

Making Democracy Work®

The Voter

Volume 66 Issue 6 February 2016

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"State of the Cities"

Saturday, February 20, 2016

Tryon Library, 1200 Langley Ave. Program 10:30 am

ayors from the five municipalities in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties will discuss progress and problems

in their cities in a "State of the Cities" discussion at the February meeting of League of Women Voters Pensacola Bay Area. The panelists will include: Mayor Freddie McCall Sr, Town of Century; Matt Dannheisser, Gulf Breeze Mayor; Jurvin Qualis, Mayor of the Town of Jay; Wesley Meiss, Mayor of the City of Milton and Keith Wilkins, Assistant City Administrator of the City of Pensacola.

School to Prison Pipeline III Report

by Paula Montgomery, 438-8891

The third meeting of the School to Prison Pipeline series was a panel discussion on January 25th at Franco's Italian Restaurant. The panelists were: Chip Simmons, former Pensacola Police Chief; Amir Whitaker, Southern Poverty Law Center Attorney; Keyontay Humphries, ACLU Community Organizer; Dale Tharp, Senior Commander of Community Services of the Escambia Sheriff's Department; and Sergeant Gary Venuti, Okaloosa County Sheriff's Department Supervisor of Youth Services. The moderator was Lisa Nellessen-Lara, Executive Editor of the Pensacola News Journal.

The discussion was centered on the interface of the schools with law enforcement. A few years ago the Southern Poverty Law Center sued five Florida counties for deplorable records of in-school arrests of juveniles, as well as expulsions and out-of-school suspensions. Escambia and Okaloosa Counties were among those sued. Since then, Okaloosa County, by executive policy, has dramatically improved its method of handling school discipline. Escambia County has been slower to change. Last year Escambia County arrested 284 students in schools while Okaloosa County arrested 28.

The Sheriff's Department representatives from both counties agreed that they did not want to arrest juveniles. The Escambia County Deputy stated that the wronged party frequently insisted on arrest rather than other methods of discipline. The wronged party in the case of theft or damage of school property is the school. The wronged party in a student fight would be the injured student's family. When the wronged party insisted, the School Resource Officer had no alternative but to arrest.

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Haley Richards



Ellen K Roston

he legislature is in session, and as a League member you should be receiving the weekly Capitol Report from the League office in Tallahassee. In addition, as a

Co Presidents' Message

Tallahassee. In addition, as a League member you will also be receiving Action Alerts, and we ask that you respond to the Alerts. Watch your in-boxes for the Capitol Reports highlighting the status of our Legislative Priorities every Friday during the session.

The League of Women Voters is the most respected and effective grassroots organization in the country. We earned this mighty reputation through the tireless work of our members.

The League was already working as the new year kicked off with the 2016 Florida Legislative Session in Tallahassee. The Natural Resources Committee is lobbying the state legislature to move specific legislation out of committees that would enable local governments to ban plastic bags. Stay tuned for ways you can lobby on this important issue!

On January 20th, the Money in Politics Study Committee, chaired by Elizabeth King, conducted a consensus meeting and submitted our input for this LWVUS National Study. This study followed a November study and consensus meeting on Amending the US Constitution. Our local consensus will be compiled along with input from Leagues throughout the nation to determine League positions on these two national issues.

The Education Committee, chaired by Paula Montgomery, held the third dinner and panel discussion in the School to Prison Pipeline series on January 25th at Franco's. The topic of School Discipline and the role of School Resource officers was discussed by a panel, representing the Southern Poverty Law Center, School Resource officers from Okaloosa County and Escambia County Sheriff's office, Community Youth Advocate and former Pensacola Police Chief.

