

A force for progress on the Emerald Coast since 1962!

Sep / Oct 2018

"We will not thrive in a world where our leadership and ideals are absent. We wouldn't deserve to."

"No one of us, if they have character, leaves behind a wasted life."

*Senator John McCain
USN (Ret'd)*



Important Dates

21 Sep: Last day to request a Vote-by-mail ballot (overseas)

8 Oct: Last day to request a Vote-by-mail ballot (domestic)

9 Oct: Voter Registration Books close

22 Oct–3 Nov: Early Voting, Okaloosa County

27 Oct–3 Nov: Early Voting, Walton County

6 Nov: General Election



Separate Fact from Fiction

It's hard to judge the accuracy of many "news" articles in the digital age, so it's your responsibility to **not** always take headlines and viral memes at face value. Use Vote Smart's Voter Self-Defense (<https://tinyurl.com/y82bcp9x>) System to fact check, or call the 1-888-VoteSmart hotline. Don't be misled again!



League's Mission:

The League 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 EDITOR

Thank you for voting in the Primary. First the good news: 26.5% of registered voters turned out in Okaloosa County and 34.1% turned out in Walton County. Now the bad news: only 10% of non-major-party-affiliated voters took part in Okaloosa's nonpartisan School Board races, and Republican turnout exceeded that of Democrats by ~7% in Okaloosa and nearly 14% in Walton. Why the huge gap in Walton? Perhaps because write-in candidates

closed the County Commission races to all but Republican voters. We must do better in November!

Our last 2 issues covered the first 11 proposed constitutional amendments on the 2018 ballot. Since then, court rulings have stricken Amendments 6, 8 and 13 from the ballot. So, this issue addresses proposed amendment 12 and our calendar of events for the fall. Join us in making democracy work!

AMENDMENT 12: LOBBYING AND ABUSE OF OFFICE BY PUBLIC OFFICERS (REFERRED BY THE CRC)

This measure would revise the state Constitution's "ethics in government" provisions, following a failed attempt by the Legislature in 2018 to reform lobbying practices. If approved it would:

- Extend the ban on state lobbying by legislators and statewide elected officials from 2 to 6 years.
- Prohibit legislators and statewide elected officials from lobbying federal and local government agencies while in office.
- Prohibit top state agency employees from any lobbying while working for the state and from lobbying state government for 6 years after leaving their job.
- Prohibit local elected officials from getting paid to lobby anyone while in office and from lobbying their own governing body for 6 years after leaving office.
- Prohibit judges from lobbying any branch of state government for 6

years after leaving the bench.

- Prohibit any elected official or public employee from using his or her position to gain a "disproportionate benefit" (to be defined by the state Ethics Commission).

Opponents claim this issue can be legislatively addressed, and therefore need not be permanently incorporated into Florida's Constitution.

Supporters claim that if passed, Florida would have the strongest ethical standards in any state's laws or constitution, and Florida would be a national leader in the area of government ethics.

For more nonpartisan information on the 2018 ballot amendments, see LWVF (<https://tinyurl.com/yadw7tb5>), Ballotpedia (<https://tinyurl.com/ybad8f73>), Vote Smart (<https://tinyurl.com/y96yr5zy>) and Florida Bar Journal (sidebar at <https://tinyurl.com/y7agqwd3>). Help make our democracy work!

BACK TO LEAGUE: ELECTION CYBER-SECURITY

Electronic hacking turned out to be a real issue in the 2016 election. How secure is your vote in 2018? Learn how our election officials are protecting our election equipment and your franchise by joining League and our local Supervisors of Election for lunch.

Okaloosa County SoE Paul Lux will brief us from **11:30–1:00 on Thursday, 13 Sep, at the Twisted Grape** (1193

Eglin Pkwy, Shalimar).

Walton County SoE Bobby Beasley will brief us from **11:30–1:00 on Friday, 28 Sep, at Bogey's Restaurant** (660 Baldwin Ave, Defuniak Springs).

The events are free and the public is welcome. Attendees are responsible for purchasing their own lunches. RSVP at info@LWVOWC.org.

FREE SHOWING OF *REINVENTING POWER: AMERICA'S RENEWAL ENERGY BOOM*

Do you want to help save the planet? Join us at **6:00 pm on Tuesday, 25 Sep, at the Destin Library** (150 Sibert Ave, Destin, FL 32541) for a free showing of the film *Reinventing Power: America's Renewal Energy Boom*, and find out what you can do.

