

A force for progress on the Emerald Coast since 1962!

Nov / Dec 2018

"Do not cry tomorrow for what you did not have the courage and the wisdom to defend today."

*Ariel Dorfman
American Author*

"Duty very often isn't glamorous or popular or even particularly inspiring, but that is what holds civilization together."

*Jim Wright, USN (ret'd)
American Writer*

The purpose of human life is to serve, and to show compassion and the will to help others.

*Albert Schweitzer
French-Alsatian Theologian*



Separate Fact from Fiction

It's hard to judge the accuracy of many "news" articles in the digital age, so it's your responsibility to **not** always take headlines and viral memes at face value. Use Vote Smart's Voter Self-Defense (<https://tinyurl.com/y82bcp9x>) System to fact check, or call the 1-888-VoteSmart hotline. Don't be misled again!

League's Mission:

The League 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 EDITOR

It's Halloween, and as I type this, nearly 25% of registered voters in Okaloosa County and 20% in Walton County have already cast a ballot—and there are still three more days of Early Voting. That is great news!

For those who haven't yet voted, Early Voting lasts through this Saturday, 3 Nov. To get info on candidates, referendums, amendments, voting locations and poll hours, see the E-Voter at

http://lwvowc.org/2018-general_e-voter/2018-e-voter.html.

Reminder: Amendment 8 was stricken from the ballot. Also, Amendments 7, 9 and 11 are still pending appeal in the Florida Supreme Court. So, you'll have to vote on them, but the vote could be invalidated depending on the court's ruling after Election Day.

Be prepared. Be informed. **Be a voter!**

JOIN THE OKALOOSA-WALTON SOLAR CO-OP

Solar electricity is abundant, accessible, and increasingly affordable, but it can still be daunting to install it in your home or business. LWVOWC wants to help you achieve peace of mind when you invest in this major upgrade to your home. So, we partnered with Solar United Neighbors of Florida to form the Okaloosa-Walton Solar Co-op.

Aside from delivering economies of scale, the Co-op will provide everything you need to join the ranks of solar owners, including expert advice on requirements, costs, financing options and help selecting a qualified solar installer.

The Co-op will be there to support you every step of the way. There are now over 1 million solar homes in the US. Will you be next? Visit the Co-op's website at <https://tinyurl.com/OWC-solar>, or attend an informational meeting:

• **5:30 pm, Wednesday, 14 Nov, Coastal Branch Library** (437 Greenway Trail, Santa Rosa Beach)

• **5:30 pm, Tuesday, 4 Dec, Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce** (34 Miracle Strip Pkwy, SE)

RSVP to info@lwvowc.org.

17 NOV GENERAL MEETING: OPEN PRIMARY STUDY REPORT

Only 17.6% of registered voters turned out for Florida's 2014 primary. From 2000 to 2016, Florida's voter turnout averaged 23%, compared to a national average of 37%. With that in mind, LWVFL launched a study in 2015 to determine if Florida's closed primary election system was hindering voter turnout.

This question is more than academic in heavily Republican Okaloosa & Walton Counties, where local and state races are often decided in the Primary, and fully 41% of registered voters are **not** Republicans. The 64% jump in non-party-affiliated voters since 2004 means this will only get worse: just one "spoiler" write-in candidate can close a primary and disenfranchise voters. So, candidates can—and **do**—win with less than 10% of the electorate's support.

League's statewide study committee evaluated reasons for and solutions to low turnout, coupled with an evaluation of alternative primary election systems. The study also included evaluation of Presidential Preference Primary elections. After the 2-year study's completion in 2017, 21 of 29 local Florida leagues met to discuss the findings and reach consensus positions.

Join League from **10:00–noon on Saturday, 17 Nov, at the Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce** (34 Miracle Strip Pkwy SE, FWB). We'll review the study findings and conclusions, and discuss potential voter turnout solutions. Let's make democracy work better in Florida!

The meeting is free and open to the public. RSVP to info@lwvowc.org.

