



The Okaloosa Voter

A force for progress on the Emerald Coast since 1962

March / April 2018

"History has shown that courage can be contagious and hope can take on a life of its own."

*Michelle Obama
Former First Lady*

"I would like to be remembered as a person who wanted to be free ... so other people would be also free."

*Rosa Parks
American Civil Rights Activist*

"In times of crisis the wise build bridges, but the foolish build barriers."

*T'Challa
King of Wakanda*

"Americans are too lazy to become informed voters."

*Malcolm Berko
American Financial Advisor*



Celebrate Women's History Month: Persist!

Learn about 2018 Honorees at <https://tinyurl.com/ycgkxreu>



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 will be my last message as your local League President. I am passing the torch in May, but I'll still be editor of the Voter and Webmaster. Watch our website for details on the April Annual meeting.

In the meantime, this issue touches on many items of local, state and national interest, including the March Municipal

Elections. Remember: If you want a better government, you have to be better citizens. Start by being informed voters!

There are quite a few events coming up locally that you won't want to miss, so be sure to read the calendar carefully and watch our home page for updates.

Mary Blackwell

2018 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS: 13 MARCH

Residents of Destin, Mary Esther and Valparaiso will be choosing new leadership 13 March. Check out the Municipal E-Voter for details on the candidates: <https://tinyurl.com/ybmvkyq8>.

Destin citizens will choose between two qualified candidates for mayor, and from among five candidates to fill three City Council seats.

In Mary Esther, residents will choose between three candidates to fill two City Council seats. They must also decide whether or not to allow the city to grant temporary economic development property tax exemptions to businesses that create new jobs.

Perhaps the most interesting race is in Valparaiso, where citizens will choose a new mayor. The late Bruce Arnold

served in that capacity for 53 years until his death last February. City Commissioner Heyward Strong has served as Mayor since then, and on Election Day he will face off with four challengers for the mayoralty.

Early Voting begins on March 5th, so get ready to vote now! Be prepared. Be informed. **Be a voter!**

2018 Municipal Election E-Voter now on-line!

Residents of Destin, Mary Esther and Valparaiso: Election Day is right around the corner so check out your one-stop-shopping place for voting information: <https://tinyurl.com/ybmvkyq8>.

OFFSHORE DRILLING COMMENT PERIOD STILL OPEN

The Trump Administration's plan to allow drilling along coasts of the United States (except Florida—for *the time being*) will begin moving ahead this year, if not modified. This will take our country in the wrong direction in addressing climate change.

Submit your comments opposing the proposed policy shift no later than 11:59 pm Eastern time on March 9th. Submit on-line to the Department of the Interior: <https://tinyurl.com/ya5tkkvk>. Use these talking points/background: <https://tinyurl.com/y8xg2ov6>.

RIGHTS RESTORATION MAKES THE FLORIDA BALLOT

After months of dedicated work, election officials in Florida certified that this initiative has collected enough signatures to get a constitutional amendment on the November ballot.

Florida is currently one of four states that permanently revokes the right to vote from those with a felony conviction—

affecting more than 1.5M people in Florida alone.

Members of the Florida League have worked hard (<https://tinyurl.com/ybrrk194>) supporting rights restoration for felons. Learn more about the Second Chances Florida Campaign at: <https://secondchancesfl.org/>.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The session ends on 9 March. To keep up on the action check out the latest Capitol Report from the LWVF lobbyist at <https://tinyurl.com/y98hvw5h>.

- **Gun Safety.** What can we say about Parkland? Last week's Rally in Tally saw thousands gathered at the Capitol to demand changes to our state's gun laws. League supports a ban on assault-style semiautomatic weapons and expanded background checks for gun buyers. The Governor has shown support for some limited measures, but the legislature isn't budging.