Have you attended a local governmental meeting recently? Whether you answered YES or NO, consider attending these meetings on behalf of the League. The League board wants to resurrect an Observer Corps which consists of League members observing local governmental meetings and reporting on the proceedings to the board or membership. If you are interested in attending one meeting a month and reporting, contact Ellen Roston via email

ekroston@aol.com. Observers are needed for City Council, County Commission, Planning Board, and School Board meetings, etc. Help us keep a closer eye on what our local governments are doing! The Gulf Coast Citizen Diplomacy Council invited the League to meet with a group of international visitors on transparency in government to be held on February 9th. There will be representatives from countries across the Middle East and North Africa. League members plan to brief the delegation on the mission of the League and present the actions of the League that won the battle over Redistricting in Florida. The discussion will include other League actions in our ongoing efforts to keep government responsive to the citizenry.

In the January 21 edition of the League Update, LWVUS President Elisabeth MacNamara reminded us that "millions of voters across the country will vote in the presidential primaries, which begin in just a few weeks. Fewer voters tend to turn out for primary elections and caucuses despite the important impact they have on elections." Direct your family and friends to the LWVF website BeReadytoVote.org to ensure everyone is registered, prepared and a voter.

Ellen and I encourage our League members to get engaged in an upcoming project, activity, committee, or recommend a member for nomination to the Board. Everyone joins the League to make a difference and this year find your passion to MAKE DEMOCRACY WORK!

SAVE THE DATE

LWV Pensacola Bay Area 66th Annual Meeting Saturday, May 7, 2016 at the Pensacola Yacht Club.

Ellen & Haley

Have you checked out our Facebook page lately?

See it here!



Painless League Fundraiser

or several years our local League has participated in a **Rewards Program** at *Office Depot*. When you make a purchase, the only requirement is to give the clerk the League phone number, **850-937-7769**.

In that way, our League will get credit for your purchase. This is a simple and painless way to financially assist the League when purchases are made.

If you forget to credit the League at the time of purchase and have your receipt, please contact Vivian Faircloth for details on crediting the League account. \heartsuit

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Two New Constitution Positions

ast week, the national Board approved two new positions. The position on Constitutional **Conventions** is particularly relevant at this time because the Balanced Budget Amendment (BBA) is close to achieving the number of states needed to require Congress to call a constitutional convention. Our new position calls for safeguards on any constitutional convention, so if your state legislature is working on this issue, we strongly urge you to join the debate.

LWVUS has just issued a press release explaining our new position. We simply cannot afford to have a chaotic or unrepresentative process for amending the Constitution. Before we head into uncharted territory that could affect our basic principles of government and our individual rights, we need to make sure some basic rules are in place. Any calls for a constitutional convention must have built-in protections to ensure it is not hijacked by a small minority.

The two new issue positions were part of *Key* Structures of Democracy. The positions are based on consensus reached by the 246 local and state Leagues and ILOs who participated in the Constitutional Amendment Process study. We now have a position outlining considerations for evaluating constitutional amendment proposals and a position calling for safeguards that must be in place to govern the constitutional convention process of proposing amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

Because of all of your work, the League is tooled to help shape the course of important public policy decisions now and well into the future. \heartsuit

Open Primary Study Progress Ray Hudkins, 346-5199

he statewide Open Primary study is making steady progress. The purpose of the study is to determine if Florida's closed primary system is a hindrance to improving voter turnout. The study includes five phases of research, interviews, and surveys: (1) Supervisor of Elections (SOE) intervi Oews; (2) Political party interviews; (3) Other state league interviews; (4) a Millennial survey; and (5) An in-depth analysis of alternative primary election systems.

The SOE phase is complete. Twenty-four SOEs were interviewed. Jo Mathews and Ray Hudkins completed seven of those interviews. What did we learn? Ballot content is very important for voter turnout. Robo calls and negative advertising drive lower voter turnout. Five of the counties interviewed have consistently achieved greater than 40% voter turnout in primaries because they are small, have a strong sense of community and consider it their civic duty to vote.

Vivian Faircloth and Sharon Henderson have joined the local League study team They will interview the Minneapolis and Pierce County Washington Leagues to learn about advantages/disadvantages of *Instant Runoff Voting* (IRV).

Jo and Ray are wrapping up interviews of Escambia and Santa Rosa County political parties. We also interviewed the state party chair of the Florida Independent Party.

