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LWV Diversity Policy

The League of Women Voters recognizes that diverse perspectives are important and necessary for responsible and representative decision making. The LWVPBA affirms its commitment to actively seek diversity in its membership, leadership and programs.



ECARE

Every Child a Reader

February 21, 2015

Tryon Branch Library, Langley Road
Coffee 10:15 am - Program 10:30 am

The local Education Committee continues its emphasis on education and the February 21 monthly meeting will focus on local efforts to improve education. A representative of Every Child A Reader Escambia (ECARE) will present the program.

"ECARE stands for Every Child a Reader in Escambia. It is a non-profit organization which is business led, a volunteer driven collaborative that mobilizes stakeholders in business, economic development, education, social services and the community to improve overall birth to five early learning results.

It is our goal to build a strong foundation of students entering the education system ready to learn. Together we can develop a prepared workforce that contributes to economic growth and development in Escambia County through effective early childhood development."

Objectives:

- To identify children birth to age four in the Ready Zone, with an initial focus on children who are enrolled in early care and education programs.
- To leverage existing community resources by focusing volunteer efforts in the Ready Zone; promoting the elementary school as a resource to parents of both enrolled and future students; and encouraging participation in existing parent and provider education, support and involvement activities.
- To assess early literacy development three times per year by administering the Florida Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Assessment to four year olds. Assessment results will guide Project Ready efforts.
- To empower all stakeholders- teachers, parents, early learning providers, school leaders and community organizations- with the data they need to make informed decisions regarding educational, developmental and social services for young children and the direction of community resources.
- To utilize data including kindergarten readiness scores, FCAT scores, promotion rates and on-time high school graduation rates to develop a research based Ready Model that can be successfully replicated in any elementary school zone in Escambia County and the state of Florida.

ECARE has focused this strategic, results-oriented pilot project in downtown Pensacola to improve kindergarten readiness by focusing efforts on children, their parents, and guardians and early education providers. Through *Project Ready* ECARE enlists *Reading Pal* volunteers to work individually with students, hosts family nights and promotes professional development for providers.

League of Women Voters

Rise Above the Mark

Andrea Walker, 723-2112

Paula Montgomery facilitated the "Rise Above the Mark" education program on February 2, at the Pensacola Public Library. She introduced the program by encouraging those present to let elected officials know their education concerns and to get involved in any way they can. Objectives of the program were to determine who's doing what for local education and to fill in the gaps in the support for our schools by expanding and linking up.

Finland has become the standard of excellence for comparison, and although the school systems in the U.S. are not without fault, Montgomery assures us the U.S. schools are not failing.

According to the information presented, the larger problems in our systems stem from the move to operate schools like businesses, allowing too much government control, and taking control away from professional educators. Standardized testing, charter schools, and vouchers contribute to the problems by pulling resources from public schools.

"Rise Above the Mark" is an hour-long documentary narrated by Peter Coyote. It is centered on the changes that have taken place in Indiana as the state legislature has assumed greater control of public education. One of the teachers interviewed explains "the legislators have beaten us down." She hopes "we find a way to fight our way back to the top" and continues "Morale has never been lower in public schools." Teachers agree "the bar in education is high and must never be lowered." A social studies teacher notes "Education provides a shared sense of culture." Unanimously, the teachers interviewed protested that testing doesn't have to be paper and pencil.

"Standardized testing is the new bully in school."

According to the narrator, "Standardized testing is the new bully in school." Standardized testing rewards conformity, punishes creativity and originality, and sends the wrong message. Successful school systems use tests sparingly. Standardized testing was invented as a diagnostic, but is expensive and pulls resources that should be used in other areas, for example, helping teachers improve themselves. We should be motivating, exciting, and inspiring students.

School choice, charter schools, and vouchers do not achieve different results if they serve the same students. Public schools do just as well.

Kids need principals and teachers to believe in them

and who can give them time. Principals and teachers need time to help students and be mentors. Principals are not CEOs. Public education is not a business and should not be run by a corporation. To do so is antithetical to education. People in the schools should be in control; responsibility and authority should be aligned.

