

Nov / Dec 2011

"May your walls know joy,  
may every room hold  
laughter, and every  
window open to great  
possibility."

Mary Anne Radmacher  
American Author and Artist



### Happy Holidays!

The League extends its  
best wishes to everyone  
for a warm and wonderful  
Thanksgiving, a joyous  
holiday and a happy and  
prosperous new year!



### Are you prepared for the 2012 elections?

Florida Election laws have  
changed, so be sure your  
voter registration is up-  
to-date before you cast  
your ballot. Don't be left  
out this presidential elec-  
tion year! Check your  
voter status or get regis-  
tered today by checking  
in at [http://www.beready-  
tovote.org/](http://www.beready-<br/>tovote.org/)



### 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.*

## Seasons Greetings from the President

When did it become unacceptable  
to wish your friends and neighbors  
a happy holiday season? Why has it  
become popular in some circles to  
interpret this cheery, inclusive  
greeting as a secular attack on the  
Christian holiday of Christmas?

Christians are unlikely to forget the  
"reason for the season," and I prefer  
to think of "Happy Holidays" and  
"Seasons Greetings" as the polite

way to extend the warmth of the  
season to everyone, regardless of  
religious affiliation, or lack thereof.  
Considering the sluggish economy  
and high unemployment rate, I also  
believe everyone needs warmth and  
inclusion now more than ever.

So it is without apology that I wish  
you all peace, happiness and joy  
this holiday season and in 2012.

Mary Blackwell

## Mandatory Minimums: Good or Bad? Find out 19 November

Are mandatory minimum sentences  
for drug offenses effective in dis-  
couraging illegal drug abuse? What  
are the economic and social ramifi-  
cations for our community?

To find out, please join League for  
lunch on Saturday, 19 Nov, to hear  
Greg Newburn of [Families Against  
Mandatory Minimums](#) and [State  
Attorney Bill Eddins](#) discuss the  
pros and cons of mandatory mini-  
mums. Mr. Newburn will advocate

for fair and proportionate sentenc-  
ing, and Mr. Eddins will discuss the  
State Attorney's position and the  
drug laws. Join us to learn more  
about this important issue.

The event will be held from noon to  
2:00 p.m., at [Two Trees Restaurant](#)  
(1955 Lewis Turner Blvd, FWB).  
Cost is \$13 (including tax & gratu-  
ity). Space is limited – please RSVP  
by [email](#) or call 621-4088 no later  
than Wednesday, 16 Nov.

## LWVUS Privatization Study

This study's purpose is to identify  
parameters and policy issues to be  
considered regarding proposals to  
transfer federal, state or local gov-  
ernment services, assets and/or  
functions to the private sector. It  
will review the community impact of  
such transfers, and identify strate-  
gies to ensure accountability, trans-  
parency, and preservation of the  
common good. The following study  
papers are available for review on

the [website](#):

- Subcontracting Public Education
- Privatization of Prisons
- Privatization of a Publicly Owned  
Waste Water Treatment Plant
- Deregulation of Railroads
- The Legal Framework of Transpar-  
ency and Accountability within the  
Context of Privatization

Watch the [website](#) for consensus  
meeting updates.

## Candidate University is back!

The [Okaloosa County Supervisor of  
Elections Office](#) is offering its pop-  
ular [Candidate University](#) in a con-  
densed format. The program is  
designed to educate those seeking  
to run for public office – or any  
member of the public interested in  
learning about the process – of the  
appropriate procedures and docu-  
ments required to run for office.

Candidate University normally con-  
sists of a three-hour curriculum  
focused on the fundamentals of  
becoming and being a candidate.  
The upcoming crash course version  
is formatted for 90 minutes. Partici-  
pants will be introduced to each  
step involved in the process includ-  
ing pre-filing, collecting petitions

and qualifying. Campaign pitfalls  
will also be discussed. All par-  
ticipants will receive a certificate  
upon completion of the program.

The Fort Walton Beach session  
will be held from 11:30am-  
1:00pm on Monday, 14 Nov, in  
the 3rd floor conference room of  
the Water & Sewer Building  
(1804 Lewis Turner Blvd). The  
Crestview session will be held  
from 5:30-7:00pm on Tuesday,  
15 Nov, in the 3rd floor confer-  
ence room of the Buddy Brackin  
Building (302 Wilson St N).

To register for the program,  
email [Tiffany Rivera](#) or call her  
at 689-5600.

## Privatization Study Summaries

### Subcontracting Public Education

This paper examines an experiment with privatization conducted by Baltimore City Public Schools.

In 1992 Baltimore signed a 5-year contract with Education Alternatives Inc. Baltimore terminated the contract after 4 years, because EAI-managed schools cost 11% *more* to operate than district-run schools, and reading and math scores of EAI students dropped after the first and second years, while control group test scores increased. (EAI students caught up in the third year.) While overall teaching effectiveness was the same between EAI- and district-run schools, "the promise that EAI could improve instruction without spending more than Baltimore City ... has been discredited."

