

May / June 2012

"It always seems impossible until it's done."

*Nelson Mandela
Former President of
South Africa*



Voter Registration Deadlines:

Last day to register or change party for the 14 August **Primary: 16 July**

Last day to register for the 6 November **General Election: 9 October**

If your child will turn 18 before the election, get them pre-registered now, so they'll be eligible on their birthdays.



2012 E-Voter Coming Soon

Once again your League will be publishing an on-line voter guide for both primary and general elections. Watch for it on [our website](#).



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

Fellow Leaguers: If you were hoping to take the summer off, better think again—it's a presidential election year! I'll need your support, so please step up when I call for help.

We have our own Candidate Freedom Rally coming up in May, right after the 13th annual SOTC (details below), followed by the 14 August Primary and the 6 November General Election.

We'll be supporting WSRE's televised Rally 2012 candidate forums in early August and late October, and we'll be talking to anyone who will listen about the ballot initiatives (all 11 of them, addressing judicial reform, taxes, state budgets, health care, religion and abortion). If you have ideas on how to better serve voters, I want to hear them!

Mary Blackwell

13th Annual State of the County Report on 5 May

Are you ready to hold your elected officials accountable? Would you like an opportunity to question them about how they're taking care of county business? Well here is your chance!

On **5 May from 10:00-noon** the League will sponsor its 13th annual State of the County Report at the Greater FWB Chamber of Commerce (34 Miracle Strip Pkwy SE). The meeting is free and open to the public, and coffee will be served.

The 2012 SOTC will feature County Commissioner Wayne Harris, School Board member Melissa Thrush, and First Judicial Circuit Court Judge William Stone. Speakers will present updates on county government, our schools and the courts, and will then entertain questions from the audience.

Please join us on Saturday to hear from your officials and ask them about things **you** want to know. We'll see you there!

Candidate Freedom Rally on 19 May

The primary and general elections are coming soon—are you ready to cast an informed ballot? Dozens of local offices are up for election in 2012, from Fire Districts across the county to the School Board, County Commission and county constitutional officers, and all the way up through state senators and representatives to our U.S. senator and congressman and the President.

While you can't get away from the national races, it can be tough to get a handle on the local ones, which arguably will have a much greater effect on our county. What to do? League can help!

Join us on Saturday, 19 May, from 10:00-noon at the Westwood

Retirement Resort (1001 Mar Walt Dr, FWB), to meet prospective office-holders in person and ask them where they stand on the issues that affect you.

Out of the 25 individuals who pre-filed to run for local offices, 13 have already confirmed they will be there. Many races have multiple candidates competing, so voters must do their homework.

In addition to the candidates, Supervisor of Elections Paul Lux will send a team to register new voters. The last day to register or change parties is 16 July, so bring your new neighbors and your almost-18-year-olds with you. We look forward to seeing you there!

Education Consensus Reached

The LWVUS now has a position on the Federal Role in Public Education! The LWVUS Board approved a new Education position at its March 2012 meeting. The position is based on responses received from the 377 Leagues across the country that participated in the Education Study. The position states: "the League of Women Voters believes that the

federal government shares with other levels of government the responsibility to provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through grade 12. A quality public education is essential for a strong, viable and sustainable democratic society and is a civil right." For details read the entire consensus [document](#).

Okaloosa County Women's Wall of Honor Induction

At 10:00 a.m. on May 8th, in the auditorium of Building 8 at the University of West Florida-Emerald Coast, FWB Campus, the Okaloosa County Commission on the Status of Women will hold a ceremony to recognize special women in our county for their everyday heroism. These wives, mothers, sisters, friends and co-workers contribute to our quality of life.

Merit Retention of Judges

The Pensacola Bay Area League held a meeting in March on "What Citizens Should Know about the Selection, Election, and Retention of Florida Judges." Okaloosa County has a contested race this year in the 1st Judicial Circuit that will pit Tom Murphy against incumbent Judge Terry Ketchel, so the intricacies of Florida's complex judicial selection process is of special interest. Here's what the LWV-PBA April Voter had to say about the meeting (*reprinted with permission*):

"The speakers explained what is meant by the 'merit retention' of judges. The names of judges, who are up for merit retention, are listed on the ballot. We are asked to vote on whether or not the judges should keep their positions, based on their records and reputation. The problem for voters is that most are not familiar with individual judges and what they do. Most judges do not come to public attention unless there is a particularly sensational trial or the judge gets into trouble.