Public education must generate well-rounded individuals who value art, music, and physical fitness. Students need outlets and must be challenged to dream. Curiosity is the essence of human existence. One measure of success is when kids ask questions. Education is a vital part of our economy, the most important infrastructure. Government must get out of the way to make the U.S. the academic leader of the world.

Following the film, Rosemary Hays-Thomas fielded questions from the audience. Escambia Superintendent Malcolm Thomas agreed with the points made in the film. He believes we are over-regulated and the loss of control is important. Tests are powerful tools that are misused. Thomas has been meeting with legislators and is concerned about the latest test which will be administered in 60 days. "We don't even know yet how the test will be scored."

When asked to respond to the education budget, Thomas pointed to the fact that the current general fund is the same amount as in 2002. Almost all of the additional money allocated since that date has been used to hire teachers to meet the class size amendment. Although Florida ranks between 45th and 50th in funding for public schools, the Escambia system has never cut art, music, or P.E.

Good teachers are identified by observation (as opposed to test results). Fifty percent of teacher evaluation comes from test scores; Thomas would like to see that number reduced. Florida Senator Legg has introduced a bill that reduces the test score to 40 percent.

When asked about the differences between Escambia and Santa Rosa County schools, Thomas pointed out that the two counties are quite different. The median income in Santa Rosa is 15% higher than in Escambia. Additionally, in Escambia County more than one third of the schools have 80% of students on free or reduced lunches. Five schools in the county have 100% of their students on free lunches.

We must break out of the paradigm of the current culture of low expectations. Citizens can help by becoming tutors and mentoring through Take Stock in Children. Citizens must also be wary of the motive of legislators.

<https://riseabovethemark.com/>

<http://www.takestockinchildren.org/local-programs/category/escambia>

Two recommended books on the current state of education are by Diane Ravitch. They are: *Reign of Terror* and *Death and life of the Great American School System*.

Restoration of Voting Rights Petition Drive

LWVF has joined a statewide coalition, *Floridians for a Fair Democracy*, to gather petitions for a constitutional amendment in 2016. The proposal, if approved by 60% of the voters, would automatically restore voting rights for felons who have completed their sentences/probation/parole and met all other legal requirements. Individuals who have been convicted of murder or sexual offenses are not included in this proposal and must apply individually through the clemency board for the restoration of rights.

The LWVF program position, following study and consensus statewide, supports the restoration of voting rights automatically rather than continuing the lengthy (7 years after completion of a sentence to initiate the process for most felonies) delay as currently exists in Florida.

Most states automatically restore voting rights when one's sentence has been completed. However, Florida is one of three states, along with Iowa and Kentucky, with the most restrictive procedures for the restoration of voting rights. In our state, there are 1.5 million individuals who cannot vote and each case must be considered individually by the Clemency Board, composed of the governor, chief financial officer, attorney general and commissioner of agriculture. This group meets periodically during the year to consider individual cases for the restoration of rights.

Floridians for a Fair Democracy is working to obtain more than 68,000 valid petitions, signed by Florida voters, by the end of March so that the Florida Supreme Court can review the proposal. This is the first step in the process for proposed amendments that are initiated by citizens.

We would like to have each member of our local League sign a petition, along with your family members and friends. Our outreach encompasses groups throughout the greater metropolitan area and includes civic and religious organizations, minority communities, extended family and social groups and the legal community. This is an opportunity for you to make a difference!

You may go to [the link to download the petition](#). Complete your name, address, date of birth and then add your signature and the date of signing. If you cannot download the petition, copies will be available at the monthly League meeting on February 21. Don't hesitate to call us if you need petitions, if you have questions or if your petition needs to be picked up. The League will collect the petitions and forward them to the coalition.

If you are willing to assist in getting signatures, please contact us.

