

LWV

THE OKALOOSA VOTER

Join today for \$15 in 2015!

A force for progress on the Emerald Coast since 1962

July / August 2015

"When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves."

*Viktor E. Frankl,
Austrian author, physician, and
Holocaust Survivor*



In memoriam: Emanuel AME Church

FOR WE DO NOT
grieve AS
THOSE WITHOUT
hope. *1 Thessalonians*
4:13-18



We want you in League!

New members: **Join now** through 30 Nov **for only \$15.** Details at right.



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

This issue was supposed to be all about our "\$15 in 2015" membership drive. Then the shooting in Charleston came as a most unwelcome wake up call.

Nearly 30 years ago the late Michael Jackson exhorted us to "start with the man in the mirror" if we wanted to make the world a better place. I chose the quote for this issue with that in mind. If ever you thought having a

black president meant we now lived in post-racial America, surely the tragedy in Charleston has changed your mind. Once again we are forced to admit that racism is unfortunately alive and well here. If we want that to change, then it's up to each of us to look within ourselves, vow to confront racism and hatred, and "make that change."

Mary Blackwell

\$15 in 2015 League membership drive now underway

The 2016 Presidential election is just around the corner, and your League is gearing up for a busy year. Won't you join us in making democracy stronger?

From now through 30 November, new members may join League for only \$15, and membership will be good through 30 Sep 2016.

In the coming year we'll be studying open primaries, collecting petitions for the Local Solar initiative and planning the *Make Democracy Run* 5 and 10k races scheduled for the first day of early voting in 2016. We'll also be busy with voter registration events, candidate forums, E-Voters and workshops on ballot amendments.

You can be part of it by joining the

Help us *Make Democracy Run*

Your League is starting early to get voters turned on to turn out for the 2016 election. As Americans we should be excited and invested in our democracy, and voting is the best way to show we care about our government and its policies and their effect on our community.

To get the attention of county voters, we are staging a 5/10k race on the first day of early voting for the 2016 General Election. League's *Make Democracy Run* event will be a community celebration of our proud American heritage and right to vote, as well as an opportunity to support local charities. Won't

Okaloosa League today, serving as a leader and working to shape the important issues that keep our community strong. Remember: Democracy is not a spectator sport!

Membership in the League of Women Voters of Okaloosa County is open to all women and men 18 years or older, and includes membership in the National and State Leagues. Don't miss the \$15 introductory rate for new members during our 2015 membership drive.

Help put an end to political apathy!

Join us to become part of the solution. Become a member today: it's only \$15 in 2015! Return the form below with your check, or join on-line at

<http://lwvokaloosa.org/joinus.html>.

you join us to help make the 2016 voter turnout the best ever?

We need volunteers for our planning committee to help finalize the route through Crestview, line up sponsors, organize community information meetings and handle the myriad other tasks involved in planning a large community event. You don't need to be a League member to be on the race planning committee – but you **can** join for only \$15! Don't delay – please contact us (info@lwvokaloosa.org or 621-4088) to volunteer today. We look forward to hearing from you!

Capitol Report: disappointing special session

When the regular session ended prematurely in a dispute over acceptance of federal healthcare dollars, a rare special session was called to adopt a budget, the one constitutionally-mandated responsibility of the Legislature. Sadly, the resulting budget was very disappointing.

Affordable healthcare for all Floridians died in the House. Again.

Despite the Senate's efforts to provide health coverage to over 800,000 of Florida's working poor, the House again refused to accept federal dollars. As a result the Legislature cut Floridians' anticipated budget surplus dramatically, almost a million Floridians continue to live without basic health coverage, and \$51 billion of Florida's tax dollars will not come back to our state.

Budget surplus slashed

The rejection of Florida's federal healthcare funds halved the \$1 billion budget surplus promised by Governor Scott in his re-election campaign. Instead the Governor signed HB 33A, providing Floridians with a tax cut of

just \$372 million. The tax cut package will reduce costs on cell phone bills, cable TV bills, gun club memberships, college textbooks and luxury boat repairs.

Amendment 1 sabotaged

Backers of the Land & Water Legacy ballot initiative contend lawmakers "ignored" the desires of voters by using a boost in environmental funding to cover the costs of daily state operations while setting aside too little for land purchases. Frustration with low allocations over the previous few years drove voters to demand higher funding levels through Amendment 1, which authorizes lawmakers to spend up to \$300 million a year for preservation and land and water protections across Florida. Unfortunately, even with this significant influx of Amendment 1 dollars, environmental funding in the upcoming budget has been reduced from last years' level.

Our job is not done: 2016 Legislative Committee Weeks will begin in less than 90 days. In a democratic society, the work of voters never ends.

LWVFL Study on Open Primaries

In May LWVFL Convention attendees voted to conduct a statewide study of the different types of open primaries to determine which one would be the best fit for Florida, which currently has closed primaries. An Open Primary is one in which any registered voter may participate, regardless of party affiliation (or lack thereof).

