



# THE OKALOOSA VOTER

## The League of Women Voters of Okaloosa County

**Mar / Apr 2011**

"I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors."

*Abigail Smith Adams  
Colonial American Feminist*



### March is Women's History Month



2011 Theme: Our History is our Strength

The National Women's History Project (NWHP) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, educational organization committed to recognizing and celebrating the diverse and historic accomplishments of women by providing information and educational materials. Visit [WWW.NWHP.ORG](http://WWW.NWHP.ORG) for information about women's history, Women's History Month in March, Women's Equality Day in August, and related women's history resources and materials.



### 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.*



**Don't forget municipal elections on Tuesday, March 8th!**

### Message from the President

Today I'm reminded of the apocryphal Chinese curse, "May you live in interesting times." Florida's 2011 Legislative Session promises to be very "interesting," and our League will be in Tallahassee advocating on behalf of its members and all Florida citizens.

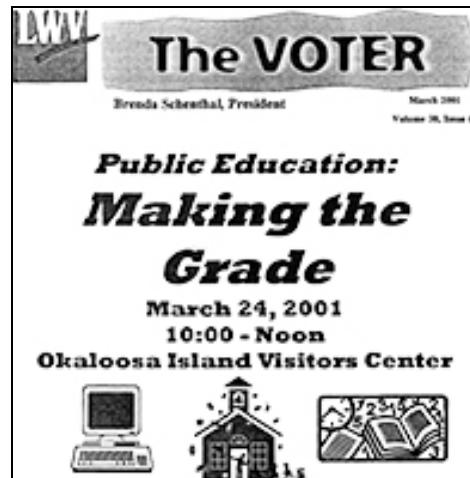
LWVOC is sending 3 representatives to this year's combined Legislative Seminar and Convention to support important good government issues (like redistricting) and oppose bad ones (like TABOR).

The budget deficit is the #1 issue this year: how and where will cuts be made to achieve a balanced budget amidst declining revenues. The impending redistricting process runs a close second. See page 2 for details.

Please vote in your municipal election if you are a Fort Walton Beach, Shalimar or Crestview resident, and

### March General Meeting Goes "Back to the Future"

In March 2001, LWVOC convened a panel to discuss public education in Okaloosa County.



One decade later we are revisiting the topic this month to see if our County's schools are still "making the grade."

### Charla Cotton to Address Annual Meeting April 30th

#### Members Old and New:

Please join us on Saturday, April 30th, at Fort Walton Yacht Club, 180 Ferry Rd NE, for our 2011 Annual Meeting.

The business meeting will begin at 10:00, and will include adoption of the proposed 2011-12 budget, consideration of our local program, and

do plan to attend our Annual Meeting scheduled for April 30th. Past School Board member and former Collegiate HS Director Charla Cotton will discuss the evolution of education in the County during her career, which will be a perfect complement to the March general meeting (details below).

Please join us at both events and keep up-to-date on important issues affecting your League and our community.

*Mary Blackwell*

### Stay Informed!

For updates on or copies of proposed legislation, call legislative information at 1-800-342-1827, or visit the Florida Online Sunshine homepage at [www.leg.state.fl.us](http://www.leg.state.fl.us).

League will host a panel of experts from **3-5:00 PM on Saturday, March 12**, at Niceville City Hall (208 N Partin Dr) to discuss past and future educational trends.

The panel includes a professional educator and administrator, parent and student. Under the theme *We're All In This Together: Looking Backward, Moving Forward*, panel members will explore important topics, including: testing and its effect on teaching; the balance of emphasis between sports, creativity and academics; the impact of diversity and integration; and areas needing improvement.

The meeting is free and open to the public, so please join us and bring a friend on March 12<sup>th</sup>.

Light refreshments will be served.

election of officers.

After lunch, well-known retired local educator Charla Cotton will discuss her perceptions of the changes in education in Okaloosa County over the course of her career.

Meeting details will be mailed out to members and posted on-line later this month.

## 2011 Legislative Session: What to Expect

The Legislature convened March 8, and Florida is facing another budget crunch. The deficit for 2011 is projected to be from \$3.6 - \$5 billion, and without new sources of revenue, lawmakers will have to make new budget cuts and program reductions. Other big picture issues this year include Medicaid reform, education reform, immigration, TABOR and redistricting.

