



A force for progress on the Emerald Coast since 1962

Sep / Oct 2017

"... if you want a better nation, if you want a better future, then you have to be *better* citizens."

*Jim Wright
American Writer, USN (Ret'd)*



"It is the unutterable truth: all men are brothers. That's the bottom line."

*James Baldwin
American Author*

"Race doesn't really exist for [white people] because it has never been a barrier. Black folks don't have that choice."

*Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
Nigerian Author*

"Those who benefit from unearned privilege are too often quick to discount those who don't."

*Dr. DaShanne Stokes
American Scholar*



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

During a 1991 road trip—well before "family" bathrooms were common—my family stopped at a small Georgia gas station. My then 4-year-old son asked why there were 3 bathrooms, and I explained that when I was his age, black people were not allowed to use the same toilet as white people. My son looked at me like I'd grown two heads and responded, "Oh come ON, Mom! REALLY—why are there 3 bathrooms?"

At the time I took this as a sign of improving race relations. My son considered the mere idea of racially segregated toilets to be so ridiculous he was insulted that I thought I could get him to believe something so outlandish.

Fast forward 26 years, and we have Charlottesville. As a history major and daughter of a WWII veteran, I never imagined that in my lifetime I would see crowds of so-called "Americans" brandishing Nazi flags and torches, chanting the Nazi slogan "Blood and Soil," and marching through one of our cities. Simply put: words fail.

Previous issues have discussed voter suppression (Jan–Feb 2017) and irrational fears about immigrants, terrorism, etc. (Nov–Dec 2016). See page 2 of this issue for some thoughts on white supremacy. Don't let racism win. Keep our nation moving forward.

Mary Blackwell

Back to League on September 19th!

Join the League for lunch on Tuesday, **19 Sep, from 11:30–1:00 at the Twisted Grape Wine Bar & Café** (1193 Eglin Pkwy, Shalimar). Our guest speaker, Supervisor of Elections Paul Lux, will discuss a number of issues affecting county voters. These include the Electronic Registration Information Center (which ensures the efficiency and integrity of America's voter rolls),

upcoming Municipal elections, the planned by-mail sales tax referendum, and the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity.

The meeting is free and open to the general public. Attendees must purchase their own meals. RSVP to info@lwvokaloosa.org by 15 Sep.

We look forward to seeing you there!

What's next for Okaloosa County's Community Alliance?

The 1st Circuit Community Alliance works with Florida's Department of Children & Families, encouraging communities and other stakeholders to ensure the well-being and safety of all children. The Okaloosa County Community Alliance stood up last spring under newly appointed Chair Rick Owen.

Join League for lunch on Thursday, **19 Oct, from 11:30–1:00 at the Twisted Grape Wine Bar & Café** (1193 Eglin Pkwy, Shalimar) to get a status update from Mr. Owen. RSVP to info@lwvokaloosa.org by 16 Oct.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Leaguers: It's time to renew your annual membership!

Thank you for your continued membership in the Okaloosa League. Our League boasts the lowest annual dues in Florida, which include membership in the State and National Leagues **and** enable us to publish the bimonthly *Voter* newsletter; organize general meetings each month from September through May; and maintain our website

to keep you informed about critical issues inside Okaloosa County and around the state of Florida. We are counting on your continued support to meet the challenges of the coming 2017–18 League year.

If you can't wait for your invoice in the mail, renew on-line today at <http://lwvokaloosa.org/JoinUs.html>.

LWVF Convention 2017: Shaping the Future

Nearly 200 League members gathered from 9–10 June to direct and shape the League of Women Voters of Florida for the next two years. Our non-partisan stand is increasingly popular: LWVF is now the second largest state league in the US; Orange County (750+ members) is now the 2nd largest local league in the country; and is followed by Palm Beach (3rd) and St. Petersburg (4th). Here's what 2017 LWVF Convention attendees accomplished:

- **Open Primary Study.** Adopted the consensus arrived at by participants in the two-year study, which examined 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 and Minor Party affiliated voters."