GRAND OPENING OF THE NEW OKALOOSA COURTHOUSE

It's been a long time coming, and now it's a reality. Join the members of the Board of County Commissioners at **9:00 am on Thursday, 16 Nov**, for the grand opening of the new County Courthouse. The new building was constructed on the site of the previous Courthouse, **at the corner of Main St and Pine Ave in Crestview.**

The County's first Courthouse opened in 1918, and was replaced in 1955. The second building closed in April 2016 because of problems with asbestos and black mold. At 68,000 square feet, the new building is half-again as large as the one it replaced, but still retains the architectural charm of its predecessor.

The new Courthouse will boast historical displays sponsored by Clerk of Court & Comptroller JD Peacock and BCC Chair Graham Fountain. Members of the Crestview Historical Society and Baker Block Museum are helping make the historic displays a reality.

Additional parking will be available at First Baptist Church and First Presbyterian Church in downtown Crestview.



COUNTY REFERENDUMS: YOUR VOTE MATTERS

Okaloosa: Half-cent sales tax

Okaloosa County voters will decide on the county's requested 10-year, local option half-cent sales tax. If approved by a simple majority, the tax would take effect on 1 Jan 2019 and would generate an estimated \$17 million annually to help pay for infrastructure projects such as road and stormwater work in the unincorporated area and local municipalities. An estimated 57% of funds raised will come from tourists.

Critical projects have already been identified by County and municipalities, so League urges you to vote **for** your County and your community!

Walton: Confederate flag

The confederate flag never flew over Walton County during the Civil War, as it was 1 of 3 Florida counties that voted *against* secession. The flag was only erected in 1964 by vote of the County Commission, although no record of discussion is extant. However, local newspapers at the time reflected then current events: George Wallace's stand for segregation; passage of the Civil Rights Act; unhappiness on the part of the white majority for Dr. King's civil rights campaign.

Please acknowledge this affront to your black neighbors: vote "no."

GUN VIOLENCE: WHERE DOES IT END?

October was a bad month for gun violence in America. After a gunman murdered two people in a Kentucky Kroger (after failing to gain entry to a church nearby), another gunman murdered 11 worshippers in a Pittsburgh synagogue. The first incident was apparently racially motivated, while the second was religiously motivated.

League does not quibble with the 2nd Amendment, which is pretty clear: "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, *the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.*"

Here is our question: What part of "well regulated" is confusing? Here are some other pertinent parts of our Constitution that carry equal weight:

Amendment 5 – Rights of Persons:
 "...nor be deprived of *life, liberty, or property, without due process of law...*"

Amendment 14 – Rights Guaranteed:
 "...nor shall any State deprive any person of *life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.*"

When individual citizens are empowered to carry the power life (or death) on their hip, then they must be fully educated about other people's right to life and due process, and they must be held to account for their actions. That is where the "well regulated" part kicks in. Without consequences, this senseless violence and loss of life will continue, with no end in sight.

Calendar

Recycling, recycling, and more recycling

13 Nov: 5:30 pm
 Enlightened Studios 142 Miracle Strip Pkwy, FWB
 Join Earth Ethics & Earth Action and bring unused and unwanted plastic bags!

Open Primary Study Report

17 Nov: 10:00 am, FWB CoC, 34 Miracle Strip Pkwy SE, FWB
 Find out how voter turnout can be improved and how we can make democracy work better for all Floridians. RSVP: info@lwvowc.org.

Solar Co-op Info Sessions

14 Nov: 5:30 pm
 Coastal Branch Library, 437 Greenway Trail, Santa Rosa Beach
4 Dec: 5:30 pm
 Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce, 34 Miracle Strip Pkwy SE, FWB
 Find out how **you** can go solar with help from the Okaloosa-Walton Solar Co-op. Get info: <https://tinyurl.com/OWC-solar>. RSVP: info@lwvowc.org.



Upcoming LWVFL Events

Leadership Conference

18–19 Jan 2019, Orlando

Legislative Summit

9–10 Apr 2019, Tallahassee

State League Convention

22 June 2019, Naples



LWVFL wins suit regarding appointments to the state Supreme Court

The League brought suit last year when Governor Scott announced his intention to appoint justices on the day his term ended.

However, the Florida Supreme Court ruled on 15 Oct that Scott exceeded his authority when he started the process to find replacements for the retiring justices. So, the incoming Governor will appoint the new justices to the court.