



### April/May 2009

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."

*Anne Frank*

*Author of a Diary of her family's two years in hiding during World War II*

This issue is brought to you on behalf of Earth Day



*(Love your Mother!)*

and

Armed Forces and Memorial Days



*Honor our Veterans and support our troops!*

### Mission:

*The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, 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

Yesterday I returned from the Legislative Seminar in Tallahassee. It was at once exciting, inspiring and a bit depressing. I was excited to make a contribution; I was inspired by other League members; I was depressed by the enormity of the challenges we face in Florida and the rest of the nation.

That's why I selected the words of Anne Frank for this issue's banner. Who among us could have maintained such optimism in the face of such cruelty and injustice? Would we have dreamed about making the world a better place at the moment our very lives were in such danger?

Would we have risen to the occasion and even left behind a written record of one person's triumph over despair?

When I consider Anne's situation when she wrote those words, it puts our current economic woes in perspective. Times may be hard, but our community is strong. Now more than ever we must put aside our differences and work together to ensure a brighter future for all of us. So don't wait a moment: join League and help us improve our county today.

*Mary Blackwell*

## Pat Hollarn to Speak at Annual Meeting on April 25th

### Members Old and New:

Please join us on Saturday, April 25th at Fort Walton Yacht Club for our 2009 Annual Meeting.

Pat Hollarn, our former Supervisor of Elections, will open the meeting at 10:00 by sharing reminiscences of her 20 years working for the

people of Okaloosa County. Lunch will be served after Pat's presentation, followed by our business meeting.

Meeting details have been mailed to members and are posted on-line at [www.lwvokaloosa.org/members.html](http://www.lwvokaloosa.org/members.html).

**RSVP today to 850-613-6170!**

## National Popular Vote Compact Consensus Meeting

The consensus meeting will be held from 6:00-8:00 p.m. on Monday, April 6th, at Tech Center Bldg 3, 51 Third St, Shalimar. To get there, go east on 9th Ave at the courthouse light, right at the stop sign onto 3rd St, right at the Tech Center sign, and park in the first lot on the left.

This is a very special meeting, so we need as many members as possible to be there. Participating in the consensus process is not just instructive and rewarding, it also

helps set the agenda for League's lobbying efforts – so we need your participation. Review the study briefs and consensus questions at [www.lwvokaloosa.org/NPVCompact.html](http://www.lwvokaloosa.org/NPVCompact.html). Bring a sack lunch and plan to stay the full two hours. Only League members may join in the consensus discussion, but members of the public are welcome to observe.

**Make a difference:** Help League reach consensus on this important issue. We'll see you there!

### Florida Fair Districts Amendments Moving Forward

After each decennial census, the boundaries of our congressional and state legislative districts are redrawn. Regular adjustment of district lines was intended to keep pace with population changes and ensure that districts are roughly equal in size -- to make sure every vote counts equally.

However, the Legislature controls redistricting, and with no standards to ensure fairness in the process, they have used it to make seats "safe" for incumbents. This system allows politicians to choose their voters instead of voters choosing their representatives.

The standards in the Fair Districts amendments will end partisan gerrymandering and require districts to be compact and community-based.

In January the Florida Supreme Court approved the proposed amendments, and the campaign is now underway to collect 1.6 million signatures by October 31st to win a spot on the November 2010 ballot.

We need your help! Together we can restore fairness to Florida's electoral process and ensure that everyone's vote counts.

First, sign the petitions at <https://www.fairdistrictsflorida.org/freepetitions>.

Second, join the fight here <http://www.fairdistrictsflorida.org/volunteer.php>.

## League Teams with FWB Chamber of Commerce for State of the County Report on May 30th

The League is pleased to announce that this year's 10th annual State of the County Report will be presented in conjunction with the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce. The meeting will be held in the Chamber offices at 34 Miracle Strip Pkwy (on the south side, between Eglin & Beal Pkwy) from 10-12:00 on Saturday, May 30th.

The 2009 Report will feature presentations by Bill Roberts, Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners; Chuck Kelley, Chairman of

the School Board; and James Owens, Public Defender. Each will have 20-25 minutes for his report, after which attendees may ask their own questions.

As always, League meetings are free and open to the public. We invite all concerned citizens to come and learn how our County is faring. Don't miss this opportunity to meet your elected officials and ask them questions about the issues that are important to you.

We'll see you there!

## LWVF 2009 Legislative Seminar Wrap-up

As in years past, the 2009 Seminar was a whirlwind of activity and an opportunity to learn. In between workshops and presentations by legislators, LWVOC's two-person delegation visited the offices of both Senators and all four Representatives from the county to discuss League legislative priorities.

At the Healthcare workshop Dr. Kenneth Brummel-Smith laid out a compelling case for single-payer national health insurance on behalf of Physicians for a National Health Program ([www.pnhp.org](http://www.pnhp.org)).

Then Dr. Francis Haithcock, Chancellor of the Florida Public School system, and Dr. Willis Holcombe, Chancellor of the Florida College System, discussed issues and progress regarding K-12 and community colleges, respectively.