"The duties of the judge are to enforce rules of procedure and apply the rules of evidence, as well as to protect the mandates of the Constitution, to provide a fair trial and promote equal justice for all. In doing a good job, the judge may not come to public notice at all.

LWV's Council of Leaders set for 11-12 May

Local League leaders from across Florida will meet in May for LWV's 2012 Council of Leaders in Tampa. Three representatives will attend from Okaloosa County. In addition to discussing important League business, attendees will participate in valuable workshops while socializing with other local League leaders from throughout the state. A "Sisters Across the Straits" luncheon featuring an impressive panel of experts on U.S.-Cuba policy will open the event, followed by workshops on budgeting, exploiting new technology to reach members and voters, and speakers bureau training. Plenary sessions

This year 16 names will be added to the plaque in a special room above the campus library, where a book is displayed containing biographical information on each woman who has a place on the Wall of Honor.

Please join us at the induction ceremony and reception, which are free and open to the public. Please [RSVP](#) if you plan to attend, so sufficient refreshments will be available.

Judges' rulings are based on law, not on a personal whim. Therefore, it is not a good idea to vote against judges just because you don't recognize their names.

"Some individuals may not like a particular ruling and may accuse the judge of bias or 'judicial activism' and campaign to get that judge removed. In other words they may want to punish the judge for his or her ruling. What can the judge do in self-defense? The answer to that question is, 'not much.' Judges cannot talk about their rulings or explain them. They cannot campaign by saying how they will rule in future cases. Unlike elected politicians, judges cannot brag about what they have done or tell what they plan to do.

"*How will League address this?* Education is the answer. The state League plans to distribute 100,000 copies of the Florida Bar's judicial retention pamphlet before the August primary. This pamphlet will include general information from polls of attorneys who have argued before individual judges and can evaluate their judicial competence. The state League will also include a section on merit retention and the Supreme Court Justices in our 2012 Special Edition Voter Guide before the November election."

will cover adoption of the new budget and re-adoption of the program, as well as initiatives from the floor.

2011 Annual Report Available

The LWVUS and the League of Women Voters Education Fund have issued their 2011 report entitled *Making Democracy Work: Standing Up for Citizens*. The report highlights programmatic activities throughout 2011, while the financial report covers the fiscal year from 1 July 2010 – 30 June 2011. Read the [full report](#) on our website.

2012 Calendar

State of the County Report

May 5th, 10:00-noon
Local elected officials report and take questions from citizens. Open to the public. Location: Greater FWB CoC, 34 Miracle Strip Pkwy SE.

Okaloosa County Women's Wall of Honor Induction

May 8th, 10:00am
Location: Building 8 Auditorium, UWF Emerald Coast, FWB Campus. The public is welcome. Please [register](#) to attend.

Candidate Freedom Rally

May 19th, 10:00-noon
Join us to meet and greet all candidates for office. Location: Westwood Retirement Resort, 1001 Mar Walt Dr, FWB.



Privatization Study & Consensus Concludes

Thanks to all who participated. Special thanks to our study committee members: Steven Pepper, Rod Debs, Odin Tones and Judy Byrne Riley.

Members Only: 2012 Power the Vote Awards

Help choose winners by voting for projects that showcase outstanding work by local and state Leagues to defend and strengthen our democracy. LWV is a finalist in the *High Impact Online Engagement* category. **Voting closes May 18th**, so [cast your vote](#).

LWVUS 50th National Convention

June 8-12, in Washington, DC. Review the Convention Workbook (info on budget, bylaws and program) [here](#).



40th Anniversary of Title IX of the Education Code

Passed on June 23, 1972, Title IX transformed the education landscape of the US within the span of a generation. [Learn more](#).

Shining a Light: Redistricting Lessons Learned in 2011

Read the LWVUS report that details the decennial process of re-drawing legislative districts.