

Jan 2008

# League of Women Voters of Okaloosa County



“Cheers to a new year  
and another chance for  
us to get it right”

*Oprah Winfrey,  
American Philanthropist  
and TV Personality*

## LWVOC

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This month’s Voter is  
dedicated to getting out  
the **vote** on January 29!

**Vote** in your precinct on  
Election Day, or **vote**  
early from 8:30-4:30 on  
Jan 14-26 at the  
Fairgrounds in FWB or  
the Supervisor of  
Elections Office in  
Crestview.

Make a difference: **Vote!**

## Mission:

*The League of Women  
Voters, a nonpartisan  
political organization,  
encourages informed  
and active participa-  
tion in government,  
works to increase  
understanding of  
major public policy  
issues, and influences  
public policy through  
education and  
advocacy.*

## Jan 2008 General Meeting: Property Tax Amendment

The “Hot Topic” for this month’s general meeting will be a panel discussion of Amendment 1 (Exemptions; Limitations on Property Tax Assessments).

The meeting is **open to the public**, and will be held at Shalimar Town Hall, #2 Cherokee Road, Shalimar, from 10:00-12:00 on Jan 12. Our panel includes Okaloosa County Property Appraiser **Pete Smith**, County Commissioner **Sherry Campbell**, and Mayor **Mike**

**Anderson** of Fort Walton Beach.

If adopted the amendment will have both immediate and far-reaching effects along the Emerald Coast. We urge all League members and concerned citizens to make every effort to learn more about the amendment and its potential impacts before casting their votes.

Be sure to attend the January 12<sup>th</sup> meeting and see below for “pros” and “cons” about Amendment 1.

### PRO:

- Adds a new \$25K homestead exemption (not applicable to school taxes).
- Allows a homestead property owner to apply up to \$500K in existing Save Our Homes tax savings to a new homestead.
- Provides businesses with a new \$25K tax exemption on tangible personal property.
- Limits county property tax assessment increases on non-homestead real property to 10% a year (not applicable to school taxes).
- May stimulate sales of real property by homestead owners by making Save Our Homes tax savings portable.

### CON:

- Subtracts \$9.6 billion in revenue from cities and counties and \$2.8 billion from public schools over the next 5 years.
- May increase the tax burden on non-homestead property owners by increasing the homestead exemption and making Save Our Homes portable.
- Could stifle growth if counties raise other fees or taxes to compensate.
- Creates new tax system disparities by capping non-homestead property assessments and shifting the tax burden from long-time owners to new arrivals.
- Changes property taxes while the constitutionally mandated state Taxation & Budget Reform Commission is still completing its study.

## Immigration Consensus Meeting: Jan 5, 2008

**REMINDER:** The Okaloosa League’s Immigration Consensus meeting will be held on Jan 5, 2008, from 10:00-12:00 at the Shalimar Town Hall.

This is a very special meeting for members, so we need as many as possible to be there. Participating in League studies and 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!

Read the one-page study briefs located at [www.lwv.org/ImmigrationStudy/](http://www.lwv.org/ImmigrationStudy/) to prepare, and plan to stay the full two hours so we can cover all the consensus discussion questions included in the separate mailing in December.

**Make a difference:** Help your League reach consensus on this important issue. We’ll see you on Saturday!

The Voter is published 8 times a year by the League of Women Voters of Okaloosa County.

## Hot Topics 2008

### Consensus Meeting on Immigration

• 5 Jan 08, 10:00-12:00, Shalimar City Hall. All members welcome. Bring your consensus study questions with you!

### Property Tax Amendment

• 12 Jan 08, 10:00-12:00, Shalimar Town Hall, featuring Property Appraiser Pete Smith, Commissioner Sherry Campbell and Mayor Mike Anderson of Fort Walton Beach. The Public is welcome.

### Sustainable Emerald Coast

• 9 Feb 08, 10:00-12:00, Shalimar City Hall, featuring Michelle Anchors, Chair of the Committee for a Sustainable Emerald Coast. The public is welcome.

### Political Parties: Where do they stand on local issues?

• 8 Mar 08, 10:00-12:00, Niceville City Hall, with representatives from the Democratic, Libertarian and Republican parties. The public is welcome.

### 2008 Legislative Seminar

• 16-18 Mar 08, Doubletree Hotel Tallahassee. Details on page 3. All members welcome.

### April Annual Meeting

• Date, time, location TBD. All members welcome.

