



The Okaloosa Voter

A force for progress on the Emerald Coast since 1962

Jul / Aug 2016

"If we were to strive to reach absolute safety, we would not have freedom."

Sarah Palin



Happy 4th of July!



Women's Hall of Fame



Nominate a candidate for the Okaloosa County Women's Hall of Fame at <https://tinyurl.com/hor2qzh>. Nominations are due on 15 July, and the induction ceremony will be held on 23 August.



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 just returned from a two-week vacation. Our first day in Italy brought news of the mass shooting in Orlando. Right in the middle I received word of the sudden death of long-time League member Stan Berg (see below). The terrorist attack in Istanbul came a short two days after we returned.

Nobody welcomes reminders of their own mortality or man's inhumanity to

In memoriam

Your League and our community lost a stalwart member and friend on 21 June, when Stan Berg died unexpectedly. Those who were privileged to know Stan don't need a list of his achievements and contributions; we know firsthand what a wonderful and endlessly generous man he was. Read the details of his life and leave a message at <https://tinyurl.com/zp2fq3q>.

man, but these events should serve as a wake-up call to those of us who think we have all the time in the world. Life is short: go on and *live* it. Spend time with your loved ones and make a difference in your community. That's what Stan did, and the world is a better place because of him. Change starts with you—so make your life count.

Mary Blackwell



Stanley Berg
(1918-2016)

Rather than dwell on what is lost, remember instead that old poem: "*Do not stand at my grave and cry. I am not there. I did not die.*" Stan's legacy will live on in our community and in our hearts. Vaya con Dios.

31 July: 2016 LWVOC Planning Meeting

What issues would you like League to address in the coming year? Join us at Mary's house (1562 Glenlake Circle, Niceville) from **2:00-4:00 pm on Sunday, 31 July**, for the annual planning meeting. Share some food and help us map out our monthly "hot topic" meetings and areas of emphasis and action for 2016-17.

League members will make the final call on topics, dates and times, but we

welcome public input.

Don't stay on the sidelines; join League now and be part of the decision-making process! It's never been easier (see inset at right).

\$16 in 2016!

Join us and become part of the solution! Now through 30 Nov, pay **just \$16** for a one-year membership good through 31 Dec 2017. Join today at <http://lwvokaloosa.org/JoinUs.html>.

2016 Okaloosa County Women's Hall of Fame

The Okaloosa County Commission on the Status of Women is accepting Applications for the Okaloosa County Women's Hall of Fame **through 15 July**.

Do you know a deserving woman whose life and works have made significant contributions to the improvement and enhancement of life for women and for all citizens of Okaloosa county? This woman's accomplishments may be in

the fields of art, agriculture, athletics, business, community service, education, environment, government, health, humanities, law, philanthropy and/or science. The nominee may be living or deceased, but must be or have been a resident of Okaloosa County.

Go to <https://tinyurl.com/hor2qzh>, download the form and nominate someone today!

Voter disenfranchisement hits home

In 1998, the Florida Constitution Revision Commission (FCRC) placed Amendment 11 (<https://tinyurl.com/j47mza3>) on the ballot. The amendment's purpose was to provide fairer elections by—among other things—allowing all voters, regardless of party affiliation, to vote in a primary election in which all of the candidates for the office have the same party affiliation and the winner will have no opposition in the general election. Sixty-four percent of Florida voters approved Amendment 11.

Unfortunately, the Florida Legislature could not agree on whether or not write-in candidates should be allowed to close a primary. So, then-Secretary of State Katherine Harris wrote a rule in 2000 that ensured an acceptable opponent could include a write-in candidate. This allowed someone with no funding, no name on the ballot and no campaign committee to close primary races and reserve the voting for members of one party only. Since then both major parties have used this loophole to disenfranchise other voters and preserve their party's control.

Based on the FCRC's legislative history, as well as conversations with a member of the 1998 Commission, it's clear they did not believe a blank space on a ballot qualified as an "opponent." Neither they nor the voters who passed the amendment expected the result that followed. Numerous lawsuits have challenged the "write-in loophole" over the intervening years, all unsuccessfully. Most recently, on 4 Feb 2016, the Florida Supreme

Court issued a unanimous opinion (<https://tinyurl.com/zlq5kst>) that agrees with the Florida State Court of Appeals that write-in candidates in general elections are "real" candidates.