Ray has engaged with the Ohio State LWV. They are conducting a very similar study and will share fact-based information from their study.

Jo will be focusing on the Arizona League to learn about their experience with a Hybrid (Partially open – partially closed) type primary and the possibility of a Top Two Open Primary versus an IRV primary.

The study timeline has been adjusted to account for statewide League participation. We expect to have detailed study kits and consensus questions in the fall of 2016 with consensus meetings in January 2017.

Continued from page 1...Schools



Paula Montgomery "pulls together" the information learned in the prior School to Prison Pipeline forums.

Keyontay Humphries pointed out that the cost of issuing a civil citation is about \$200 while the cost of an arrest is around \$4000. Civil citations are an alternative to arrest for misdemeanors under certain circumstances. Some parents refuse to sign these because they feel that their child is not guilty of anything. They do not realize that the civil citation will keep the child out of the criminal justice system.

There are a lot of ways in which the Escambia County treatment of children could be improved. This is an issue that needs further action. The Education committee will continue to look for ways to bring this problem to public attention and finally to get action. If you are interested in this project, please contact Paula Montgomery, 438 8891. The next meeting of the Education committee will be on February 6th at Paula's house (641 Connell Drive, Pensacola) at 2:30 PM.

Read the Fact Sheet on School Arrests in Escambia County here. The material was compiled by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

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United Nations Climate Talks - COP 21 (Paris, France)

Mary Gutierrez, Executive Director, Earth Ethics, Inc. Co-Chair, Natural Resources Portfolio

or years global leaders have been promising a new climate agreement through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP). This year, the UNFCCC/COP 21 took place in Paris, France from November 30- December 11, 2015 with the goal of a legally binding agreement on climate change anticipated to be signed by world leaders. This year they finally delivered; an agreement was signed on December 12, 2015.

I am grateful to have been part of this historical event. As a member of a delegation of 33, representing the states of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas, we saw COP 21 as an opportunity for voices, typically ignored or overlooked, to be heard. And heard they were! Gulf South Rising, our grassroots effort, shared our unique Gulf South perspective with other global communities on the frontlines of climate change.

As part of the Global South, we have already been experiencing severe environmental and social inequities that have heavily influenced climate change impacts and injustices along the Gulf of Mexico. From hurricanes to oil-drilling disasters, deepwell injection to sea level rise, our stories resonated with others in the Global South. It was obvious that our stories are the stories of others.

I was able to observe the negotiations as they were taking place. I was one of two delegates from our group given special authorization to attend these meetings. The process was interesting - what was negotiable/what was not, what the deadlines were, what is currently being done, what were the economic impacts. There was very little discussion of the environmental, human and non-human impacts and, with my background, I found this very disturbing. Regardless, there was a sense of urgency to do the right thing. Despite the signing of an agreement, our time is limited on whether whatever action is taken will be effective. I still question whether we waited too long to start the process.

In Florida, the change will be difficult as our Governor will not allow the use of the term climate change and the Attorney General is suing the Obama administration over the implementation of the Clean Power Plan. Although the plan is imperfect, some action is better than doing nothing.

The conference reaffirmed that the greatest impacts of climate change are being created by the most developed nations, including the United States. Not only are we impacting areas of the United States, we are impacting other countries through our actions. In fact, the greatest impacts are currently being felt by islands and less developed countries that have to address sea level rise, loss of agriculture, increased and/or damaging weather events and numerous other atrocities. These are areas where the carbon footprint is relatively insignificant. We have a moral and ethical obligation to be quick and effective in our actions. We can no longer wait to address a global issue that has significant environmental, economic and public health impacts associated with it.

Although the agreement has been signed, our work is now just beginning.

Join Earth Ethics, Inc. on Friday, February 26th beginning at 11:30 a.m. at the downtown library located at 239 N Spring Street. "From Pensacola to Paris and Back" is a discussion of the trip to Paris by Earth Ethics Executive Director Mary Gutierrez for the UN Climate Change Conference. What happens now? How do we move forward as a community and a nation? Learn what you can do to make a change.