LWVPBA Co-chairs for the Restoration of Voting Rights
Vivian Faircloth vfaircloth@iname.com 438-5539
Janet deLorge jgdel@aol.com 607-9170

JOIN THE FIGHT FOR VOTING RIGHTS!

*More than 1.5 million Floridians have lost their right to vote.
It's time to give all citizens a voice and a stake in our communities.*

★ **What:** A 30-minute training to activate community support for the much-needed amendment to Florida's constitution to restore voting rights to individuals with former felony convictions

When: Thursday, February 12th @ 10:30am & 5:30pm

Where: Lexington Terrace Community Center
700 S. Old Corry Field Road
Pensacola, FL 32507

Sponsored by:



Two 30 - Minute training workshops
Thursday, February 12th, 10:3- am & 5:30 pm
Lexington Terrace Community Center
700 S. Old Corry Field Road, 32506

Escambia Youth Justice Coalition movie screening "15 TO LIFE" Kenneth's Story

Friday, February 13, 2015 6 - 8 pm
Greater True Vine Baptist church
Rev. Isaac Williams, Senior Pastor
130 North Pace Blvd, 32505

The Legislative Session is almost here so we need to educate ourselves and the community on possible policy changes to juvenile justice.

In March, the Florida legislature may hear a bill directed at reforming the laws that send kids into the adult criminal justice system. Come learn about the issue so we are all well informed before calling and meeting with our legislators.

Join the Escambia Youth Justice Coalition (EYJC) at this special event.

Note: Be sure to "LIKE" the Escambia Youth Justice Coalition page on Facebook!



League Co-President Haley Richards and speaker John Clark

January League Meeting Report Council on Aging

Andrea Walker, 723-2112

John Clark President of the Council on Aging of West Florida (COAWF) discussed aging issues and services at the meeting January 17th. In Florida the population of 4.6 million people over age 60 makes the state number one in the percent of older people in the population. Many of those residents live at the poverty level, especially in Escambia County. This year the Pensacola Area Chamber of Commerce has adopted the expansion of Medicaid as an issue to pursue because Escambia County rates near the bottom in health care.

The growing number of aged persons presents challenges and an urgent need to address long term (not necessarily institutional) care issues. Continued care through life affects the national budget which has seen a rise in Medicare from \$2.5 billion to 5.5 billion.

In Florida, only about 5 percent of people live in nursing homes, fewer than other states. In the mid-seventies, Florida began funding Community Care for the Elderly (CCE), and in the late eighties, Florida began implementing the Medicaid Waver Program to use Medicaid dollars for in-home care. This policy is no longer in effect, and we began to turn dollars over to private agencies that operate for profit. In March 2014, we became part of that system and all people were transferred.

Most services continue through non-profits and COAWF has been a 501(c)(3) since 1972. Services provided by our local COA help seniors stay at home and out of nursing homes. Services provide nutrition through Meals on Wheels along with socialization through the Senior Dining Program for citizens over 60. Case management serves individuals in a variety of health-related ways. The Retreat at 875 Royce Street, open Monday - Friday provides a pleasant and stimulating day experience by trained staff and offers field trips as well.

CCE responds to individual cases and assists the family in locating and providing basic needs of nutrition, caregiver respite, consumables, and homemaking. CCE services can make the difference in staying home or entering an institution. No one wants to go to a nursing home. Not only does staying home save tax payer dollars, but people are happier at home.

Housing and transportation are also big issues for the elderly. Funding assistance is available in addition to private pay. Other programs include Foster Grandparent and Mentor Service and Senior Companions. COAWF uses volunteers and is a Better Business Bureau Accredited Charity.

A number of organizations and groups all over the state support the COA, which has hired a lobbyist. Groups should contact the legislature to support COA. The Florida COA recommends an increase in funding for Florida's General Revenue Home Care Programs of \$11.2 million to serve seniors and delay

institutionalization.

