



League of Women Voters Celebrates 100 Years

Creating
★ A MORE PERFECT ★
Democracy

Who and what is League?

- For 100 years, League has been a nonpartisan, activist, grassroots organization that believes *voters* should play a critical role in democracy.
 - This includes all citizens, since League membership was opened to men in 1973.
- League believes our democracy is strongest and works best when citizens are informed and engaged in the democratic process.
- League encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.



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League of Women Voters — National-Level



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1920 — 2020

We believe in the power of women to create a more perfect democracy. That's been our vision since 1920, when the League of Women Voters was founded by leaders of the women's suffrage movement. For 100 years, we have been a nonpartisan, activist, grassroots organization that believes voters should play a critical role in democracy.

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1920: League founded on 14 February

The League was officially founded in Chicago, just six months before the 19th amendment was ratified and women won the vote. Formed by the suffragists of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, the League began as a “mighty political experiment” designed to help 20 million women carry out their new responsibilities as voters.



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1920: 19th Amendment ratified on 26 August*

After it was passed by Congress, the 19th Amendment headed to the states for ratification. Anti-suffrage groups fought to oppose ratification, and suffrage leaders mobilized to continue their pressure campaign in the states. Finally, the Amendment was ratified in Tennessee and officially made law on August 26.



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*The 19th Amendment and Women of Color

After women won their decades-long struggle to vote, not all women gained equal access at the ballot box. Women of color — especially those in the south — did not have full voting rights, and significant black suffragists were erased from the history of women's suffrage in America. Even today there is still more work to be done.



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1944 – 45: UN Established & LWV Named NGO Observer

Post-war, League carried out a nationwide public support campaign for American participation in the UN, and President Truman made League a consultant to the US delegation at the UN Charter Conference. LWV was one of the first organizations officially recognized by the UN as a non-governmental organization, and League still maintains official observer status today.



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1957: LWV Education Fund established

As League became more active in issue advocacy, the need arose for a separate organizational arm for activities like voter registration and information. The League of Women Voters Education Fund was established to encourage the active and informed participation of citizens in government and to increase understanding of major public policy issues.



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1972: Major campaign to ratify the ERA

Shortly after the 1972 passage of the Equal Rights Amendment, LWV voted officially to support “equal rights for all regardless of sex.” League mounted a nationwide pressure campaign through the 1970s. That national campaign ended in 1982, but LWV continues to push for ERA ratification today.



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1976: Emmy award for Presidential Debates

The League sponsored the first televised presidential debates since 1960, for which it received an Emmy award for Outstanding Achievement in Broadcast Journalism.



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1980s: LWV Sponsors Presidential Debates

League sponsored televised general election Presidential debates in 1980 & 1984, as well as presidential primary forums in 1980, 1984 & 1988. As candidates demanded increasingly partisan conditions, League withdrew its sponsorship of general election debates in 1988. Local Leagues nationwide continue to hold debates and forums for local and state offices today.



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1993: NVRA becomes law

The League's grassroots campaign for national legislation to reform voter registration resulted in passage of the National Voter Registration Act, AKA the "motor-voter" bill. The goal: increased accessibility to the electoral process. The motor-voter bill enabled citizens to register at the DMV automatically, as well as by mail and at agencies that serve the public.



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2002: Help America Vote Act becomes law

The 2000 election exposed many problems facing the election system, so League began work on election reform. Working closely with a civil rights coalition, LWV helped draft and pass HAVA, which established provisional balloting, requirements for updating voting systems, and the Election Assistance Commission.



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2006: LWV Launches VOTE411.org

League published a voter info website as early as the 1990s, but in 2006 it launched the next generation with VOTE411.org. This “one-stop-shop” for election-related info provides both general and state-specific nonpartisan resources to the voting public, including a nationwide polling place locator, a ballot look-up tool, candidate positions on issues, and more.



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2019: LWV Launches People-Powered Fair Maps Campaign

In June 2019, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that partisan gerrymandering cannot be solved by the federal courts. In response, League initiated People-Powered Fair Maps, a coordinated effort across all 50 states and DC to create fair and transparent, people-powered redistricting processes to eliminate partisan and racial gerrymandering nationwide.



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2020: LWV celebrates its centennial

Over the last century, League has fought for election protection, democratic reforms and equal access to the ballot — all while maintaining its commitment to nonpartisanship and fostering an informed electorate. Going forward League aims to build power for the next generation of leaders and voting rights activists with the theme: Women Power the Vote.



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What will the next 100 years hold?

The League of Women Voters has evolved from a mighty political experiment designed to help 20 million newly enfranchised women vote in 1920, to what it is today: a unique, nonpartisan organization that is a recognized force in molding political leaders, shaping public policy, and promoting informed citizen participation at all levels of government. To join us for our next 100 years, join your local League today!

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League of Women Voters — State-Level



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1921 – 2020

The Florida State League of Women Voters formed in 1921 with a strong focus on women's issues. Following a decline in the 1930s, the moribund League was reorganized as the Florida Nonpartisan League of Women Voters in 1939, and renamed the League of Women Voters of Florida in 1947. Today the Florida League remains engaged in a number of statewide and local projects, including voter registration, election reform and voter education.