Please RSVP to mary.earthethics@cox.net if you plan to attend.

Fracking Legislation Opposed

The League of Women Voters of Florida OPPOSES LEGISLATION PROPOSED TO PERMIT FRACKING OF ANY TYPE IN FLORIDA FOR REASONS OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND PROTECTION OF WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY.

"This Changes Everything"

Join us at Pensacola Cinema Art located at 117 E Government Street for the viewing of the critically acclaimed documentary, *This Changes Everything*, by Naomi Klein. The film documents people and communities adversely impacted by climate change.

There will be two viewings of the film, Friday, March 4 at 7 pm and Saturday, March 5 at 1 pm. You must register through *eventbrite* and bring your ticket to the theater. Tickets for the film are \$5.

Need more information? Contact Mary Gutierrez, mary.earthethics@cox.net.

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Voter Service Report

Charlyle Parrish, Chair, 932-0854

he Voter Service Committee will be meeting monthly throughout this "election" cycle. Our emphasis will be not only assisting new voter registrations and changes in voter registration but educating on the importance of voting, making sure that all voters know when and where to vote and the resources that they will need. Please assist us in getting out the word as to the dates of the first election and the target dates for voter registrations or voter record updates:

Presidential Preference Primary: Tuesday, March 15, 2016. **Books close** for new registrations and party changes: Tuesday, February 16, 2016.

Don't forget that this is a "closed primary" election so you will be able to vote only for candidates in the party (Democrat and Republican) in which you are registered.

BeReadytoVote.org is your "go to" web page for information on your readiness for the upcoming election. Please share this information with friends and neighbors. Many people may have questions and you want to be ready to assist them.

Three ways to vote:

- √ By Mail: Absentee ballots can be requested from your local Supervisor of Elections. This is a great way to vote in your home, without pressure. Just a mere stamp and your ballot is on its way to be counted.
- √ Early voting: Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties will be conducting early voting -including a Saturday and a Sunday for those who may not be available on weekdays.
 - Escambia County: <u>Escambiavotes.com</u>
 - ✓ Santa Rosa County: votesantarosa.com
- √ Vote on Election Day, Tuesday, March 15 in your precinct.

Thank you to Carol Scott and Janet de Lorge who conducted a voter registration event on Sunday, January 24th at the Belleview Assembly of God. They assisted with 4 new registrations, including a pre-eighteen year old, and 3 requests for record updates.

Janet deLorge, Vivian Faircloth and Ellen Roston conducted voter registration at Fortis Institute in early February. Seven new registrations were completed as well as three record updates. Staff at Fortis expressed appreciation that the League offered registration at the site. They indicated this was a 'First' for their school.

Our next committee meeting will be Monday, February 8th at 1:00pm at the Pensacola Downtown Library. We will be discussing future voter registration events and speaking engagements. If you have a group that would like a presentation prior to the PPP election, please let us know.

T'Shirts



bout time to clean out the closet? Members of the Natural Resources committee are turning your old un-wanted

T'shirts into new, durable mult-use tote bags. Please bring your T'shirts to the League meeting February 20th or drop them off into the box on Vivian Faircloth's porch, 126 West Jackson Street. Recycle and Reuse! To volunteer to help sew or for more information, contact Carolyn Kolb, c.kkinfla at gmail.com.

oin the League of Women Voters of the Pensacola Bay Area and Earth Ethics, Inc. for a viewing of Plastic Paradise on Thursday, February 25th beginning at 5:30 p.m. (with film viewing at 6:00 pm) at the Lucia M. Tryon Branch Library, 1200 Langley Avenue. After the film, we will discuss the adverse impacts of plastics in the environment and to our health as well the current bills in the Florida legislation and the efforts being made and that can be made to keep plastics out of our waterways. Light refreshments will be served.

Contact Mary.earthethics at cox.net for more details.

