



THE OKALOOSA VOTER

The League of Women Voters of Okaloosa County

Nov / Dec 2010

"If you are different from others, you need to act on that difference, if society is to advance."

*Jane Addams
American Sociologist and
Nobel Peace Prize Winner*



In Memoriam:



Norma T. Kerr
(1917-2010)

Long-time League member Norma Kerr passed away on August 21st. A resident of Shalimar since 1982, she was born on Long Island and raised in New York City. She graduated from Spence School and Skidmore College in New York, and was among the first female executives at IBM. Passionate about her community, Norma strove to give back as much as she got. She will be sorely missed by all who knew her.

"Death is not extinguishing the light; it is only putting out the lamp because the dawn has come"

Rabindranath Tagore



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

When the dust settled after the general election, 48.3% of our County's registered voters had cast a ballot. This is .3% above the state average, and much higher than is usually seen in an off-year election. Well done to all who exercised their franchise to make democracy work!

Thanks to all who advocated for the Fair Districts Amendments. Your hard work means Florida now has standards in place for the upcoming redistricting process. With politics removed from the equation, we

expect to see a more equitable result, especially since Florida may pick up more seats in Congress.

Since voters rejected Amendment 1, campaign financing will still be available to candidates for Governor and Cabinet-level posts. Now it's up to the Legislature to provide some statutory relief.

Please take note of our upcoming general meetings and the rest of the articles in this edition of the Okaloosa Voter. Also, feel free to suggest topics for future articles.

Street Gang Activity on November 13th

Please join us at Shalimar Town Hall (#2 Cherokee Rd, across from the Post Office), from 10-noon on Saturday, November 13th, when Deputy Matt Abbot, Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office Street Crimes Unit, will discuss gang activity in the County.

Gang activity may not be rampant in Northwest Florida, but it does

exist. New members are recruited from the ranks of the young, and that's why intervention and education are so important in putting a stop to it. Join us on November 13th to learn how to recognize gang activity and get tips for gang prevention.

Admission is free and the public is welcome. Coffee will be served.

Florida On The Line Conference Calls

Have you been listening in on the LWVF's monthly conference calls? They are typically scheduled for the 3rd or 4th Thursday each month at 4 PM. League members may dial in to hear a variety of guest speakers discussing a range of issues.

Past topics have included "A Look Inside Florida Legislative Session 2010," with LWVF lobbyist Ben Wilcox; "Government: The Owners Manual," with co-author Eric Hand; "The Constitutional Amendments"

with Ben Wilcox and Marilyn Wills; "Shaping Florida's Landscape: The Future of Growth Management," with Charles Pattison, Director of 1000 Friends of Florida, and Tom Pelham, Florida's Department of Community Affairs Secretary; and "The Fight for Fair Districts," with Campaign Chair Ellen Freidin.

League members please check www.lwvokaloosa.org for details and instructions on how to dial in, and join us for the next call.

State League Update

League members across the state chose these priorities for the 2011 legislative session:

1. Government in Florida,
2. Education in Florida, and
3. Natural Resources

Some of the issues of concern in those areas are finance and taxation, ethics, the Sunshine Laws with respect to lawmakers, providing adequate funding to insure quality education, a permanent ban on off-shore drilling, preservation of freshwater resources, and reauthorization of the Department of Community Affairs.

The State League Board has renamed the Lobby Fund; it will be called the Advocacy Fund.

The LWVF is sponsoring a trip to St. Augustine on November 13-14.

All LWVF members and their guests are welcome to attend. You can register online here: www.lwvfla.org/staugustine_safari.htm#st_augustine.

Nominations are now being solicited for State Board. Anyone interested should contact Corinne Miller at ctmil@comcast.net.

Visit www.lwvfla.org for more information.

New Member Spotlight

Beth and Steven Pepper of Fort Walton Beach are the Okaloosa League's youngest members. The newlyweds joined in July and served as escorts for candidates during the WSRE Primary and General Election Rallies in Pensacola.

Beth is a military brat, born in Japan and raised all over the world, who has called Okaloosa County home for the last 14 years. Steven is a Paxton native and graduate of the University of West Florida. Welcome to League!



How much time does it take to be active in League?

Do you have an extra **5 minutes** once a year? In 5 minutes you can:

- Pay your dues.
- Join and make your voice be heard.
- Check www.lwvokaloosa.org.
- Check www.lwvfla.org.
- Check www.lwv.org.

That is being active in League.

Do you have an extra **20 minutes** a month? In 20 minutes you can read what your dues and contributions pay for:

- The Okaloosa Voter
- The Florida Voter
- Monthly General Meetings

That is being active in League.

Legislative Seminar/Convention Combined

For the first time the annual LWVF Legislative Seminar (March 23-24) will be combined with the biennial Convention (March 25-26) in 2011.

Members lobby as a group for our issues during Seminar, and we do the very important League work of

electing new officers, passing our budget and setting program items for the coming year at Convention.

Next year we'll be able to do both in a single trip to Tallahassee, saving both time and money. Save the date and join us in March!

2010 Census Update

With its 76% participation rate, Okaloosa County bested both the national and statewide rate of 74%. This matches the rates achieved during the 2000 Census – a significant achievement in a time of declining survey participation worldwide.

The census results aren't official yet, but projections indicate that

Florida will gain two more seats in Congress, tying us for third place with New York, behind Texas and California.

Since federal aid is also largely distributed based on Census numbers, Florida's growth will mean more dollars for everything from roads to schools, when we get our fair share of our tax money back.

It's Time for Annual Membership Renewal

Members old and new: It's time to renew your membership in LWVOC. We have the lowest annual dues in Florida; our events are free of charge and open to the public; we have an enviable record of community service over our 47-year history; and we have an exciting year planned. League

needs your continued involvement and support to successfully address voter education needs.

Your membership invoice will be mailed soon. Please return it to us at your earliest convenience, so we can continue moving forward.

Remember: Change is inevitable, but progress is not.

Calendar 2010-11

Local Gang Activity

Nov 13th, 10 AM – Noon
at Shalimar Town Hall.
Speaker: Deputy Matt Abbot, Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office Street Crimes Unit.

Holiday Party

Dec 16th: Details TBD

Oil Spill Aftermath

Jan 22nd, 10 AM – Noon
at location TBD. Topic: *Oil Spill's Long-Term Impact*.
Speaker: County Emergency Response Office

Diversity

Feb 12th: Come celebrate diversity in our community. (Location and special guests TBD)

Growth Management

March 19, 10 AM – Noon.
Topic: *Impact of the 7th Special Forces Group and Joint Strike Fighter Arrivals*. (Location and County EDC Speaker TBD)

Annual Meeting

Apr 30th, 10 AM – 1 PM at Ft Walton Yacht Club. (Details TBD)

12th Annual State of the County Report

May 21st: Details TBD



America Recycles Day

Okaloosa County in conjunction with Eglin Air Force Base, the Greater Fort Walton Beach Chamber of Commerce's Green Task Force, McDonald's, and the Santa Rosa Mall will host an **America Recycles Day** event at Santa Rosa Mall in Mary Esther, Florida on **Nov 20th** from 10 AM - 4 PM. The theme will be recycling, conservation and sustainability. Vendors and Organizations wishing to participate should contact Betsy Whitehurst (850-244-2172 x 204 or betsy.whitehurst@am.jll.com). Fees are \$30 for non-profits and \$40 for others. Ronald McDonald will collect Aluminum cans to support Ronald McDonald House. Eco Troubadour Stan Slaughter will entertain throughout the day.