### Yellow Rose Award Ceremony

• Date, time, location TBD. The public is welcome. See <http://www.lwvokaloosa.org/yellowrose.htm> for details.

**Be a part of it:  
Democracy is  
not a spectator  
sport!**

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### Take Action: It All Begins With You!

Most of us lead very busy lives, with many personal and professional commitments. We want to make a difference, but we don't have time to assume more responsibility. As a wife, mother of three, Air Force retiree and full-time civil servant, I know just how you feel.

So I'm on a mission to identify manageable opportunities for Okaloosa League members to get involved and take action

— opportunities that **don't** require major or recurring investments of time — so you can make a difference without neglecting job or family.

You can start by participating in the Immigration Consensus meeting on Jan 5<sup>th</sup>. Then read the next two items and see if one is a good fit for you.

~ Mary Blackwell, President, LWVOC

### Needed: Interviewers Through February 15th

Did you know your state legislators have local offices? You can visit Don Gaetz in Fort Walton Beach, Ray Sansom at Uptown Station, Greg Evers in Milton, Don Brown in DeFuniak Springs and Marti Coley in Marianna. They'll all be in their districts until the 2008 session begins on March 4<sup>th</sup>.

You can help the League by interviewing

your Senator or Representative. Let them know what the League legislative priorities are and find out where they stand. Then send the results to LWVF. A 2008 Legislative Packet is available at <http://lwvokaloosa.org/positions.htm>, with everything you need to conduct a face-to-face interview. Use the "Contact us" link on the site to get more details.

### Wanted: Volunteer for *Our Florida Government*

The Florida League needs help staffing the *Our Florida Government, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition* revision team. Have you got what it takes to make a difference?

**Desktop Publisher** needed to create a new, fresh look for the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of *Our Florida Government*, a publication of the League of Women Voters of Florida Education Fund, using Microsoft Word 2003. Members are updating this 128-

page book that has served as a resource throughout the state since 1969. We will send you a simple Word document and several graphics for you to turn into a great-looking publication. Knowledge of styles, formatting, fonts and page layout in Microsoft Word 2003, and a great sense of design and layout are required. Contact Sandy Parker at 239-513-1595 or [sparker101@gmail.com](mailto:sparker101@gmail.com).

### 2008 LWVF Legislative Seminar: March 16-18

The Florida League's 2008 Legislative Seminar will kick off in Tallahassee on March 16, 2008. The seminar will include two and a half days of round-the-clock presentations and meetings with state leaders and those who influence them.

Participants will hear from Senators, Representatives, lobbyists and others on the inside, as they learn more about the key issues facing our citizens and share ideas with our representatives.

League members will meet in small groups with local legislators to hear first hand as they answer questions about

LWVF legislative priorities, property taxes, healthcare and the environment.

Participants will join other League members from across the state at the many interesting small seminars, and will come away with an inside view and a much deeper understanding of our government process.

The Okaloosa League typically sends one or two members to represent us at the Legislative Seminar. If you are available and are interested in attending this year, contact our president at [Mary.Blackwell@lwvokaloosa.org](mailto:Mary.Blackwell@lwvokaloosa.org).

## Overseas Electronic Voting Pilot Project Launched in Okaloosa County

Overseas voters registered in Okaloosa County will be able to test an electronic absentee voting system in 2008's general election. The Okaloosa Distance Balloting Project – brainchild of Supervisor of Elections Pat Hollarn – will put kiosk computers staffed by trained poll workers at locations near U.S. military facilities in England, Germany and Japan, enabling voters to cast absentee ballots via a virtual private network.

This pilot program is the initial project of the Operation Bring Remote Access to Voters Overseas (BRAVO) Foundation, whose goal is to establish reliable electronic alternatives to paper-and-mail absentee voting for Americans overseas in time for the 2016 presidential election.

Frustrated with previous unsuccessful efforts to correct difficulties overseas voters have in receiving and casting ballots by mail, Ms. Hollarn started the program three years ago, creating Operation BRAVO Foundation as a funding vehicle. No tax money is being spent on the Okaloosa project.

Because of the foundation's small size and limited resources, the Okaloosa

project is the only one scheduled for 2008. The pilot is important to the county because 20,000 service members and dependents registered to vote here are currently stationed overseas.

The Okaloosa project will focus only on casting ballots remotely. On-site poll workers will authenticate remote voters' identities by accessing the county's electronic voter registration database. Once authenticated, voters will cast votes directly to a secure server in Okaloosa County.

