

Sep / Oct 2011

"We are in the business of rigging elections."

Mark McDaniel
Former State Senator, NC



This issue is brought to you by Susan B. Anthony members Doris & Stan Berg, Rod & Jeannette Debs, and Mary Hahn.



Join or renew at this special level to support your Local League programs.



In Memoriam:



Rae Williams
(1921-2011)

"Let no one weep for me, or celebrate my funeral with mourning; for I still live, as I pass to and fro through the mouths of men."

Quintus Ennius
Poet of Ancient Rome



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

Last issue my message began: "Redistricting is ongoing, and League is in the thick of it." Well it still is, and so are we. This issue's lead quote is the reason why we are so involved. Please join us at 6:30 PM on Friday, 16 September, for a free screening of the documentary *Gerrymandering* at Shalimar ES. Florida voters should choose their representatives, not the other way around!

Farewell to an Okaloosa Original

Ramonde (Rae) Ruckel was born in Evanston IL in 1921, the daughter of Marion Plew and C.W. Ruckel. At 11 months she moved to Florida, where her father helped develop the town of Valparaiso.

Rae traveled the world during the course of two marriages and raising her family. Along the way she attended Duke University, earned her pilot's license, and raced her Formula I Lotus across the southeast as the "Racing Grandmother," placing third in Road Atlanta.

No matter where Rae traveled, she always returned to Valparaiso, and was actively involved in the Valparaiso Women's Club, the Red Cross, the American Association of University Women, the League of Women Voters, the Okaloosa Democratic Women's Club and Demo-

All members/prospective members: please mark your calendars for *Back to League* at 11:30 on Saturday, 17 Sep (details below).

Finally, *vaya con Dios* to veteran Leaguer Rae Williams. Mother Teresa said, "It is not the magnitude of our actions but the amount of love that is put into them that matters." Rae combined both magnitude and love. We'll miss her.

Mary Blackwell

cratic Executive Committee, serving as State Committee-woman for many years.

She was also a local entrepreneur as President and later Board Chair for Valparaiso Realty. She was the second person and first woman to serve as President of the Valparaiso-Niceville Chamber of Commerce.

Rae was also a Girl Scout troop leader, a sailing/canoeing instructor, and founder of the 1st Judicial District Guardian Ad Litem Program, which named her Volunteer of the Year for 1980. She was inducted into the Okaloosa Women's Hall of Fame in 1998.

Rae's was truly a life well lived, and we are richer for having known her. She will be missed.

Back to League: 17 September at Golden Corral

Our 2011-12 League year will begin again on Saturday, 17 Sep. We'll be meeting at 11:30 for lunch at Golden Corral Restaurant (414 Mary Esther Cut Off) to hear member Pam Smith discuss the US Department of Education's *Blueprint for Education*, focusing on college completion and technology. Please RSVP to info@lwvokaloosa.org.

This meeting will be a perfect lead in for the Education Study and Consensus process, which will begin on 22 Sep. Two more education study summaries are on page 2 to help you prepare. Watch the website for details – we need all members to participate!

We'll see you on the 17th!

Free Screening of *Gerrymandering* on 16 September

Every ten years, states redraw political district lines to account for both adjustments in the size of their overall congressional delegation and variance in the populations of their already-drawn districts.

As in many other states, Florida politicians control redistricting. These are the very people whose political careers may be threatened

by the change of a line. For the first time, *Gerrymandering* exposes the manipulation of the redistricting process for political gain.

Please join us at 6:30 PM on Friday, 16 September, at Shalimar Elementary School (1350 Joe Martin Cir) for a free screening of the film. Find out about the movie here: <http://www.gerrymanderingmovie.com/>

Education Study Summaries

Legislation & Funding for the Education of Children Who Are Disadvantaged

The 1965 *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) has undergone many reauthorizations (including *No Child Left Behind* – NCLB), but remains an umbrella law that funds education of identified disadvantaged children through discretionary grants. ESEA covers children who are poor, neglected and delinquent, homeless or impacted by disasters, as well as Native Americans, migrants, those who live in rural areas and those who are learning to speak English.