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1939: "Florida Nonpartisan LWV" formed

The new League's ambitious first program included a survey of state and county school systems, a study of state and local government, and the foreign policy of the United States. To encourage inclusivity, the first president refused to charge fees to attend meetings or to hold them at locations that practiced segregation.



Catherine Stephenson, formerly Mrs. Nelson Poynter, first president of Florida Non-Partisan League of Women Voters. (Photograph, 1985; Portrait, 1939)

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1940s: State League activism bears fruit

In 1941 League led the petition campaign for a successful referendum to bring public housing to St. Petersburg. In 1945 League developed an equitable plan for senatorial redistricting, and the Legislature ultimately adopted a compromise. In 1949 League helped pass the permissive jury service statute that enabled women to serve on juries.



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1950s: LWVF pushes Constitutional Revision

Early attempts at piecemeal constitutional revision proved slow going. In 1953 a League-endorsed amendment to extend legislative sessions was approved, but large-scale revision foundered in 1958 when the Florida Supreme Court rejected the legislature's grudging attempt to add the work of the Florida Constitutional Advisory Committee to the ballot.



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1960s: LWVF makes an impact

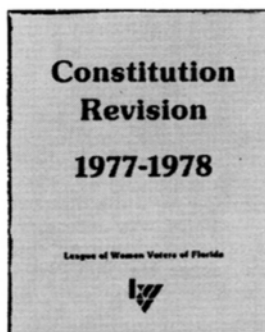
LWVF Past President Maxine Baker joined the Florida House and helped write the Florida Mental Health Act (AKA the “Baker Act”), which provides individuals with emergency services for mental health evaluation and treatment. League also supported some long-sought revisions to the state constitution in 1966 and 1968.



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70s & 80s: Sunshine and the constitution

In 1976 LWVF supported the Sunshine Amendment to require financial disclosure for public officials, the first successful citizen's initiative. League also finally convinced the Legislature to accept single-member districts in 1981, and sued to force all senators to run for re-election in 1982. League closed the decade supporting Open Meeting laws (“government in the Sunshine”).



Analysis of proposed amendments. (1978)



Open Meetings Promotional. (1988-89)

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1980–2015: Reapportionment

League re-engaged with every decennial census from 1980 on, and helped found Fair Districts Florida in 2008 to amend Florida's Constitution to require fair redistricting. Voters approved the Fair Districts Amendments in 2010. LWVF challenged the Legislature's maps in court in 2012. Multiple lawsuits later, the Court approved the League's proposed new maps for implementation in 2016.



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2016 – 2020

The Florida League continues to educate citizens and advocate on public policy issues ranging from education to natural resources to health care to gun safety. Always on the front burner: election safety and voting rights, as well as continued assaults on Florida's precious wetlands and water resources.



LWVF Board (2020)

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League of Women Voters — Local-Level



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1962 – 2020

The local League was organized in 1962 as the Provisional League of Women Voters of the Playground Area. During the mid-sixties, the local chapter achieved full League status. In 2018 it expanded to include Walton County and changed its name to the League of Women Voters of Okaloosa & Walton Counties. From its inception the local League has been deeply involved in issues related to human resources, land use, energy, water resources and the environment.

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1962–1975: The early years

The Provisional League spent its first year studying local and state government and providing voter services. Subsequently it studied the Okaloosa County School system and surveyed its facilities, which resulted in changes and improvements. By 1970 there was a League member on every advisory board in the county.



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1976–1990: “Peak” League

Changing demographics brought major changes to the League through the eighties, as women entered the work force in greater numbers and the general population aged. Issues of concern expanded to include juvenile justice, child and domestic abuse, childcare availability, elder services and charter government.



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Roaring 90s: Partisanship takes its toll

In the 1990s the GOP finally broke the Democrats' stranglehold on Florida government, and the Okaloosa League began to shrink as partisanship increased. League began its continuing partnership with the Pensacola Bay Area League to support WSRE's televised primary and general election candidate forums every election year.



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2000–2015: League rebuilds and modernizes

League went digital, with a website and Facebook and Twitter accounts. Electronic candidate guides for local, state and municipal elections began in 2011 and have covered each subsequent local and state election. In 2018, the National League approved our expansion to include Walton County and change our name to the League of Women Voters of Okaloosa & Walton Counties.



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1962–2020: LWVOWC's greatest hits

- Study & consensus on multiple issues at local/state/nat'l levels
- Established 3 child care centers for low income working mothers to fill a need for over a decade
- Prompted establishment of land percolation fields that were in use on Eglin through 2017 to reduce effluent discharge into local waterways
- Worked to open Shelter House for domestic abuse victims in Okaloosa & Walton Counties
- Supported passage of the Fair Districts amendments in 2010
- Helped the Okaloosa SoE select new voting equipment in 2015
- Formed the Okaloosa-Walton Solar Co-op to enable locals to "go solar" at lower cost in 2019

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What's next?

In **2020** your League is supporting two referendums that affect Okaloosa County: "YES for Okaloosa Schools" wants county residents to decide if their Superintendent of Schools should be appointed by **and answerable to** the School Board, rather than elected; "School Cents Just Makes Sense" is an effort to revive a 10-year half-cent sales tax initiative to benefit Okaloosa County schools. And League is **also** helping our most vulnerable children and families to achieve better outcomes by supporting the Circuit 1 Community Alliance.

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