League's primary mission is to enable and encourage all eligible citizens to vote, with a goal of increasing voter turnout. This study will determine (1) if Florida's current closed primary system hinders voter participation; and (2) which type of open primary would be best for Florida. A partial list of the many types of open primaries follows.

Open partisan primary: Voters may select either party ballot, but are limited to that ballot. Political parties cannot prevent non-members from voting their party ballot.

Nonpartisan primary: One election, where all voters and candidates participate on a single ballot.

Top-two primary: In lieu of partisan primaries, all candidates appear on the same ballot, regardless of party affiliation. The top two vote getters move on to the general election.

Instant run-off: Voters rank candidates in order of preference. A candidate must receive more than 50% of the first-choice votes to win. If no candidate receives more than 50% of the first-choice votes, the candidate with the fewest number of first-choice rankings is eliminated, and these votes are redistributed. This process repeats until one of the candidates receives more than 50% of the votes.

Hybrid: Many state primary systems fall somewhere in between "open" and "closed." Procedures are unique from state to state, and how to categorize these primaries is a judgment call.

You needn't be a member to join in the open primary study, but you must be a member to participate in consensus. Join now for just \$15 and find out what it means to be a Leaguer!

2015 Calendar

Planning meeting

13 July, 1-2:00 pm,
51 Third St, Bldg 3 Shalimar
The board will be planning all the general meetings for 2015-16. Please join us to recommend "hot topics" or just let us know what you're interested in. If you can't be there in person, join us by phone: dial 641-715-3580, meeting ID 227-269-504.

Juvenile Justice Systems Improvement Project (JJSIP) Circuit 1 implementation meeting

28 July, 9:00 am-Noon,
Warriors' Hall, 201 Stillwell Ave, Crestview
Florida is one of four states participating in this national initiative to reform the juvenile justice system, reduce recidivism and improve outcomes. This meeting is for community stakeholders to learn about JJSIP and its results in other Florida circuits. RSVP by 30 June to Paul Wallis (850-595-8820, x233 or Paul.Wallis@djj.state.fl.us).



Discover Cuba with League 14-20 Sep, 12-18 Oct

Seize the opportunity to visit Cuba and learn more about the island nation just 90 miles from our shores. Experience Cuba firsthand and learn about the history, culture and changing political landscape of a country once forbidden to Americans. Get more info at: <https://tinyurl.com/n43g35x>.



LWVUS Constitutional Amendment Study

will explore what constitutes an appropriate and well-crafted constitutional amendment. Check out the Century Foundation's guidelines for constitutional amendments here: <https://tinyurl.com/kw3woeh>; and additional background reading here: <https://tinyurl.com/q2x3pas>.



New members join now: only \$15 in 2015!

If you've been reading the *Okaloosa Voter*, or visiting our website at LWVOkaloosa.org, you know League is the organization where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic progress. League is a nonpartisan, national grassroots organization that does not support or oppose political parties or candidates – instead we strive to educate voters so they can make informed choices. League is where individuals like you are actively engaged in creating positive change on the local, state and national levels.

We'll soon be heading into a Presidential election year, which means we'll be busy with voter registration events, candidate forums, E-Voters and workshops on ballot amendments. You can be part of it by joining the Okaloosa League today, serving as a leader and working to shape the important issues that keep our community strong. In 2015 we'll be studying open primaries, collecting petitions for the Local Solar initiative and planning the *Make Democracy Run* 5 and 10k races scheduled for the first day of early voting in 2016. Remember: Democracy is not a spectator sport, and we need your help to keep our democracy strong!

Membership in the League of Women Voters of Okaloosa County is open to all women **and men** 18 years or older, and we are offering a special **\$15 introductory rate** to new members during our 2015 membership drive. The membership is good through September 2016 and includes membership in the National and State Leagues. Dues are **not** tax-deductible, but your contribution to the LWVF Education Fund marked for Okaloosa County **is fully tax-deductible**.

Help put an end to political apathy! Join us to become part of the solution by filling in the form below and returning it with your check. The Emerald Coast needs leaders like you to ensure our community remains a strong, safe and vibrant place to live. With your help, we can make democracy work for everyone. **Become a member today: it's only \$15 in 2015!** Return the form below with your check, or go on-line to join us at <http://lwwokaloosa.org/joinus.html>.

Mary W. Blackwell
President, League of Women Voters of Okaloosa County

Membership Form

Yes, I want to join League and get involved!

- ~~Susan B. Anthony Membership \$100.00~~ ~~Individual Membership \$50.00~~
- ~~Additional Family Member \$25.00~~ ~~Student Membership \$25.00~~
- FIRST-TIME MEMBER** **\$15.00** (good only for new members joining between 1 Jul-30 Nov 15)

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Please make your check payable to LWVOC and mail to:
Diane Hodgins, LWVOC Treasurer, 1752 Nancy Ward Cove, Niceville FL 32578.

- I can't join right now, but I would like to make a tax-deductible donation.*

Please make your check payable to LWVF-EF, indicate "Okaloosa County" on the memo line and mail it to the LWVOC Treasurer at the address above.