



The Okaloosa Voter

A force for progress on the Emerald Coast since 1962

Nov / Dec 2017

"I do not believe in a fate that will fall on us no matter what we do. I do believe in a fate that will fall on us if we do nothing."

*President Ronald Reagan
1st Inaugural Address*



"Every single day, you have to push back against the fall of night."

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

"Privilege is when your voice is the norm, but still you claim to be unheard."

*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

In the wakes of Harvey, Irma and Maria, Mother Nature has again proven to be powerful, arbitrary and often fatal. As so many Americans are still recovering (or not) in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico, many of us may be suffering from compassion fatigue and bad news overload, but don't look the other way or make excuses for inaction. Read President Reagan's words at the left, and ask: If not me, then who?

We each carry individual responsibilities, but we must also support our society in general and our communities in particular. Our nation is justly proud of its tradition of helping others in need, so uphold that proud tradition now. Let's keep our county and our nation moving forward—together.

Finally, whichever holiday you celebrate, may it be filled with blessings!

Mary Blackwell

RESTORE Act update with Don Gaetz on 14 November

Your League invites everyone to catch up with former State Senator Don Gaetz—now of Triumph Gulf Coast (<https://www.myfloridatriumph.com/>)—from **5:30–7:00 pm on Tuesday, 14 Nov, Room 302, Student Services Center, NWFSC** (100 E College Blvd, Niceville).

Don will discuss the status of the

County Commission-approved RESTORE Act projects in our community, and when we might expect to see funds dispersed and work begin.

The event is free and open to the public. For more info call Mary Blackwell at 850-621-4088, or RSVP to info@lwvokaloosa.org.

Is a county-wide stormwater utility coming to Okaloosa?

A huge backlog of unfunded stormwater infrastructure repair needs is behind a push to establish a county stormwater utility (<https://tinyurl.com/y8haf3ms>), which is considered the "most stable source of funding" for stormwater management (<https://tinyurl.com/yd3wgqkp>).

What would that mean for county residents? That depends on which method is used to calculate the monthly user fee. The most important factor is *impervious area*, which is a hardened surface (driveway, patio, rooftop, sidewalk, etc.) that does not absorb stormwater. While most U.S. stormwater fees

are based on each parcel's impervious area (the Equivalent Residential Unit—ERU—system), some use a flat fee per parcel based on the average ERU. Often there are different rates for residential and commercial parcels, and sometimes agricultural land is exempt.

Studies show that nationwide the average monthly single-family residential fee in 2016 was \$5.14, and the median fee was \$4.00. Be advised: Residential customers pay much more under a flat fee system, and exempting agriculture also significantly increases the single-family fee. (<https://tinyurl.com/ycmc2xbc>).

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

Thank you for your continued membership in the Okaloosa League. We have 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. We need your continued support to meet the challenges of the coming 2017–18 League and election year.

Your invoices were mailed last week, but you can renew on-line today at <http://lwvokaloosa.org/JoinUs.html>.

Caring about our fellow citizens

The following is excerpted is from a June article in the Huffington Post. Read it in full here: <https://tinyurl.com/ybolyhxx>.

"I don't know how to explain to someone why they should care about other people ...

I'm perfectly content to pay taxes that go toward public schools, even though I'm childless and intend to stay that way, because all children deserve a quality, free education. If this seems unfair or unreasonable to you, we are never going to see eye to eye.

... Poverty should not be a death sentence in the richest country in the world. If you're okay with thousands of people dying of treatable diseases ... there is a divide between our worldviews that can never be bridged.

... Our disagreement is not merely political, but a fundamental divide on what it means to live in a society ... "

Before you condemn this as socialism, ask yourself: What would Jesus do? Draw your own conclusions:

Will we ever see a Crestview bypass?

Do you remember the last time you had to evacuate before a hurricane? How much time did you spend stopped in traffic on Hwy 85? Now imagine you have to make the trip from FWB to Crestview every day. The daily traffic jam south of the County Seat isn't just an inconvenience and a public safety

Sand: It's not just a Panhandle issue

You know about the on-going dispute over beach restoration in Destin and on Okaloosa island. At issue is substandard sand and whether or not we need beach restoration at all. But elsewhere in Florida nearly half of our coast—411 miles' worth of beach—is considered "critically eroded."

South Florida beaches are in decline, and they are desperately seeking sand of any kind to stave off erosion, but a 1986 law bars federal funding for foreign sand. Since the Army Corps of Engineers provides a big chunk of money for beach restoration, Florida's Congressional delegation wants the ban lifted so we can buy sand from the Bahamas.

Federal regulations also dictate that

Philippians 2:4 – Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

Galatians 6:2 – Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

Proverbs 19:17 – One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, And He will repay him for his good deed.

1 John 3:17-18 – But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

Matthew 25:40 – Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.

Proverbs 28:27 – He who gives to the poor will never want, but he who shuts his eyes will have many curses.

John 13:34-35 – ... love one another, even as I have loved you.

issue; blocking access to Duke Field and the 7th Special Forces Group compound could compromise national security. A county of 200,000 people deserves better than a single highway, only four lanes wide, linking our two halves together. This is a countywide issue, so ask the BCC about bypass options.

only US-flagged ships may import sand from the islands. So, the US dredging industry is suspicious of Bahamian companies muscling in on its turf.

How did the beaches get into such bad shape? (<https://tinyurl.com/y936qyag>) Blame storms, underfunded beach maintenance and unchecked coastal development. Jetties and seawalls hold back water but accelerate beach erosion and preclude natural coastline movement.

Industry-specific protectionism may be questionable at best, but considering there's also a global sand shortage (<https://tinyurl.com/y73593vl>), if we want sustainable reform, perhaps Florida **should** be forced to deal with its own problems without exacerbating others.

Calendar

Free Film Screening

7 Nov: 3:00 pm
Destin Library, 150 Sibert Ave
Come see *To Begin the World Over Again: The Life of Thomas Paine*, and learn all about one of America's truly radical Founding Fathers. For more info call 850-837-8572.

"Hot Dogger" for Veterans and their Families

10 Nov: 11:00 am–2:00 pm
Coastline Calvary Chapel, 2834 Hwy 87, Navarre
Check your VA benefits and entitlements and meet Rep. Matt Gaetz's VA case worker. Learn about PTSD. Consider housing and job opportunities. Connect with local congregations.

RESTORE Act Update

14 Nov: 5:30–7:00 pm
Rm 302, Student Services Ctr, NWFSC, Niceville Campus
Triumph Gulf Coast Board member and former State Senator Don Gaetz 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.

League Holiday Party

10 Dec: 2–4:00 pm
1562 Glenlake Cir, Niceville
Bring a friend and a dish to share, and join us for some holiday cheer!

Okaloosa Community Alliance Meeting

8 Jan: 2:00 pm
United Way offices, 112 Tupelo Ave SE, FWB
Find out how you can help support the most vulnerable members of our community.

Crestview Bypass

Jan 2018: Date/Time TBD
We've been talking about it for years. A west bypass is finally in the works, but traffic continues to worsen. What about an east bypass? Learn about the options and what **you** can do to make it a reality.