The Sierra Club movie takes us across the country to hear directly from the people making our clean energy future achievable. These individuals are working to rebuild what's broken, rethink what's possible, and revitalize communities. These stories are proof that America does not need to choose between keeping our lights on and protecting our communities.

Reinventing Power underscores the notion that we don't have to sacrifice jobs for a clean environment. Supporting a clean energy future means building a better, more prosperous future for everyone. Over the film's 50 minutes, you'll meet people in 8 states whose lives were changed by the renewable energy industry while exploring various

aspects of the clean energy industry from innovation to installation.

This event is being brought to you by the Sierra Club Emerald Coast, Earth Ethics, Inc. and League of Women Voters of Okaloosa & Walton County. Representatives will be there to answer questions about the movie and alternative energy sources. An LWVOWC representative will discuss our solar initiative campaign in Northwest Florida. Keep up to date on the event activities at <https://tinyurl.com/ydx9zja6>.

National Voter Registration Day at NWFSC

Your League is partnering with the NWFSC Chapter of the Association of Florida Colleges to hold a National Voter Registration Day event from **9:00 – 3:00 pm on Tuesday, 25 Sep, in Bldg 410** outside Starbucks, Student Life Center, NWFSC Niceville Campus. Stop by and get ready to vote!

QUESTIONS? WE'VE GOT ANSWERS: THE 2018 AMENDMENTS

You've read about the amendments in the Voter, now hear about them in more detail—with *handouts*. The presentations are free and open to the public, so mark your calendars and tell your friends—especially those without internet access.

Okaloosa County: 11 Oct, 6:00 pm, Niceville City Hall, 208 Partin Drive N.

Walton County: 16 Oct, 5:30 pm, Coastal Branch Library, 437 Greenway Trail, Santa Rosa Beach.

RSVP to info@LWVOWC.org.

CLOSED V. OPEN PRIMARIES: WHAT'S IN FLORIDA'S FUTURE?

Only 17.6% of registered voters turned out for Florida's 2014 primary. From 2000 to 2016, Florida's voter turnout averaged 23%, compared to a national average of 37%. With that in mind, LWVFL launched a study in 2015 to determine if Florida's closed primary election system was hindering voter turnout.

This question is more than academic in heavily Republican Okaloosa & Walton Counties, where local and state races are often decided in the Primary, and fully 41% of registered voters are **not** Republicans. All it takes is one "spoiler" write-in candidate to close a primary and disenfranchise voters. That means candidates can—and **do**—win with less than 10% of the electorate's support.

League's statewide study committee evaluated reasons for and solutions to low turnout, coupled with an evaluation of alternative primary election systems. The study also included evaluation of Presidential Preference Primary elections. After the 2-year study's completion in 2017, 21 of 29 local Florida leagues met to discuss the findings and reach consensus positions.

Learn all about the study results at your League's November general meeting (date and location TBD). Find out how turnout can be improved, and how we can make democracy work better for Floridians.

The meeting is free and open to the public, so bring a friend. RSVP to info@LWVOWC.org.

General Election E-Voter coming soon!

Except for one Fire Commission seat in South Walton, all the local races were decided in the Primary. However, there will still be a full ballot for the General Election. In addition to all the proposed Constitutional Amendments, there are contested races for Governor, Attorney General, Chief Financial Officer, Commissioner of Agriculture, State Senator–District 2, and State Representatives – Districts 3 & 4.

At the Federal level Floridians will be choosing a US Senator, and Panhandle residents must choose their 1st Congressional District Representative.

The LWVOWC's 2018 General Election E-Voter will be your "one-stop-shopping place for information on the amendments and candidates in contested races. **The E-Voter will be published 1 Oct.**



Join the Okaloosa–Walton Solar Co-op

Solar electricity is abundant, accessible, and increasingly affordable, but it can still be daunting to install it in your home or business. LWVOWC wants to help you achieve peace of mind when you invest in this major upgrade to your home. So, we partnered with Solar United Neighbors of Florida to form the Okaloosa–Walton Solar Co-op. Aside from delivering economies of scale, the Co-op will provide everything you need to join the ranks of solar owners, including expert advice on requirements, costs, financing options and help selecting a qualified solar installer. The Co-op will be there to support you every step of the way. There are now over 1 million solar homes in the US. Will you be next? For info contact earthethicsaction@gmail.com OR www.facebook.com/earthethics.