills, of which 1 passed. All 9 of the bills we opposed died.

Bottom line: 89% of bills opposed by League were defeated; 8% of the bills League supported were passed.

League also urged Governor Scott to veto the budget, which short-changed education and Florida Forever. School funding was ultimately increased, but the fight to secure Florida's natural resources continues.

**Don't forget:
League
Planning
Meeting on
July 9th!**



Florida League members gather to shape the future

Nearly 200 League members gathered in Fort Lauderdale Beach in June at the State Convention to make decisions that will help direct and shape the League of Women Voters of Florida for the next two years—all against the backdrop of an explosive 65% membership growth this past year. The Florida League is now the second largest state league in the country.

The consensus positions achieved earlier this year by local leagues participating in the Open Primary Study were added to the League's statewide positions. The aim of the two-year study was to examine ways to increase voter participation in primary elections. It recommended "statewide use of an Open Primary election system that would allow for the broadest possible voter participation, including No Party

Finally: Florida has a budget

After some tense negotiations, Governor Scott finally signed the budget in early June, but only after vetoing nearly \$12 billion in special projects—including funds to move Fort Walton Beach's historic Gulfview Hotel.

Scott ordered legislators back to town for a three-day special session—which cost as much as \$70,000 a day—to increase funding for Florida's public

and Minor Party affiliate voters."

Keynote speaker Vikram Amar, dean of the University of Illinois College of Law, discussed the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, noting that the Electoral College—originally created as a compromise to win ratification of the Constitution—now benefited just a handful of states. He concluded, "It is a good moment in U.S. history to change the Electoral College rules."

Convention attendees formally began work for the campaign to put the citizen's initiative regarding Restoration of Former Felons Rights on the 2018 ballot, and also explored League's role in the Constitution Revision Commission process.

Get more convention details here: <https://tinyurl.com/ycm4vs8m>.

schools and take care of some of the governor's other top priorities.

The following week the Legislature approved both a new and bigger budget for public schools as well as money to repair the dike that surrounds Lake Okeechobee. Get details here:

- <https://tinyurl.com/y9qd8n4m>
- <https://tinyurl.com/ybldbsbw>
- <https://tinyurl.com/y78kstjg>

Help League fill in the calendar: Join us at the 9 July Planning Meeting!

Calendar

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.



Five things you can do to combat climate change

• Commit to solar

Volunteer with the League's FLSUN.org program to make Florida #1 in solar. Install rooftop solar on your home or business. Sign up for local solar programs offered by your utility.

• Make the next car pledge

Buy a hybrid or electric car next time. Purchase fuel-efficient cars. Carpool, bike or walk to your destination. Ride sharing apps even offer an option to share rides and save both money and emissions.

• Use native plants at home

Minimize the size your lawn (50% of Florida's water goes to *irrigation*), grow bird and butterfly-friendly plants at your home, and use native plants to reduce your water and energy consumption **and** utility bills. Learn more about native plants for your area by plugging your zip code in here: <https://tinyurl.com/y9mvqtqg>.

• Reduce home energy use

Install LED energy-efficient lightbulbs. Check your house for leaks. Ask your utility company for a **free energy audit**.

• Volunteer

Join our local League's Natural Resources/Solar Committee and lobby your county and cities to make renewable energy targets and pass laws that preserve clean water and greenspace.