

Dec 2007

League of Women Voters of Okaloosa County



“America is not a melting pot. It is a sizzling cauldron.”

*Barbara Mikulski,
United States Senator
(D-MD)*

LWVOC

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This month's Voter is dedicated to the legions of immigrants from decades and centuries past, who came from around the world and built new lives **and** a new country in the United States.

Mission:

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

LWVOC is Now Online at <http://LWVOkaloosa.org>

Your local League has finally stepped out onto the information highway with the inauguration of its new website. Check us out at <http://LWVOkaloosa.org>!

The site includes both general and specific information about local, state and national League, plus contact information for League officers, an events calendar, and helpful web links, among other items of interest to members and the public. So bookmark us today, and tell your friends.

Now if the *Voter* comes late or the dog eats it, you can still find out what's going on from the privacy of your own home with just a few clicks of your mouse.

We are very excited about this opportunity to reach a larger audience — and especially about its potential to increase our membership. **You** can help!

We value your opinions, and we want your recommendations. If you have a suggestion to improve the site, please use the online contact form to let us know. With your guidance we can make our site a first-class tool to communicate, educate and recruit. We're waiting to hear from you!

And since I'm sure you're curious, the domain name "LWVOC.org" was already taken -- by the Orange County League!

Immigration Consensus Meeting: Jan 5, 2008

Over the last several months we've been promoting the National Immigration Study and attempting to inform members about it through *Voter* articles, the November HOT TOPICS general meeting and a November study meeting. Now it's time to see if the Okaloosa League can reach consensus on an Immigration position.

Consensus is the process the League uses to reach member agreement on study issues. It is neither a simple majority nor unanimity; instead, it is an *overall sense of the group*. In other words, consensus results from answers to questions on which members can find common ground and agreement. Group discussion that allows an exchange of ideas and opinions is the preferred way to achieve consensus, because that

makes subsequent League action on the issue(s) uniquely credible and respected.

Participating in League studies and the consensus process is akin to exercising your right to vote — it helps set the agenda for League's lobbying efforts — so **please** mark your calendar for the LWVOC Immigration Consensus meeting

on Jan 5, 2008,
from 10:00-

12:00 at the

Shalimar Town

Hall. Plan to stay

the full two hours so

we can cover all the

consensus discussion

questions.

We urge **all members**

to attend this meeting

and help us reach

consensus. To prepare, read the one-page study briefs at

www.lwv.org/ImmigrationStudy/.

Make a difference: Help your League reach consensus on this important issue.



The Voter is published 8 times a year by the League of Women Voters of Okaloosa County, PO Box 4546, Ft. Walton Beach FL

Florida Taxation & Budget Reform Commission Hearing

• 5 Dec 07, 4:00-7:00 p.m., Mattie Kelly Fine & Performing Arts Center, OWC, 100 College Blvd, Niceville. The public is welcome.

Potluck Holiday Party

• 9 Dec 07, 1:00-4:00 pm, 1562 Glen lake Circle, Niceville. All members welcome.

Consensus Meeting on Immigration

• 5 Jan 08, 10:00-12:00, Shalimar City Hall. All members welcome.

Proposed Constitutional Amendment Review

• 12 Jan 08, 10:00-12:00, Shalimar City Hall, speakers TBD. The Public is welcome.

Sustainable Emerald Coast

• 9 Feb 08, 10:00-12:00, Shalimar City Hall, speakers TBD. The public is welcome.

Political Parties: Where do they stand on local issues?

• 8 Mar 08, 10:00-12:00, Niceville City Hall, with representatives from the Democratic, Libertarian and Republican parties. The public is welcome.

April Annual Meeting

• Date, time, location TBD. All members welcome.

“Yellow Rose” Award Presentation Ceremony

• Date, time, location TBD. The public is welcome.

**Be a part of it:
Democracy is
not a spectator
sport!**

Where Do YOU Live?

