



A force for progress on the Emerald Coast since 1962

Jan / Feb 2016

"The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."

*Nelson Mandela,
Former President of South Africa*



Happy New Year!



In honor of 95 years of Making Democracy Work®, LWVVUS staff members share stories about their work with League at <http://lwv.org/tags/lwvat95>.



League of Women Voters US 2016 Convention

The LWVUS 52nd National Convention is scheduled for 16-19 June at the Washington Marriott Wardman Park Hotel in Washington DC. Get details: <https://tinyurl.com/q376rs4>.



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

Happy New Year! Now let's get to work. On 15 March voters will choose their favorites in the Presidential Preference Primary, and residents of Cinco Bayou, Destin, Mary Esther and Valparaiso will choose local leaders. The on-line Municipal E-Voter will be available 1 Feb.

Check the page 2 calendar for events in January and February, and find details on upcoming general meetings below.

In the meantime, here are two articles that address our appallingly low voter turnout. "Why we can't just pay people to vote" (<https://tinyurl.com/h85ycfb>) decries our politically uninformed electorate. Alternatively "The real reason many Americans don't vote" cites the (<https://tinyurl.com/q45n79f>) "economic component." What do you think?

Mary Blackwell

What about those new election systems?

Supervisor of Elections Paul Lux warned the Board of County Commissioners (BCC) in 2014 that our voting system equipment needed replacing before the 2016 general election. Last spring he convened a Voting System Citizens Advisory Board to find the best replacement, and the BCC approved the Board's recommendation in the fall.

Please join us for a demo of the new

equipment on **20 Jan from 1-3:00 pm at the Shalimar SoE offices** (1250 Eglin Pkwy, Ste 103), and get familiar with the new system **before** the March elections.

The meeting is free and the public is welcome. For more info call Mary Blackwell at 850-621-4088, or **RSVP to** info@lwvokaloosa.org.

Juvenile Justice System Improvement Program: Update

Last July our county began implementation of the data-driven Juvenile Justice System Improvement Program (JSSIP), which has provided excellent results in several other Florida counties.

Please join League in February to see how JSSIP implementation is progressing. Our guest panel is still being assembled, but we hope to include representatives from Law Enforcement

(the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office), the Department of Juvenile Justice and the State Attorney's office.

The meeting is free, and the public is welcome. Once the date and venue are locked in, we'll publish full details on our website (<http://lwvokaloosa.org>), so stay tuned!

Get ready for 2016 elections!

The Presidential Preference Primary and Municipal Elections will be held on **Tuesday, 15 March**.

Citizens of Cinco Bayou, Destin, Mary Esther and Valparaiso should see <https://tinyurl.com/og5jfxm> for more info on their Municipal Elections.

Potential candidates should see <https://tinyurl.com/phumzwl> for Qualifying Packets. Valparaiso candidates must qualify with the Clerk at their City

New League trips in 2016!

The Florida League wants your input to plan the 2016 travel calendar. Do you want to visit Cuba or tour Seneca Falls, site of the original Women's Rights Convention? What about the Everglades or Washington DC? Complete this brief survey and make your voice heard: <https://tinyurl.com/p7jvg8r>.

Hall; all other municipal candidates must qualify at the Shalimar SoE offices, 1250 Eglin Pkwy, Ste 103.

LWVF's Capitol Report for December 2015

This year has seen 3 special sessions intertwined with pre-session committee weeks, a battle for the Senate presidency, and collapse of the Legislature's efforts to adopt fair voting districts. Not addressed: healthcare and climate change.

VOTING LAW AND ELECTIONS

The voting law and elections issue has seen little attention in committee weeks. As session begins we will also be monitoring reports from Secretary of State Ken Detzner on his agency's preparations for the 2016 elections.

EDUCATION

Committee weeks have seen little action on our priorities, but concerning bills are being filed daily for considera-

tion in the upcoming session.

HEALTH CARE

Expectations for the state to accept federal Medicaid expansion funds are extremely low after the meltdown of the 2015 session. The result to date is the loss of \$54 billion in *Floridian-paid* federal tax dollars to provide medical care to our working poor. Instead we will experience increasing indigent care costs, diminishing federal participation and reductions in health care services.

GUN SAFETY

NRA lobbyists have been busy advancing bills that would weaken gun protections in Florida. The League has been active in opposing legislation that would allow firearms on our college campuses.

LWVF Legislative Summit 2016

The LWVF's 2016 Summit is scheduled for 16-18 Feb. This annual event brings members from across the state to Tallahassee to meet with and advocate before state legislators. The League works hard to ensure that our strong and unique voice is heard. This two-day conference takes place during the Legislative Session and includes an orientation program, seminars on League positions, face-to-face meetings with

legislators, a tour of the Capitol, and other activities.

To register or get more event details see <https://tinyurl.com/p7utysd>. If you would like to represent the Okaloosa League this year, please contact Mary Blackwell at 621-4088 or email her at mary.blackwell@lwvokaloosa.org. This is a wonderful experience for both new and old League members, so call today.

Redistricting Update

The Florida Senate redistricting trial wrapped up on 17 Dec. The 4-day trial brought an end to a year of redistricting battles that has cost taxpayers over \$11 million, led to four trials, three special sessions and eight rulings from the Florida Supreme Court.

Leon County Circuit Court Judge George Reynolds asked the parties to tell him their top choices for a new Senate map, after which he will recommend a map to the Florida Supreme Court that will reshape the boundaries for the state's 40 Senate districts in time for the 2016 election. At stake are as many as six seats around the state.

At the core of the dispute is the Legislature's implementation of the Fair Districts amendment to the state constitution, which for the first time required that lawmakers draw political boundaries without the intent to favor incumbents or political parties. The trial

began with a rare concession by the Senate that two maps submitted in the 2012 redistricting fight as public maps were actually drawn by Republican political operatives.

The biggest surprise of the trial came from Judge Reynolds, who aggressively challenged the assumptions made by both sides for failing to include political data when drawing maps. He said he had concluded that "[political data] is absolutely necessary in formulating a plan" and suggested the data should be considered as the maps are drawn, not just "in the rearview mirror."

Judge Reynolds' ruling on which Senate districts map should be used for the 2016 elections is expected in early January, in time for Florida Supreme Court deliberation of a final plan to be complete by mid-March. Then brace yourself for the 2020 census and the next round of redistricting.

2016 Calendar

2016 Jubilee Day

1 Jan, 10:00 am

New Life Missionary Baptist Church, 285 Duggan Ave, Crestview

The NAACP invites the community to celebrate the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation and reflect on the struggles endured by slaves and today's less fortunate. We must never forget, forfeit or falsify our past.

Voting Equipment Demo

20 Jan, 1-3:00 pm

Supervisor of Elections Office, 1250 Eglin Pkwy, Suite 103, Shalimar

The county's entire election system has been replaced. Get a look at our new voting equipment before election day!

Juvenile Justice System Improvement Program

Feb, date/time/location TBD

Learn how JJSIP implementation is progressing from our panel of experts, including representatives from the Sheriff's Office, the State Attorney and Florida's Department of Juvenile Justice.

2016 Election Dates

4-8 Jan: Municipal Election Candidate Qualifying

5-12 March: Early Voting

For the Presidential Preference Primary and Municipal Election

15 March: Presidential Preference Primary and Municipal Election

20-27 Aug: Early Voting

For the Primary Election

30 Aug: Primary Election

24 Oct-5 Nov: Early Voting

For the General Election

8 Nov: General Election

Find Early Voting locations:

<https://tinyurl.com/gw2fo66>

Find your Election Day poll location:

<https://tinyurl.com/h6zky25>