

Jan / Feb 2011

"God gave us memories that we might have roses in December."

*James M. Barrie  
(attributed)  
Scottish novelist & dramatist*



### In Memoriam:



Nancy L. Mitchell  
(1943-2010)



Anniece P. Cowart  
(1921-2010)

"I have enjoyed this earth, the sadness is that my time here was too short. So, live every day with me in your heart; do good work in my name, and be prepared to see me again. I am on the horizon."



### 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.*



**Watch the website for our Municipal Election E-Voter!**

## Message from the President

It has been a sad Christmas season for the Okaloosa League, as we mourned two of our longest-serving members. Such losses are hard to bear, but the holiday season is a time meant for celebration and joy rather than grief. So, I choose to focus not on what was taken from us, but on what was given.

Anniece Cowart and Nancy Mitchell gave many years of service to our community and League, leaving

behind a legacy of accomplishment and love. Friends and loved ones each have special memories of these two special women, so they may be gone from our sight, but will remain forever in our hearts.

I choose to honor Anniece and Nancy by moving forward as they did, striving to make our state and our community a better place for everyone. I hope you will join me.

*Mary Blackwell*

## Farewell to Two Long-time Leaguers

**Nancy Langham Mitchell** died on December 27, 2010. Born on April 15, 1943, in New Orleans, Nancy graduated from Southeastern Louisiana State University with a B.A. in education, and from Troy State University with a master's in counseling. She taught first grade for 30 years, mostly at Cherokee Elementary at Eglin Air Force Base.

She was involved in many programs of the First Presbyterian Church of Fort Walton Beach, and served her community through the League of Women Voters as president and secretary of her local chapter. She was also a member of the Florida League's board and the Okaloosa County Commission on the Status of Women. Nancy's service as an elections supervisor in several nations of the former Yugoslavia was a highlight of her life, when she and other observers helped implement the first-ever democratic election processes throughout the Balkans.

We will miss Nancy sorely.

**Anniece Polk Cowart** of Fort Walton Beach passed away on November 13, 2010. Born August 16, 1921, in Columbiana AL, she was the youngest of six children. In 1945 she married her Auburn University sweetheart, Allan Burns Cowart, after he returned from service in the Army Air Corps during World War II. They lived in Ecuador, Argentina, Japan, Hawaii and several postings in the U.S.

After settling in Shalimar in 1972, Anniece joined the League of Women Voters. She held several offices in her local League and served on the Florida state board, managing the state League's Education Fund and petitioning legislators as a registered lobbyist for League. She cherished the friendships she made in the League; they gave her great joy and strength.

Anniece is survived by her nieces and by her son Gregory Allan Hutchinson Cowart. She will be remembered and missed by all who knew her.

## January General Meeting: 2010 Oil Spill

Please join us on Saturday, January 22nd, at the Shalimar Town Hall (#2 Cherokee Rd) from 10:00-noon to hear all about Okaloosa County's initial and continuing response to the Deep Horizons oil spill of 2010.

Guest speaker Randy McDaniel is Emergency Management Division Chief for Okaloosa County's

Department of Public Safety. Mr. McDaniel will discuss the measures taken in the aftermath of the spill to minimize effects on our coastline, as well as on-going efforts to keep our beaches clean.

League general meetings are free and open to the public, so bring a friend. Coffee will be served.

## LWVOC Nominating Committee at Work

Get more involved in League in 2011! Our nominating committee is working on the slate of officers and directors for 2011/12, and we also need another member for the Nominating Committee itself.

Please think about how you can help your League by either submitting your name to the committee ([info@lwvokaloosa.org](mailto:info@lwvokaloosa.org)) or saying "yes" when they call you. Member support is key to our success!

## Florida Redistricting Efforts Underway

Over the next two years Florida legislators will be redrawing district boundaries for themselves: 40 in the Senate and 120 in the House – and now 27 for U.S. Congress.

Okaloosa's own Senator Don Gaetz chairs the Senate committee on redistricting, and has declared that a website will be created to allow Florida citizens to access the census data being used by his committee. Additionally, he plans at least 20 public hearings across the state to solicit input.