At a recent meeting, a long-time member described a T-shirt she had just bought. On the front was the question: “Where do **you** live?” On the back was the answer: “I live to make a difference!”

When asked what you’ve done to make the world a better place, how will you answer? Do you set a good example? Do you have the courage of your convictions? Do you try to make a difference?

It’s safe to say most of us will never be

president or win a Nobel Prize, but that doesn’t mean we can’t each make an important difference in our community and the lives of those around us. And that is exactly what League is all about.

Get involved. Volunteer to register voters (see below) or interview your legislators (see p. 3). Attend the Immigration consensus meeting. Vote!

Think about it: Where do **you** live?

~ *Mary Blackwell, President, LWVOC*

2008 Florida Election Update

Early voting will be available for the January 29 Presidential Preference Primary and designated municipal elections [except for school district taxes] beginning January 14 through January 26. Hours of early voting operation are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday – Saturday in the Northwest Florida Fairgrounds Conference Room, 1958 Lewis Turner Blvd, Fort Walton Beach, and the Supervisor of Elections Office, 302 N. Wilson St., Crestview.

LWVOC will be teaming with the NAACP to conduct voter registration before the primary. The registration drive is tentatively scheduled for the 15th and 22nd of December from 10:00-2:00 at Walmart in Fort Walton Beach **and** Crestview. We’d like to have at least two Leaguers at both sites on both days.

If you can support this effort, please call Mary Blackwell at 884-6869 (weekdays) or bwel1@mac.com.

Election	Date	Registration Closeout
Presidential Preference Primary	January 29, 2008	December 31, 2007
Primary Election	August 27, 2008	July 28, 2008
General Election	November 4, 2008	October 7, 2008

Florida’s 2008 Presidential Preference Primary

This year the Florida Legislature defied established party rules and moved the presidential preference primaries for both major parties from the second Tuesday in March to January 29. This unauthorized change prompted both national parties to impose sanctions, with the possibility that the number of state delegates to be seated at the national conventions will be seriously reduced.

Nevertheless, votes cast here on January 29th **will** count, and they are important, because they will help decide who will be the party candidates to face one another in the November elections.

Only registered Democrats may vote in the Democratic preference primary, and only registered Republicans in the Republican race. If you are registered to vote and wish to declare or change your party affiliation, you must let the Supervisor of Elections know — in writing — before close of business on December 31st. Just fill out a new voter registration form, indicate your party choice, and get it to the Supervisor on time.

In any event, be sure to meet the League's standard by never missing an opportunity to vote.

November Hot Topic: Immigration Enforcement and Human Trafficking in Okaloosa County

A small but appreciative audience enjoyed the informative presentation by Inspector George Collins of the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) on Nov 17th. The meeting ran overtime as attendees peppered him with questions.

Inspector Collins provided frightening details on recent human trafficking cases in the county, and shared his frustration about the difficulties he encounters in prosecuting suspects and helping victims. On more than one occasion — and despite OCSO requests for visa extensions — key witnesses had to leave the country before the trial dates for known

human traffickers, forcing case dismissal.

The audience was also surprised to learn that the OCSO has no authority to enforce federal immigration law, and that the chronically under-staffed Immigration & Naturalization Service is unable to provide any relief. Illegal aliens identified by OCSO today receive notices to attend deportation hearings — **in 2010!**

LWVOC extends its thanks to Inspector Collins for sharing his expertise with us. For more details visit www.sheriff-okaloosa.org and click on "Immigration Info."

Redistricting Reform is Back!

LWV Florida and Common Cause Florida recently announced a new effort to reform the redistricting process. Under the current system, the Florida Legislature can draw bizarrely shaped districts that divide Florida's cities, counties and communities solely for political reasons. These gerrymandered districts discourage challengers and ensure incumbent members of Congress and the legislature face little or no opposition.