Help Register Voters



This summer and fall will be busy times for Voter Service members as we continue to register voters and assist with updating information for individuals. YOU can assist in our work by adding your name to our list of volunteers. You will need to

review the slide presentation and take a simple, twelve question quiz to be qualified. Join the Registration Drive here.

Please send me an email (ccparrish at usa.net) after you are notified that you passed the test. THANK YOU!

Charlyle

Thank you to all who responded to the Natural Resources Committee's plea to contact legislators on the **plastic bag bills**. The House nudged the bill but couldn't get it to committee to get a vote and failed to move at all in the Senate. There is a plan for next year which means our committee will be working on this issue locally through out the year. We'll keep members posted. It takes a village and sometimes more.

Carolyn Kolb, Co-Chair Natural Resources

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Sisters across the Straits (SAS)-A Cuban Exploration

Jo and Sam Mathers, 476-1032

he League of Women Voters of Florida sponsors a program in which groups of League members can travel to Cuba as a people-to-people experience. We were fortunate enough to be able to join this program from November 9 through November 15. The leader of this program is Annie Betancourt, a Cuban native, who currently lives in Miami, Florida.

We chose to participate in this program to get a first-hand look at the Cuban culture and to learn something of U.S.-Cuban relations first hand from a diverse set of Cuban citizens. The timing of our trip was based on our desire to see the culture and interact with Cuban citizens before the U.S. blockade (their term for our "embargo") was terminated and the U.S. culture had permeated Cuba to a greater extent than has already occurred.

We chose to participate in this program to get a first-hand look at the Cuban culture and to learn something of U.S.-Cuban relations first hand from a diverse set of Cuban citizens.

The arrangements and logistics of the trip were well organized and Annie, being a veteran of these trips, had planned for an excellent balance between organized events and time for individual exploration of Havana and Varadero, a coastal village east of Havana. It is important to note that each trip sponsored by SAS will have slightly different itineraries but they typically will have a majority of the time in Havana. Another aspect of the planning for a trip to Cuba is the Cuban "f----" word-flexibility. From the flights to and from Cuba to the schedules within Cuba itself, timetables are necessarily flexible. As any of us who have scheduled meetings with outsiders within our own workplaces know, internal emergencies occur. Understanding this and being able to go with the flow are attributes that will lead to a peaceful and informative trip. Each time we made adjustments, the changes always yielded a positive outcome. Discussion were held with the following groups:

The University of Havana -- Centro de Estudios Hemisféricos y sobre Estados Unidos. This discussion centered on current political relations in the current context of the 2 nations. This institute has cooperative relationships with a number of U.S. universities. ACNU, an associate of the United Nations-Civic engagement group, discussion focused on the major focus areas Cuba is targeting to improve their social-economic climate.

Farmers' Market, where we engaged local farmers about their produce and viewed the commodity market in which Cubans purchase food at a reduced price with government supplied food rations. The *Farmers' Market* also had a private sector section in which one can buy

produce and meats at market prices.

Editorial de la Mujer -Isabel Moya and Dr Marta Nunez, this discussion focused on women's issues. This organization published a periodical which it sells on the open market with the proceeds allowing the organization to be self-sustaining. These periodicals typically sell out in a short time following distribution. When asked why they did not publish additional copies of their periodical they pointed to the lack of raw materials (paper) as the primary reason.

El Quitrin -women's initiative and clothing workshop: In this organization, women are recruited from the region to be trained on tailoring and seamstress skills. In addition, they have a retail outlet so women gain experience in the business side of the trade. In some cases, women remain employed by the workshop and in others they become independent businesswomen.

Our day began at 9AM and ended by 4PM. We then had time on our own for our independent observations and interactions with local Cuban people. This was a highlight for us as we were able to walk through a neighborhood that included what appeared to be a residential area with mostly average Havana residents.

I would recommend this trip to every League Member. The Florida LWV, through Annie Betancourt's efforts, did an outstanding job putting the details together and ensuring all those in the group had an informative educational experience. The accommodations were outstanding, the food superb and the 400 years of architecture indescribable. \heartsuit

Program Planning: What Issues Should the League Tackle Now?

