



*A force for progress on the Emerald Coast since 1962*

### March / April 2013

"Okaloosa politics is never boring."

*Rebecca Sherry  
President, Condo Alliance of  
Okaloosa Island*



### Women's History Month 2013



Join the celebration at NWFSC on 21 March. Check the article and the enclosed flyer for details.



### Municipal elections now underway



Vote early from 8:00am to 5:00pm through 9 March at SoE offices in Crestview (302 N Wilson St, Ste 302) and Fort Walton Beach (1804 Lewis Turner Blvd, Ste 404). Polls will be open from 7:00am to 7:00pm on Tuesday, 12 March. Find all the information you need for the election in our Municipal E-Voter, your one-stop-shopping place to get ready to vote

### 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

I had this great quotation picked out for Women's History Month, but that was before my recent email correspondence with the CAOI president regarding the fallout from the TDC scandal. Her comment was impossible to resist, and is reprinted here with her permission.

Our county has had its share of political black eyes recently, and we must hold our elected officials accountable. **But** we still need to work together. Change is inevitable, but progress is not, so Okaloosa County citizens must ensure that

our local government moves **forward** by taking steps to increase oversight, strengthen internal controls and hold personnel accountable for their actions.

Accountability begins with voting, so all citizens of Fort Walton Beach, Crestview and Laurel Hill: **Be prepared. Be informed. Vote.**

Everyone else: read on for details of our Women's History Month event and the 14th annual State of the County report.

*Mary Blackwell*

### Women's History Month 2013

Okaloosa County's annual event honoring Women's History Month will be hosted by **NWFSC** at the Costa Leadership Institute in the Student Services Center on the Niceville campus from **5-7:00pm on Thursday, 21 March**. Your League is a proud sponsor.

The keynote speaker will be Anna Rodriguez, long-time women's activist, founder of the [Florida Coalition Against Human Trafficking](#) and 2011 inductee into the Florida Women's Hall of Fame.

The event is free and open to the public. To attend, please [RSVP](#) no later than 19 March.

Don't miss the **Florida Women's Hall of Fame induction**, which will be held on **20 March at 5:00pm** in the Capitol Courtyard, Tallahassee. Governor Rick Scott has selected

three outstanding Florida women for induction in 2013: Clara C. Frye formerly of Tampa, Aleene Pridgen Kidd MacKenzie of Miami, and Lillie Pierce Voss formerly of Delray Beach. The induction ceremony is open to the public, and attendees are encouraged to arrive at least 30 minutes early.

**Why "Women's History Month?"** As recently as the 1970's, women's history was virtually an unknown topic in the K-12 curriculum or in general public consciousness. In February 1980 President Carter issued the first Presidential Proclamation declaring the Week of March 8th 1980 as National Women's History Week. In 1987, Congress declared March as National Women's History Month in perpetuity. Learn more about it at the [National Women's History Project](#).

### LWVOC Annual Meeting 2013

Members: Mark your calendars to attend the 2013 Annual Meeting on Saturday, 27 April, from 10:00am-12:30pm, at Two Trees Restaurant, 1955 Lewis Turner Blvd, FWB.

Our keynote speaker will be Dr. Joyce Gillie Gossom, Associate Dean for UWF Emerald Coast and Fort Walton Beach City Council member. Her background includes working as an instructional designer and teacher, and she has also been a small business owner. Additionally, Dr. Gossom has served as an active member or as an officer on the Boards of Directors with numerous civic, professional and community organizations throughout her professional career.

Please review the local program and by-laws to recommend improvements. Both documents can be found on our [website](#).

You may also be hearing from our Nominating Committee, who will be looking for new board members and officers to serve in the 2013-2014 League year. The board meets once a month throughout the year for a working lunch, and also pitches in for event planning. Please consider serving your League and our community by volunteering to join our board. Together we can make our community better!

For more details and to RSVP, visit our [members' webpage](#).

## Legislative Summit & Convention 2013

The 2013 legislative session began March 5th. Between election and ethics reform, healthcare expansion (or not), women's rights and more, League members and lobbyists have their work cut out for them.

LWVF consultant Ben Wilcox will be leading the charge with Marilyn Wills, and Local League members will be needed to make their voices heard during Legislative Summit &

Convention scheduled for 10-13 April at the Governors Inn Hotel in Tallahassee.

During the event members will be briefed by elected officials, lobby their legislators, attend caucuses and elect a new LWVF/EF Board of Directors for a two-year term. Your League will be represented. If you'd like to attend, contact Mary right away at 850-621-4088.