The system will generate a paper ballot, which poll workers will keep, while the voter retains a receipt with a tracking number to enable verification that the electronic ballot was tallied. No data will be stored on the remote kiosks.

Because the pilot kiosk system does not include automatic voter authentication and requires county poll workers to be on site, it won't translate to general deployment. However, officials say they hope it will demonstrate the feasibility of remote electronic voting and result in a system that states and counties could adopt by 2016.

## Sustainable Emerald Coast: Learn All About It Feb 9th

The governor's Committee for a Sustainable Emerald Coast (CSEC) submitted its final report Dec 31, 2007, making specific recommendations for Okaloosa and adjacent counties.

The League will showcase the report's findings at our general meeting on Feb 9, 2008, from 10:00-12:00 at the Shalimar Town Hall. CSEC Chair Michelle Anchors will be our featured speaker. If you are concerned about preserving the Emerald Coast's economic prosperity and quality of life, attend the February meeting and learn how **you** can help!

Short-term (2008-1010) goals include:

- Implement a "green" building program.
- Establish a four-county Emerald Coast Health Care Alliance.
- Establish a long-range transportation multi-modal corridors plan.
- Address major strategic airspace issues for commercial and military traffic.
- Enhance incentives/support for conservation land acquisition.
- Support the Northwest Greenway partnership.
- Protect area wetlands and estuaries.
- Develop climate change strategies to deal with hurricanes, rising sea levels, saltwater intrusion and carbon reduction.
- Diversify and strengthen the regional economy and workforce by focusing on both existing and emerging industries.
- Support the tourism/leisure industry.
- Address workforce housing and access to quality education and research.

See [www.SustainableEmeraldCoast.com](http://www.SustainableEmeraldCoast.com) for more info on the CSEC's implementation timeline.

## Choosing the President 2008 Edition

The League of Women Voters US Education Fund has updated its comprehensive guide to the presidential election process, *Choosing the President 2008*.

Read about the participants (the voters, candidates, parties, media, and who gives and who gets the money) and the process (the primaries and caucuses, nominating conventions, the general election campaign and Election Day).

This book is an essential read for everyone – students, first-time voters and long-time voters – as we prepare for the 2008 presidential election. Purchase the guide for \$11.00 at: [www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=LWV\\_Store](http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=LWV_Store)

## Presidential Candidate Voters Guide for 2008

Thanks to the collaboration between members of the Maryland, National Capitol Area and Virginia Leagues, and the League of Women Voters US Education Fund, the *2008 Presidential Primary Voters' Guide* is now available.

We have responses from Biden, Clinton, Edwards, Obama and Richardson on the Democratic side and Giuliani, McCain, Paul, Tancredo and Thompson on the Republican side. Only Dodd and Romney were invited to participate and chose not to.

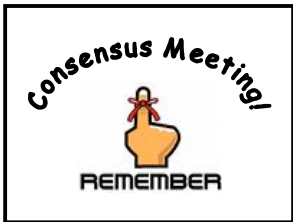
Download a complete PDF of the Voters' Guide from [VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org) and check out the candidates' views today.



**The Okaloosa Voter**  
 League of Women Voters of  
 Okaloosa County  
 P.O. Box 4546  
 Fort Walton Beach FL 32549

Non-Profit Organization  
 U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
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 Ft Walton Beach FL 32548

☆☆☆☆ Immigration Consensus Meeting - January 5th ☆☆☆☆



Yes, I want to join a nonpartisan organization that encourages informed and active participation of citizens in government.

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

\$42.50 Individual     \$21.25 Additional Family Member     \$21.25 Student

Please make your check payable to LWVOC and mail to Carol Davis, Treasurer, 524 Dorado Drive, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548.

Please check (P) for participate or (I) for interest in activities below:

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education       | <input type="checkbox"/> Voter Services     | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Speaking        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environment     | <input type="checkbox"/> Fund Raising       | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health          | <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative Action | <input type="checkbox"/> Web Site               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Policy   | <input type="checkbox"/> Membership         | <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Team         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Int'l Relations | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Relations   | <input type="checkbox"/> Observe Gov't Meetings |

**Make  
 Democracy  
 Work!**

**Join the League.  
 Be a Voice  
 for Citizens and  
 a Force for  
 Progress!**



**Men can join  
 League, too!**