LWVF lobbyist Heather Walker briefed us on current legislation and League priorities over dinner, and we heard from various legislators the next morning. All of them had the same refrain: "No money!"

The mood in the Senate is quite different from that of the House. The Senators seem to accept that it's not possible to cut our way out

of the current budget deficits, and efforts to recapture "lost" revenues – and even some tax increases – are on the table. Tax exemptions are under the microscope, as are proposals for Combined Reporting (which would make corporate taxes more fair for Florida businesses), the Streamlining Sales Tax & Use Agreement (which would implement tax for internet sales), and an increase in cigarette taxes.

Despite the lack of stable recurring revenue streams (due to overreliance on sales tax) that caused the current budget volatility, attempts to increase revenues are still radioactive in the House. Out of 246 sales tax exemptions, the Finance & Tax Council could not find one to cut. As a result, both education and healthcare are in danger.

Amidst the economic doom and gloom there is good news: our county is **twice** lucky. Okaloosa has an experienced legislative delegation, and we made sure they know we rely on them to protect Florida's biggest asset – intellectual capital – by preserving education funding. Even more important: we can count on BRAC to speed our economic recovery.

## LWVF 32nd Biennial Convention

The Florida League's 32nd Biennial Convention will be held from Friday, May 15 through Sunday, May 17, at the Hyatt Regency Riverfront Hotel in Jacksonville. The Convention will also mark the 19th joint meeting with the LWVF Education Fund.

The state board's goal for convention is 100% participation with delegates from all LWVF Local Leagues and Member-at-Large units. All League events are open to the public, and visitors are invited and encouraged to attend and become more informed about the League; however, visitor fees include convention materials and workshops only.

Six skill-developing workshops will be offered on Saturday afternoon, including sessions on building a dynamic website, program planning, fund raising and recruiting new members. There will also be a separate *President's Roundtable* directed to local League leaders.

Invited speakers will ensure the convention is an exciting, memorable and fun experience for all, addressing such topics as ethics and corruption in our government; managing resources in tough economic times; and increasing and retaining membership.

Get details at [www.lwvfla.org](http://www.lwvfla.org).

## LWVF 2009 Convention Business

### Proposed Bylaws Changes

**Change 1** to Article VIII, Sec. 6, strikes language requiring 50 delegates plus Board members to constitute a quorum, and substitutes language requiring 1% of LWVF membership *from at least half of the local Leagues* plus board members to make a quorum.

**Change 2** adds a new Sec. 7 to Article V, "Manner of Meetings," authorizing the president to convene virtual electronic meetings if desired, and describing procedural requirements for them.

**Change 3** adds a new Sec. 5 to Article IV that is identical to Change 2, above.

### Proposed Study Items Changes

**Change 1** discontinues the Education Study due to resource shortages and significant changes in Florida's test administration since the 2007 Convention.

**Change 2** implements the Florida transportation planning study that was recommended by the 2007 Convention. Former LWVF Board Member Charlene Walker will chair the study, and county volunteers

are needed to assist with information gathering.

### Proposed Budget for 2009-2010

The **LWVF** proposed budget projects a 4% increase in income and a matching 4% increase in spending. However, actual income and expenditures so far for 2008-2009 are one-third less than projected for both income and expenses.

The **LWVF Education Fund's** proposed budget for 2009-2010 is one-third smaller than the 2008-2009 budget. While actual income so far this year is 64% above total actual income for last year, it's still 30% *below* projections. As a result, the Education Fund has scaled back next year's programs to keep them in line with fiscal realities and League priorities.

### Visit our Webpage

Please visit our home page and let us know what you think. We put everything up front so you don't have to hunt, and we update it regularly. Check it out at [www.lwvokaloosa.org](http://www.lwvokaloosa.org).

## Notes From All Over

### The Mini Page

The League's history was highlighted in the March 22 issue of *The Mini Page* in celebration of Women's History Month. This weekly syndicated insert is directed to children and published by more than 500 newspapers nationwide, including the Daily News. If you missed it, you can read it all here: <http://thetandd.com/minipage/today.pdf>.

### Council 2009 Goes Virtual

The LWVUS Board will hold a "virtual" Council on June 13 beginning at 1 pm EDT and lasting about 4 hours. It is a terrific chance to explore new technologies that provide the opportunity for State Leagues to expand members' participation in the Council. To participate you'll need a computer with high-speed Internet access and a speakerphone.

### 2008 Post-Election Survey

The Overseas Vote Foundation took a detailed look at how overseas & military voters and election officials fared during the 2008 General Election; the results were not great. To read the OVF's recommendations, click on the link to the report on our home page at [www.lwvokaloosa.org](http://www.lwvokaloosa.org).

### Municipal Election Turnout

Turnout was dismal for March 10 local elections. Laurel Hill takes bragging rights with a 42% turnout, and the controversial tax referendum for North Okaloosa Fire District mustered 18% of voters. Crestview and Fort Walton trailed with 10% and 15%, respectively.