With a for profit adjustment which takes state dollars, managed care is now offered by Sunshine State Health Plan as well as American Health Care (Humana). Accountability of private companies is a huge issue, and reimbursements are being cutting back. Clients become system-managed within the private companies. On the other hand, COA is audited, monitored and scrutinized more thoroughly than private companies.

Services are available throughout the state, and an important goal is to keep people out of institutional care and to slow the growth of Medicaid expenses. Statewide 55,000 people are on the waiting list for services. Locally individuals should call John Clark to apply for any particular service because eligibility varies. According to Clark, our community has many needs, but Escambia County has an incredible team.

Website: www.coawfla.org Phone: 432-1475 ◇

Legislative Priorities for Action

The League has many positions from which to take action but establishing a focus for our advocacy is a critical responsibility of all the League Boards. We cannot be all things to all people and remain an effective voice in any legislative body. In setting legislative priorities the Board considers a number of factors the most important of which is focusing League effort where it can have the greatest impact.

The LWVUS legislative priorities are ranked in two tiers. *The first tier priorities are:*

- ★ voting rights
- ★ election administration
- ★ money in politics

the second tier priorities are:

- ★ climate and environmental protection
- ★ immigration
- ★ health care including reproductive choice

LWVUS legislative priorities materials [here](#).

- ★ Expansion of access to health care using federal funds appropriated for that purpose
- ★ Containment of further efforts to expand school choice programs without associated accountability, specifically charter schools and vouchers
- ★ Enactment of online voter registration
- ★ Implementation of Amendment 1 with a balanced apportionment between land acquisition and management of natural resources

Please click [here to](#) offer your suggestions on how you feel **Amendment 1** funding should be spent. Thank you for all you do to make democracy work!

Plastic, Paper or Reusable?

Carolyn Kolb, 939-8653



The Natural Resources Committee has undertaken an examination of the worldwide use of plastic bags and plastic bottles and the accompanying hazards associated with the disposal of them. Globally, 288,000 tons of plastic are produced each year and 10% ends up in the oceans of the world. According to one estimate, there are 46,000 pieces of plastic in one square mile of ocean.

Marine life is especially vulnerable to discarded plastic as plastic bags are mistaken for food by jellyfish and large sea animals with tragic results. This same tragedy occurs with large sea birds. One estimate points out that plastic debris is responsible for the deaths of 100 million marine animals each year.

Some facts related to the use of plastics:

- Americans purchase 28 billion plastic bottles of water each year and each reusable water bottle keeps 167 bottles out of the environment.
- Each reusable bag keeps 400 plastic bags from being used.
- Plastic straws are among the top debris found on beaches.
- Plastic was found in the stomachs of 15% of 65 hatching loggerhead turtles in a FDEP study.
- One hundred cities on six continents regulate the use of plastic bags.
- The percentage of single-use plastic bags in Los Angeles was reduced by 94% after the city banned their use.

In 2008, the Florida Legislature passed a law banning local cities, counties and municipalities from imposing restrictions on the use of plastic bags. At that time, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection was given the task to report on the status of the use of plastic by the state's residents. They reported 90 billion plastic bags were used in 2003 and only 12% of those were recycled. Plastic waste hampers recycling and waste management systems, storm water management and litter control. Plastic bags are the Number One problem at landfills.

Our committee has gathered enough facts to raise awareness and educate the public on the potential hazards related to plastic use and will partner with other agencies and organizations on this subject. ♦

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Public Workshop

The League of Women Voters Natural Resource Committee in partnership with Earth Ethics, Florida Clean Water Network and the Panhandle Watershed Alliance will host a public workshop to discuss the Pensacola Beach Waste Water Treatment facility and Water Quality. The meeting is being held at the Santa Rosa Island Authority Conference Room, 1 Via deLuna, beginning at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 12th. Contact Mary Gutierrez at mary.community@cox.net for information.

NATURALIZATION CEREMONIES

The Northwest Florida Federal Court in Pensacola hosts naturalization ceremonies for naturalized citizens several times each year. These events are held when approximately 100 individuals have met the requirements for citizenship. Federal Judge Casey Rodgers coordinates these ceremonies and stresses the important contributions these new citizens can make in our democratic system.