## Election reform: what's new?

On 4 Feb the Florida League responded to Secretary of State Ken Detzner's report on improving Florida's election system. Characterizing it as a "good starting point," LWVF added its own recommendations for reform:

- At least nine days of early voting, including two full weekends;
- Flexibility for SoEs to select early voting sites the same way they choose polling places;
- Ability to update addresses at the polls on Election Day and still cast a regular ballot;

## Update on redistricting

You all remember the Fair Districts amendments that were approved by 63% of Florida voters in 2010. Many of you remember how hard League worked to gather the required petitions to get the amendments on the ballot. Some of you remember that League has been working to establish standards for redistricting since 1979.

So you probably thought the 2012 redistricting maps were drawn in a relatively nonpartisan way. Sadly, that may not be the case. The FairDistricts coalition is challenging the Congressional and Senate maps in court, and documents obtained through the litigation reveal Florida's legislative leaders "appear to have authorized their staff to use private email accounts, personal

- On-line voter registration to supplement the current system;
- Notification of an absentee ballot rejection with time for redress;
- Addressing mobility and safety concerns for voters who are disabled or elderly and providing an expedited process to allow them to vote.

League is excited to play a part in reforming Florida's election laws and practices. To understand why substantive election reform is so desperately needed, check out this [graphic](#).

'dropboxes' and to engage in 'brainstorming meetings' with [political party] consultants in attempting to draw favorable political districts, despite a constitutional ban on such coordination." (Miami Herald, 4 Feb 2013)

Did our elected officials ignore the new constitutional amendments? If so, the people of Florida – who deserve better – need to know. Here in Okaloosa County we are living every day with the consequences of lack of oversight and accountability at the local level; so it's imperative that we prevent a similar scenario from playing out at the state level. Let Senator Gaetz and your representative know today that you are paying attention and will hold them accountable.

## State of the County Report: 16 May

This year will mark the 14th annual State of the County Report, in which local government representatives assemble to give citizens a summary of the previous year's activities and achievements. The SOTC is your opportunity to meet elected officials and get answers to your questions. The 2013 SOTC is scheduled from **10:00am-noon on Saturday, 18 May**, at the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce, 34 Miracle Strip Pkwy SE, FWB.

Because it's been such an eventful year for our county, we are trying to switch things up a bit by inviting the new Superintendent of Schools, the Sheriff, and our Supervisor of Elections to join one of our County Commissioners at the event. The slate of speakers was not confirmed at press time, so watch for the press release and check our website and for details. Since "Okaloosa politics is never boring," we expect a lively discussion, so mark your calendars today!

## 2013 Calendar

### Florida Women's Hall of Fame Induction

**20 March**, 5:00pm

Location: Capitol courtyard, Tallahassee. Three new members will be inducted. The event is free and open to the public. Please plan to arrive 30 minutes early.

### Women's History Month Event

**21 March**, 5-7:00pm

Location: Costa Leadership Institute, NWFSC Student Services Center, Niceville. Guest speaker is Anna Rodriguez of Florida's Coalition Against Human Trafficking. [RSVP here](#).

### LWVF Legislative Summit & Convention 10-13 Apr

Location: Tallahassee.

Members will be briefed by elected officials, lobby their legislators, attend caucuses and elect new LWVF/EF boards. Call Mary at 850-621-4018 if you'd like to represent our League in the capital.

### Women on Wellness 1-day symposium

**12 Apr**, 8:00am-4:00pm

Location: Costa Leadership Institute, NWFSC, Niceville. The conference aims to help women achieve balance and success in life, work and health. For info call 850-729-6880 or visit [WomenOnWellness.org](#).

### LWVOC Annual Meeting

**27 Apr**, 10:00am-12:30pm

Location: Two Trees Restaurant, 1955 Lewis Turner Blvd, FWB. FWB City Council Member Dr. Joyce Gillie Gossom is our featured speaker. For more details and to RSVP, visit our [members' webpage](#).

### 14th Annual State of the County Report

**18 May**, 10:00am-noon

Location: Greater FWB Chamber of Commerce, 34 Miracle Strip Pkwy SE, FWB. This is your opportunity to meet with your elected officials and get answers to your questions about local government. Stay tuned for details on all the featured speakers.

**Northwest Florida State College**

# **Women's History Month Free Workshop**

**Student Services Center**  
Building "SSC" - Room 302  
Niceville Campus

**Thursday, March 21, 2013**  
**5:00 PM - 7:00 PM**

**Keynote speaker:**

**Anna Rodriguez - Founder:  
Florida Coalition Against Human Trafficking**

**Sponsors:**

- Florida League of Women Voters of Okaloosa County
- NWFSC - Office of Career and Technical Education,  
Carl Perkins Career & Technical Education Grant
- NWFSC - American Association of Women  
in Community Colleges
- Okaloosa County Commission on  
the Status of Women

**To RSVP go to [www.occsw.org/history](http://www.occsw.org/history).**

**For more information please contact:  
(850) 729-5202 or [workforceed@nwfsc.edu](mailto:workforceed@nwfsc.edu)**

Carl D. Perkins Career & Technical Education Grant

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