Republicans now control both executive and legislative branches, and the Republican majority in the 2011 Legislature has enough votes in both chambers to put constitutional amendments on the ballot by a 3/5ths vote and to override a veto by the Governor with a 2/3rds vote.

High on incoming Senate President Mike Haridopolos' priority list are health care and limiting state spending. He wants to have citizens approve constitutional amendments that allow Florida to opt out of the health insurance mandate and limit state revenue and spending.

through a Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR). New House Speaker Dean Cannon's priorities include Medicaid and judicial reform.

Senate Reapportionment Committee Chair Don Gaetz expects to have the "MyDistrictBuilder" website – which will allow anyone to draw redistricting plans – online in June. The committee anticipates holding 20 public hearings throughout the state this summer. In the meantime, Governor Scott delayed Justice Department "pre-clearance" of Amendments 5 and 6, and re-appointed Kurt Browning (who opposed the redistricting amendments) as Secretary of State.

Other "good government" issues that may be addressed this year include ethics, the Public Service Commission, the ban on gifts from lobbyists to legislators, term limits, government in the sunshine, elections, and campaign financing.

*Excerpted from LWVF Capitol Report  
Filed by Ben Wilcox, 31 Jan 11*

## League Priority Issues for the 2011 Legislative Session

The LWVF has set four program areas for 2011.

**Government:** Promote an open government that is responsive to the people of the state.

- **Equitable Taxation:** The League supports tax legislation that does not jeopardize local service, addresses infrastructure deficits, and removes unfair tax exemptions that affect governments' ability to serve citizens.

- **Redistricting Reform:** The League supports single-member election districts that are equal in population, provide access for minorities, are compact and, when possible, take local characteristics such as political and geographical boundaries into consideration.

- **Citizen Initiatives:** For the past four sessions, the League has fought against passage of new restrictions on the citizens' initiative process. As bills addressing citizen initiatives arise; the League will oppose bills that increase the monied interests' stranglehold on the initiative process and the legislative process and, where appropriate, advance the idea of a citizen statutory initiative.

- **Elections:** The League supports legislation that promotes stricter election audits and would give the Supervisors of Elections more flexibility in selecting early voting sites.

**Education:** Priorities are Funding,

Accountability and Civic Education.

- The League supports legislation that provides for a free public school system with high standards for student achievement and with equality of educational opportunity for all that is financed adequately by the state through an equitable funding formula.

**Social Policy:** Priority is Health Care.

- The League supports measures to implement Florida health care in a manner consistent with the LWVUS position on health care reform.

**Natural Resources:** Priorities are resource management, land use, energy, freshwater resources, coastal management, environmental protection, public participation, and agriculture.

### Get Involved: Join the Lobbying Corps

LWVF is still looking for folks to participate in the Lobbying Corps. To join up, contact Marilynn Wills ([marilynnwills@msn.com](mailto:marilynnwills@msn.com)) or Rebecca Sager ([rsager@music.org](mailto:rsager@music.org)).

For news on priority issues and what you can do to help, check out the **Capitol Report** and the **Florida Voter** available at [www.thefloriadavoter.org/](http://www.thefloriadavoter.org/).

## Calendar

### Panel on Education

**March 12**, 3-5:00 PM at Niceville City Hall (208 N Partin Dr).

Topic: *We're All in this Together; Looking Backward, Moving Forward.*

### Annual Meeting

**Apr 30**, 10 AM – 1 PM at Ft Walton Yacht Club (180 Ferry Rd NE).

See page 1 for details.

### 12th Annual State of the County Report

**May 21st** (details TBA)



## Women in History

In March we celebrate **National Women's History Month**. The 2011 theme is *Our History is Our Strength*, in honor of the millions of women who helped create a better world for themselves and future generations. During these difficult times, this year's theme is an important reminder to our nation that adversity can be overcome.

Women have played and continue to play a crucial role in several important movements in American history. These include:

- **The Labor Movement**, which began as early as 1765 with the formation of the first society of working women.

- **The Women's Suffrage Movement**, which was launched in 1848 at the first women's rights conference held at Seneca Falls NY.

- **The Civil Rights Movement** in which women held a variety of roles from leadership to organizers to participants.

- **The Women's Rights Movement**, which was re-energized in the 20th Century during what is called the Second Wave.

- **The Environmental Movement** in which women played a key role from the early 19th century and which was officially launched on Earth Day, April 22, 1970.