- **Education.** The Senate Education Committee adopted a modified version of **HB 7055** after multiple strike-all and other amendments, and several impassioned pleas to amend it further. Most

KERNER COMMISSION UPDATE

In 1967 LBJ established a commission to investigate the causes of the nation's civil unrest. The Kerner Commission concluded: "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal." An Economic Policy Institute update to the (<https://tinyurl.com/y7sq5x8n>) report included the following observations:

- Black Americans have closed the gap in high school graduation rates, but significant gaps persist in college graduation rates.
- The black poverty rate is still dramatically higher, and median household income much lower, than that for white

GET READY FOR VOTER REGISTRATION SEASON

League members: we'll be registering voters in the run-up to midterms, so get your training done now!

Step 1: Download the "Ten Steps to Registering Voters in Florida" briefing at <http://www.lwvfl.org/register-voters/>.

Step 2: Review the briefing.

TRAVEL WITH THE FLORIDA LEAGUE

Join League from **14–20 April** for a getaway along the pristine rivers through Blackwater Forest, Conecuh National Forest and Eglin Range, home of the world's largest long-leaf pine forest. Experience the flora, fauna, stillness and solitude from your kayak. Get info: <https://tinyurl.com/yauh7dxq>.

of the House priorities remain in the bill, and a credit in financial literacy was added as a graduation requirement.

The Senate also reduced funding for the bullying voucher relief program and requires more documentation at the school level before a voucher is awarded. Basically, the love shown to public schools and their teachers and administrators by the Parkland community fell on deaf ears.

- **Elections.** HB 85 and HB 87—which are needed for ERIC—have passed. So has Vote-by-mail, which will allow voters to drop off their Vote-by-mail ballot in any early voting center, as well as a minor change to write-in candidates, which requires that they live in the district they are running in.

Americans.

- Incarceration rates for all Americans have skyrocketed, but a black American is 6.4 times more likely to be incarcerated than a white American.
- Black infant mortality is over twice as high as for white infants, and life expectancy for black Americans is still almost four years shorter than that of white Americans.

LWVUS Convention 2018

Join League in Chicago from 28 Jun–1 Jul. Get info and register at <https://tinyurl.com/y7b898pj>.

Step 3: Take the mandatory quiz at <https://tinyurl.com/yaxvbqz>.

Step 4: Follow the special instructions you receive from LWVF via email.

Step 5: Forward your confirmation of certification to info@lwvokaloosa.org.

Join Civil Rights Movement veterans and law professor *emeritus* Robert Bickel on **14–19 May** in Montgomery, Birmingham and Selma AL to explore the history of the campaign for social and economic justice that led to the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Get more info: <https://tinyurl.com/yaw9qeq2>.

Calendar

Women Who Made a Difference

7 March: Noon (lunch) Wyndham Garden Resort, Okaloosa Island
Honor outstanding women—and work to be women who make a difference—with Republican Women of Okaloosa Federated. Call Donna Pattison (651-5416) to reserve a spot.

Field Hearing: Hezbollah Gains in South America

12 March: 1–4:30 pm
NAS Pensacola Air Museum
Engage in meaningful discussions relating to drug trafficking and terrorism in the Western Hemisphere with Rep Matt Gaetz. Get info: <https://tinyurl.com/ya3raoxd>.

US Naturalization Test Prep Course

12 March–9 May: Mon & Wed, 5:30–7:00 pm
UWF Emerald Coast Campus, Fort Walton Beach
Improve your English and study for the civics test. Tuition is \$425. Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/ya62399g>.

Florida Constitutional Revision Commission Presentation

15 March: 6–7:30 pm
Destin Library, 150 Sibert Ave
Florida voters must decide on constitutional amendments from the CRC. Find out what you need to know before you vote. This program is free and open to the public.

5th Annual Youth Leadership Conference

21 Apr: 9:00 am–3:00 pm
Boys & Girls Clubs of the Emerald Coast, 923 Denton Blvd NW, FWB
Join United for a Good Cause to help local kids cultivate leadership skills and discover their purpose and potential. Get info: <https://tinyurl.com/yacd166aj>.