Each new citizen is given a packet of materials, including the League's Guide to Elected Officials, which includes information for contacting elected officials. The League has two assigned seats at each ceremony and all of our members are strongly encouraged to attend. Ceremonies during 2015 will be held on the following dates: February 20, April 17, July 24, Sept 18 and Nov 13.

Contact Gene Feicht at 479-3352 and welcome new citizens to the United States. ♦

Tell Your Representative to Move Forward a Florida Solution for Extending Health Care Coverage

ACTION: Please contact your Representative: Call 1-(850)488-1234 or click [here](#) to find your Representative's contact information.

Both the business community and a bi-partisan coalition of community and political leaders are speaking out to say: Let's find a unique, Flexible Florida Solution and move forward.

Calendar

February

- 9 Monday, 8:30 am
Escambia County Planning Board Meeting on LDC changes to wetlands. Central Office Complex, 3363 West Park Place. Contact Mary Gutierrez for information. See **Action** alert 2/6/15.
- 9 Monday, 11 am - 1 pm, **Voters Service Committee**, Downtown Library on Spring Street. Members are welcome. Contact Charlyle Parrish at 932-0854.
- 12 Thursday, 10:30 am & 5:30 pm, **Voting Rights Restoration**, Lexington Terrace Community Center, 700 S. Old Corry Field Road. Contact Janet deLorge, 607-9071 or Vivian Faircloth, 438-5539 for details.
- 12 Thursday, 5:30 pm, **Natural Resource Committee**, public workshop to discuss Pensacola Beach Waste Water Treatment Facility & Water Quality at Santa Rosa Island Authority Conference Room, 1 Via DeLuna. Information: contact Mary Gutierrez, mary.community@cox.net.
- 14 Saturday, **Birthday of the LWV**. [Celebrate Making Democracy Work®](#) for 95 years.



Board of Directors National League of Women Voters - Chicago Convention February 1920

- 14 Saturday, 2:30 pm **Education Committee** at Paula Montgomery's 641 Connell Drive, 438-8891.
- 17 Tuesday, 10:00 am **International Relations Committee: Great Decisions** at Azalea Trace. Henry Trimble, *Privacy in Digital Age*, Information: contact Gene Feicht at 479-3352
- 18 Wednesday, 12:30 -2:30 pm **Natural Resources Committee** Tryon Branch Library, 1200 Langley Ave. Information: contact [Mary Gutierrez](#) or [Carolyn Kolb](#).
- 20 Friday 10:00 am, **Naturalization Ceremony**, Northwest Florida Federal Court, One North Palafox St.
- 21 Saturday, 10:15 coffee, 10:30 am program. **General League Meeting, Every Child A Reader** (ECARE).New Tryon Branch Library, 1200 Langley Ave. (See page 1)
- 23 Monday, 5:30 pm **Board Meeting** at the Downtown Library on Spring Street in the Conference Room. Members are always welcome.

March

- 21 Saturday, 10:15 am coffee, 10:30 program **General Meeting**, Speaker: Rosemary Hays-Thomas, *10 Myths about the Gender Wage Gap: What Women and Men Should know about the Money they Earn*. New Tryon Branch Library, 1200 Langley Ave.

The 2015 Nominating Committee had its first meeting on Monday, February 2, 2015. The members of the committee invite you to contact any member of the committee with questions about its work, about the positions for which nominations will be made, about the job description for positions to be filled, and with your recommendations. If there is a position for which you would be willing to be considered, we would especially like to hear from you. And, if you wish to suggest names for the Committee to consider, please let us know. The next meeting of the Nominating Committee has been scheduled on Thursday, February 12th.

Don Freeman, Chairman 477-6626, donandina@cox.net
 Rosemary Hays-Thomas, 477-5560, rht1@cox.net
 Paula Montgomery, 468-8891, montpns@aol.com
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