The League has supported reform of the redistricting process for over 30 years, and is now an integral part of the new campaign for redistricting reform in Florida. The legal team for the "Fair Districts Florida" political action committee has drafted two amendments to the Florida Constitution — to be placed on the ballot in November 2010 — that would establish new requirements for drawing congressional and legislative districts.

If the proposed constitutional amend-

ments are adopted by Florida voters, congressional and legislative districts could not be drawn to favor incumbents or political parties. Districts would have to ensure that racial or language minorities have the opportunity to fully participate in the political process and elect representatives of their choice. Districts would also have to be compact, contiguous and within existing city, county and geographical boundaries.

Petitions must be circulated and sufficient signatures gathered to earn a spot on the 2010 ballot. The petitions will give Florida voters the opportunity to end the legislature's manipulation of districts to protect incumbents and enhance political party power. For more information visit www.FairDistrictsFlorida.org.

Please join this campaign. The current redistricting process places the concept of "one person, one vote" in jeopardy! The League and the citizens of Florida are counting on you!

Interviewers Needed

If you are interested in helping to interview our legislators about the LWV of Florida legislative priorities for 2008, please contact Mary Blackwell at 884-6869 (weekdays) or bwell1@mac.com.

This is a great way to learn about the Florida League's legislative priorities for 2008, and to meet your own legislators.

Legislative Seminar

Local Leaguers from across Florida will meet in Tallahassee on March 16-18 for LWV Florida's 48th Legislative Seminar.

Participants will listen, learn and lobby. This is a great opportunity to learn the nuts and bolts of state government. Check the website and watch the *Voter* for more details on this exciting event!

Prepare for Immigration Consensus

As a participant in the discussion, consider answers to the following:

- Are immigrants needed to supplement the current and future U.S. work force? Should immigration policy make legal entry of workers more equal to the needs generated by supply and demand? Should employers be required instead to pay higher wages to attract more native-born potential workers and thus reduce the need for foreign labor?
- Should priority be given to family reunification in immigration reform? Should immigrants with specialized training and strong academic credentials receive priority admission?
- To more effectively control unauthorized immigration, should all persons residing in the U.S. have a social security card or other national identification card? Are physical barriers such as fences the most effective way to stop unauthorized immigration? What about tracking foreign students and temporary foreign workers until they leave the U.S.?
- Should employers be burdened to verify employee visa status? Should employers incur significant fines for failing to verify employees' status?
- Should all unauthorized immigrants be deported? Should there be a legalization process (penalty tax, learn English, study civics) established for unauthorized immigrants who live and work in the U.S. for an extended period of time?

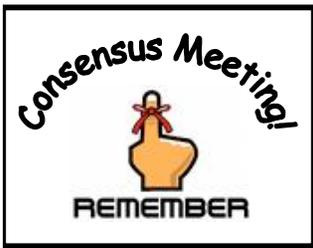
Think about it: The US is a country of immigrants who have successfully integrated into the fabric of the nation, enriching and contributing to all aspects of American life.



The Okaloosa Voter
League of Women Voters of
Okaloosa County
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 Fort Walton Beach FL 32549

Non-Profit Organization
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☆☆☆☆ Immigration Consensus Meeting - January 5th ☆☆☆☆



Yes, I want to join a nonpartisan organization that encourages informed and active participation of citizens in government.

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

\$42.50 Individual \$21.25 Additional Family Member \$21.25 Student

Please make your check payable to LWVOC and mail to Carol Davis, Treasurer, 524 Dorado Drive, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548.

Please check (P) for participate or (I) for interest in activities below:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Voter Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Speaking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Fund Raising | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health | <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative Action | <input type="checkbox"/> Web Site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Policy | <input type="checkbox"/> Membership | <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Team |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Int'l Relations | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Relations | <input type="checkbox"/> Observe Gov't Meetings |

**Make
 Democracy
 Work!**

**Join the League.
 Be a Voice
 for Citizens and
 a Force for
 Progress!**



**Men can join
 League, too!**