The Baltimore School Superintendent cited the following lessons learned: anticipate conflict; secure buy-in of all constituencies beforehand; establish specific performance objectives with accountability mechanisms linked to funding; establish a reasonable timeframe for changes to occur, and manage expectations; agree to terms of severance; anticipate the need to renegotiate the contract, as flexibility is needed to resolve unexpected issues.

### Privatization of Prisons

Many states—including Florida—have turned to private prisons to address the issues of prison overcrowding and the capital expense of building new prisons, and to reduce the cost of prison operations. Advocates argue that private prisons can achieve savings by purchasing in bulk, eliminating overtime and employee benefits, and reducing red tape. Opponents argue that a true and accurate comparison between public and private costs and services is difficult and complex, and does not provide a compelling argument for privatizing prison services.

Only a single case study was provided: a horror story of "racketeering, money laundering and conspiracy" in Pennsylvania that involved current and former judges who reportedly received \$2.6 million in kickbacks for sending thousands of juveniles to 2 private detention centers.

A 1999 meta-analysis<sup>1</sup> of 33 cost-effectiveness evaluations of private and public prisons from 24 independent studies (available on our

website) revealed that "private prisons were no more cost-effective than public prisons, and that other institutional characteristics—such as the facility's economy of scale, age, and security level—were the strongest predictors of a prison's daily per diem cost."

Another 1999 study<sup>2</sup> available from the American Behavioral Scientist concludes there is a "pendulum pattern" in public and private systems because "prisons ... cannot be managed as effectively as expected by the media, political elites, or general public regardless of whether they are entirely under government control or whether they involve extensive privatization."

<sup>1</sup> Pratt, Travis C. and Maahs, Jeff, "[Are Private Prisons More Cost-Effective Than Public Prisons?](#)" Crime and Delinquency, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Schneider, Anne Larason, "[Public-Private Partnerships in the U.S. Prison System](#)," American Behavioral Scientist, 1 Sep 99.

### Privatization of a Publicly Owned Waster Water Treatment Plant

Since 1972 the EPA has invested more than \$67 billion in federal funds into publicly owned wastewater treatment works (POTW) across the country. A 1992 executive order directed federal agencies to remove regulatory barriers to privatizing POTWs under their control. This paper is a case study of the first POTW privatized under that executive order.

In 1995 a contractor purchased the POTW in Franklin OH in an agreement that gave the state the option to buy it back in 20 years. Additionally, all plant personnel were retained. The city's rates for wastewater disposal were reduced by 23% during the first year of the contract, and with the exception of energy and chemical costs, future rate increases were limited to increases in the rate of inflation.

The pace of economic development in the area increased after the sale. Stabilized wastewater treatment fees were reportedly a primary incentive for expanding operations of 3 area paper industries and a subsequent increase in jobs. This was closely followed by an expansion of the water distribution system from ~4 million gallons per day up to 10 million. Franklin now has another public/private POTW.

Depending on the terms of the contract, EPA and/or OMB review and approval may or may not be required to sell POTW assets.

## 2011-12 Calendar

### Fair & Proportionate Sentencing Laws

**Nov 19th**, Noon-2:00  
Greg Newburn of Families Against Mandatory Minimums and State Attorney Bill Eddins will discuss mandatory minimum sentencing over lunch at Two Trees Restaurant (1955 Lewis Turner Blvd). RSVP by [email](#) or call 621-4088

### Holiday Party

**Dec 18th**: 2-4:00 pm

### Privatization Study

Study and consensus results are due 1 May 2012, so meetings will be scheduled soon. Watch your email and the [website calendar](#) for details.

### Healthcare Reform: What will it mean?

**Jan**: Find out what's really in the Affordable Care Act, and how it will affect you personally.  
(Date/time/location TBD)

### 2012 Presidential Preference Primary

**Jan 31st**: Democracy is not a spectator sport. All registered Republicans: Make your voices heard at your polling place.

### Human Trafficking

**Feb**: It's a modern day scourge primarily affecting women and children. Find out what you can do about it in Okaloosa County.  
(Date/time/location TBD)

### Beach Nourishment

**March**: Is it sustainable in the long run, economically and environmentally? Is it best for our County? Listen to both sides and decide.  
(Date/time/location TBD)

### Status of Children in Okaloosa County

**April**: It's Child Abuse Prevention Month; come learn how our County is meeting the challenge.  
(Date/time/location TBD)

### Annual Meeting

**Apr 28th**, 10:00am-1:00pm  
(Location TBD)

### State of the County Report

**May**: Local elected officials report and take questions from citizens.  
(Date/time/location TBD)