- **National Popular Vote Interstate Compact.** Made adoption of the NPVIC a statewide priority for 2018.

- **Rights Restoration Coalition.** Joined the campaign to get the citizen initiative regarding Restoration of Former Felons Rights on the 2018 ballot (details below).

- **Constitution Revision Commission.** Discussed League's role in the process.

Details at: <https://tinyurl.com/y8vqsywh>.

LWVF Joins Rights Restoration Coalition

The Florida League has formally joined Florida Rights Restoration Coalition in supporting an amendment to reinstate ex-felons' rights. Here is the Ballot Summary for the proposed amendment:

This amendment restores the voting rights of Floridians with felony convictions after they complete all terms of their sentence including parole or probation. The amendment would not apply to those convicted of murder or sexual offenses, who would continue

to be permanently barred from voting unless the Governor and Cabinet vote to restore their voting rights on a case by case basis.

Over 1.6 million Floridians still do not have the right to vote because of Florida's Civil War-era ban on voting for individuals with past felony convictions. Florida is only one of three states with a lifetime voting ban, but you can help change that! Sign the petition to get this amendment on the ballot in 2018: <https://floridarrc.com/volunteer>.

American Racism and White Supremacy are Real

The Nov–Dec 2016 Okaloosa Voter cited facts to demonstrate that "reverse racism" is **not** real. Here are some facts which prove white Americans enjoy a clear advantage over black Americans, simply by virtue of their race.

1. **Black college graduates make less money than white high school dropouts.** Don't take my word for it. Check out Duke University's Research Network on Racial and Ethnic Inequality study here: <https://tinyurl.com/yd3rgghj>.

2. **Black schools are underfunded.** After controlling for property tax revenue and parental income, the 1 determining factor in how much money a school receives almost always correlates to its percentage of black students. See: <https://tinyurl.com/y74agayv> and <https://tinyurl.com/y74agayv>.

3. **Black unemployment is consistently twice that of white unemployment.** A black person is far less likely to find a job than a white person with the same education and experience, according to the Economic Policy Institute (<https://tinyurl.com/yb5cny2>).

Too often when black people bring up the subject of racism, white people dismiss their claims. White people who have not been systematically discriminated against simply refuse to believe that such a thing exists, even in the face of hard evidence.

These studies prove that racism and white supremacy in our country are indeed real, and it's a national disgrace. This is your choice: to deny reality, or to stand up for our Constitutional promise of freedom, justice and equality for **all** Americans.

Calendar

Back to League

19 Sep: 11:30 am–1:00 pm
Twisted Grape, 1193 Eglin Pkwy, Shalimar
Join us for lunch and hear from Supervisor of Elections Paul Lux about issues affecting county voters. RSVP to info@lwvokaloosa.org.

Community Alliance Update

19 Oct: 11:30 am–1:00 pm
Twisted Grape, 1193 Eglin Pkwy, Shalimar
Chairman Rick Owen will provide a status report on the stand-up of Okaloosa County Community Alliance. Learn how you can help, over lunch. RSVP to info@lwvokaloosa.org.

RESTORE Act Update

Date/Time/Location: TBD
A Triumph Gulf Coast representative will update us on the status of community projects approved for RESTORE Act funding. Find out when and how our cities and county will benefit from the BP oil spill recovery payout.

Constitution Revision Commission: Time is running out to submit proposals!

22 Sep: Deadline to submit public proposals.
19 Sep & 17 Oct: 9–noon
CRC meetings in Tallahassee where you can comment. Review existing proposals at: <https://www.flcrc.gov/Proposals>



Travel with League Seneca Falls/Rochester 1–5 Nov

Travel back in time to the cradle of the US women's rights movement. Register at: <https://tinyurl.com/y78yvp6y>.

Do you Vote Smart?

Vote Smart's mission is to provide **unbiased, factual, free** information on candidates and elected officials to **ALL Americans**. Sign up to receive their e-newsletter: <https://tinyurl.com/yaogdl5m>.