Why the history lesson? In 2014 our County's Supervisor of Election publicly called out potential write-in candidates for attempting to close important primaries, and they backed down. As a result, all of Okaloosa's registered voters had a say in their local and state representation that year. In 2016 it's a different story. Write-in candidates closed three very important races at the last minute, including the District 1 Board of County Commissioners (BCC) seat, District 1 State Senator and District 4 State Representative. Write-in candidates do not pay filing fees or need signed petitions to enter the race, and their names don't even appear on the General Election ballot, but their candidacy effectively disenfranchises one third of Okaloosa County's registered voters.

Former Crestview City Council member and previous Clerk of Court candidate Charles Baugh is actively campaigning for the BCC seat, but write-in Christopher Schwantz readily admitted (<https://tinyurl.com/hfur5d8>) that he filed specifically to close the State Representative race. So unless County voters register with the GOP by 1 Aug, they will have no say in who will represent them in the Legislature in the near term. Welcome to democracy, "Florida-style."

Yes on 4: Tax exemptions for renewable energy

Want to know the best-kept secret in Florida about one of the biggest barriers holding back meaningful solar development? It's not lack of sunshine, it's **taxes**—really burdensome taxes whose impact drives up the cost of solar power. The Sunshine State should not be taxing the sun.

Taxes are big reason that Florida, which has 9 million energy customers, boasts only 8,500 rooftop solar systems. By comparison, New Jersey has over 43,000 rooftop systems with half the population and less sun.

Florida voters will have an opportunity to change that on 30 Aug. A "YES" vote

on Amendment 4 on your primary ballot will lower taxes on solar panels for 20 years, thus making them more affordable. Access to affordable solar energy will lower overall energy costs for consumers. This is a win for Florida residents AND the environment.

League is one of many organizations supporting Amendment 4. Find out why it deserves your support at:

- CleanEnergy.org (<https://tinyurl.com/hwcw7d2>),
- Ballotpedia.org (<https://tinyurl.com/gqv2ho>) and
- Floridians for Solar Choice (<https://tinyurl.com/gp8zvvz>).

Important Election Dates

15 July: The Okaloosa-Walton 2016 Primary E-Voter—your "one-stop-shopping" place for election information—will be posted on the website.

23 July: A Candidate Forum featuring local, state and national candidates will be held at 4:00 pm at Striving for Perfection Ministries, 24 Bass Ave, Fort Walton Beach.

1 Aug: Last day to change party affiliation or register to vote in the Primary.

2–4 Aug at 7:00 pm: WSRE Rally 2016 televised Primary Election candidate forum (local channel 8 or 9; cable/satellite channel 23).

20–27 Aug: Early Voting for the Primary.

24 Aug: Last day to request a mail-in ballot for the Primary.

30 Aug: Primary Election

30 Aug by 7:00 pm: All Vote-by-Mail ballots must be received **at** the Supervisor's office.

24 Oct–5 Nov: Early voting for the General Election.

25–26 Oct at 7:00 pm: WSRE Rally 2016 televised General Election candidate forum (local channel 8 or 9; cable/satellite channel 23).

29 Oct at 7:30 am: *Make Democracy Run 5k* starting at Johnny O'Quigley's Alehouse, 1025 Industrial Dr, Crestview. Details coming soon!

8 Nov: General Election

Travel with League

Seneca Falls: 17–21 Aug: Visit the Susan B. Anthony Center and other historical sites! Get details here: <https://tinyurl.com/j8ahgtq>.

Cuba: 14–20 Nov or 12–18 Dec: Get details on Sisters Across the Straits trips here: <https://tinyurl.com/j32bzka>.



New members join now: only \$16 in 2016!

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.

League's work is more important than ever in this Presidential election year, as we strive to provide voters with accurate and nonpartisan information so they can cast informed ballots. We are working on voter registration events, candidate forums, E-Voters and workshops on ballot amendments, and planning the *Make Democracy Run* 5 and 10k races scheduled for 29 Oct. 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. Remember: Democracy is not a spectator sport, and we need your help make our democracy work for us!

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 **\$16 introductory rate** to new members during our 2016 membership drive. The membership is good through 31 Dec 2017 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 \$16 in 2016!** 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** **\$16.00** (good only for new members joining between 1 Jul-30 Nov 16)

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Please make your check payable to LWVOC and mail to:
Rachel Winkler, LWVOC Treasurer, 194 Kel Wen Circle, Destin FL 32541.

- 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.