NCLB provides Native American (including Alaska and Hawaii) education, language restoration (tribal languages), family literacy, cultural exchanges and programs to improve reading and math skills. NCLB also provides English instruction for non-English proficient Native Americans and immigrants.

Rural education programs are now funded for teacher recruitment, technology and distance education, and that's expected to continue.

The majority of the 132,000+ children who are neglected, delinquent or at-risk are incarcerated, so most of those funds are used in institutional education programs.

ESEA also addresses the special challenges of homeless and migrant students. Migrants are often enrolled sporadically, so the Office of Migratory Education offers High School Equivalency programs as well as a special "Early Start" program for Migrant preschoolers.

Special education covers K-12 students aged 3-21 with specific disabilities including mental retardation, hearing impairments, speech or language impairments, visual impairments, serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments or specific learning disabilities. The 1975 *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* has a zero reject policy, and also requires students to be placed in the least restrictive environment as close as possible to their local school.

Disabled children participate in Reading and Math skills assessments and are subject to disciplinary action. Transition programs to enable disabled students to live independently after special education have also been funded for many years.

Funding & Equity Issues

Following the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, federal education policy focused on equality of opportunity. Since 1990, however, most lawsuits have focused on adequacy – whether a state is providing local districts with just enough funding and resources to provide a basic education.

Student background and socio-economic status are important in determining educational outcomes, so ESEA provides more resources to districts serving high concentrations of low-income families. Initially there was little federal involvement in how ESEA resources were used by state and local authorities, but over time federal influence grew as a result of numerous legislative, regulatory and judicial mandates.

States that rely heavily on property taxes to fund education tend to have large funding inequities, and education inequities have profound effects on individuals and society. They are associated with higher rates of unemployment (resulting in \$200 billion a year in lost wages and taxes); lower life expectancy; high health risk behaviors; and child poverty, low birth weight and lack of child health insurance.

NCLB introduced an aggressive schedule holding states accountable for improved student performance. Intended to close achievement gaps (particularly for minority students), it actually punished underperforming schools and their teachers by reducing resources. This worsened problems for already inadequately funded schools, degraded teacher and student motivation and took decision-making authority away from local schools.

NCLB supporters praise increased accountability, but studies suggest threatening schools and teachers with punishment is harmful to students. Research also shows that rewarding educators' effectiveness based on student performance is not an effective incentive.

Studies of voucher and charter schools reveals little difference in education outcomes and student performance compared to public school students with similar backgrounds.

This study concludes with recommendations for the federal government to promote equity, based on evidence from systemic educational reforms in Finland and South Korea over the last 30 years.

2011-12 Calendar

Gerrymandering

Sep 16th, 6:30 PM

The public is welcome to a free screening of the movie at Shalimar ES, 1350 Joe Martin Circle, Shalimar.

Back to League

Sep 17th, 11:30-1:00

Pam Smith will discuss US Dept of Education's *Blueprint for Reform*. Over lunch at Golden Corral (414 Mary Esther Cut Off). RSVP to info@lwvokaloosa.org.

Education Study

Study and consensus meetings are tentatively scheduled for Sep 22nd, Oct 6th and 20th (location TBD). Watch your email and the website calendar for details.

Redistricting: An Historical Perspective

Oct 22nd: Former State Senator Robert McKnight will share his experiences during redistricting in 1980. (Time/location TBD)

Fair & Proportionate Sentencing Laws

Nov 19th: Greg Newburn of Families Against Mandatory Minimums will discuss individualized, humane sentencing guidelines. (Time/location TBD)

Holiday Party

Dec: Details TBD



Renew Your Annual Membership Today

Members old and new: we have the lowest per member payment in Florida; our events are free and open to the public; we have an enviable record of community service over our 48-year history; and we have an exciting year planned. League needs your continued involvement and support to successfully address voter education needs.

September is membership renewal month, so your membership invoice will be mailed soon. Please return it as soon as possible, so we can continue moving forward.

Remember: Change is inevitable, but progress is not.