Details on how Florida's population has shifted are expected in April, midway through the 2011 Legislative session. Data will be fed into computers and analyzed to determine who will be affected by shifting legislative and congressional district boundaries. The Legislature used the Florida Redistricting System (FREDS 2000) database to conduct the last redistricting process after the 2000 census, and will likely use an updated version this time.

FREDS 2000 included detailed info about Florida's population broken down by census boundaries, cities, counties and elections precincts. For each such division, info was available revealing racial and national origin data, political affiliation and voting patterns of the population. FREDS' database also

contained results of the most recent Presidential elections and statewide election results since 1992.<sup>1</sup>

FREDS' sophisticated mapping capabilities enabled Senate or House districts of ideal population size – which could be viewed almost instantly – to be drawn based on any of the characteristics included in the program. This feature may have facilitated gerrymandering in the past, but could prove very useful in the current process.

The Fair Districts constitutional amendments adopted Nov. 2 require districts to be as compact and contiguous as possible while not favoring or handicapping incumbents, political parties or potential candidates. The 1965 Voting Rights Act, protecting the electoral interests of black and Hispanic voters, also applies.

Purging the FREDS' database of information relating to political affiliation and voting patterns would enable the mapping function to be used in accordance with the new Amendments and federal law. In any case, the final map must pass muster with the Florida Supreme Court and federal courts before it can be implemented.

<sup>1</sup> Brief of Attorney General Robert A. Butterworth, *In Re: 2002 Joint Resolution of Apportionment*, Supreme Court of Florida Case No. SC02-194 (p.19).

## Wither the DCA?

The future is cloudy for Florida's Department of Community Affairs, which is responsible for enforcing Florida's growth management laws. Last session the Legislature declined to fund DCA, making it a candidate for elimination in 2011. Gov. Scott also accused DCA of inhibiting development and being a job-killer during his campaign.

Now Gov. Scott has named Billy Buzzett, St. Joe Company VP of strategic planning, as secretary of the DCA, saying he "is focused ... on efforts to increase investments in Florida and spur job creation."

Buzzett previously served on a transition team that recommended merging DCA with the departments of Environmental Protection and Transportation, and the business community welcomed his appointment. Audubon of Florida executive director Eric Draper also praised Buzzett, claiming he "has a personal feeling for the specialness of Florida's environment." Draper fur-

ther predicted a DCA merger – opposed by environmentalists, who fear it would dilute protection of Florida's natural resources – would be a nonstarter in this session.

Departing DCA Secretary Tom Pelham's final report shows DCA has approved planning amendments permitting more than a million new housing units and 2.7 billion square feet of nonresidential construction. It would take decades to use up this existing development capacity, but DCA critics now anticipate a reversal of the focus on funneling growth into urban areas and the opening of rural areas to development.

League fought last session for continued DCA funding, and will redouble efforts this session to both fund the agency and prevent a merger. It will be up to Florida's citizens to let their legislators know that we value our environment and do **not** want to see it sacrificed for short-term economic gains.

## Calendar 2010-11

### Oil Spill Aftermath

**Jan 22nd**, 10 AM – Noon at Shalimar Town Hall, #2 Cherokee Rd. Topic: *Oil Spill Response & Impact*. Speaker: Randy McDaniel, County Emergency Management Division Chief.

### Black History Month

**Feb 12th**: Come celebrate Black History in our community. (Location and special guests TBA)

### 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 TBA)

### Annual Meeting

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

### 12th Annual State of the County Report

**May 21st**: Details TBA



## Message from LWVF

I want to extend our heartfelt thanks to each and every one of you for your remarkable giving of time, talent, and passion to our mutual passion: good government and citizenship. Our state is a better place because of you, our local communities are better for your vigilance and contributions, and our world can only benefit when people combine to improve humankind's imprint on this world, our mutual home.

*Deirdre MacNab  
President*

## LWVEF Receives Redistricting Grant

The National League Education Fund has received grant funding from the Open Society Institute to execute a targeted redistricting effort in 2011. As part of this effort, the LWVEF will work closely with several state Leagues – including Florida! -- to support their work to promote a fair and transparent redistricting process.