The LWVUS Board is asking Leaguers to consider a nationwide League program focus to *Make Democracy Work*, for the next biennium. Since Convention 2014, the League has been focused on core democracy issues.

- Engaged in Key Structures of Democracy program:
 - Study of constitutional amendment process
 - Money in politics review and update
 - Redistricting review
- Voting rights and voter protection
- Election reform
- Voter service

Leaguers are being asked for input to help develop a LWV wide strategy for the most meaningful impact to our democracy for 2016-2018.

- Where would you like the League put its energies in the coming biennium?
- What are the most pressing National issues?
- Which of these issues demand attention NOW?
- Which are feasible to work on NOW?
- Is there a LWV position already?

Also

• To what extent are state and local League resources necessary to address there policy issues?

Continue on page 7... Issues

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THANK YOU!

FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE MISSION OF THE LEAGUE.

Memorial contributions have been made in memory of League members and supporters Steve Marvin, Marcia Boney, Doris Lea and Ron Roston.

2015-2016 Susan B. Anthony Members

Marilyn Badessa Janet de Lorge

Vivian Faircloth Rosemary Hays-Thomas

Jan Hervieux Ellen Roston

Member Contributors

Joan Allen David & Sherlee Aronson Bea Belous Gene Feicht Don & Ina Freeman Gail Honea & Frank Sansone Carolyn Kolb Mabel Knight Patricia & Krista McGraw Shirley Lewis-Brown Susan Metzger Kay & William Mountcastle Charlyle Parrish Eugene & Sandra Pettis Betty Salter Doreen & Leonard Schwartz Carolyn Tokson & Jeffrey Elliot Pam Schwartz

Bessie & Fred Vallianos Jacqueline Young

Bill & Muriel Wagner

Non-Member Contributors

Anonymous Aston Hayward Rev Bob Eddy Mr. And Mrs. W. Christopher Hart - MM Hart Fund

Susan B. Anthony membership is a special category including League members who contribute \$100 or more, in addition to membership dues, during the League year. Contributions may be made to our local League or to the Education Fund, the tax deductible arm of the League.

(If you think your name should be in this list, please contact the treasurer at lwvpba@gmail.com.)

Continued from page 6....Issues

- How can we balance state and local Leagues' calendars of activities with proposed new work?
- What is the likelihood of results?
- Who is already working on the issue? Are they effective?
 Potential partners?
- Does the issue have 'legs' in the nation? In the state? Community?

Do you support the proposed program focus 'Making Democracy Work'? Yes __ No __

Do you have a recommendation for another program item, in addition to or instead of 'Making Democracy Work?

Give your suggestion for issues to study or for action to any local League board member or email lwvpba@gmail.com.

Calendar

February





- 16 Tuesday, 10:00 am Azalea Trace, **International Relations**, Great Decisions discussion. For information contact Gene Feicht at 479-3352.
- 20 Saturday, 10:30 am program. General League Meeting, New Tryon Branch Library, 1200 Langley Ave. 'State of the Cities' Panalist: Mayors from the five municipalities in Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties.
- 25 Thursday, 5:30 pm Tryon Branch Library, 1200 Langley Ave., "Plastic Paridise" showing.
- 26 Friday, 11:30 am, Report: "From Pensacola to Paris and Back" by Mary Gutierrez. See page 4 for details.

March

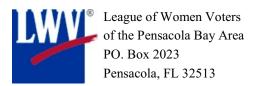
- 4-5 Friday, 7 pm, Saturday 1pm "This Changes Everything" Pensacola Cinema Art, See page 4 for details
- 12 Saturday, 2:30 **Education Committee** at Paula Montgomery's home, 641 Connell Drive, 438-8891.
- 14 Monday, 11:00 am, Natural Resources Committee, Main Library downtown. Contact Mary Gutierrez, 549-7472.
- 14 Monday, 1:00 pm, Voter Service Committee, Downtown Library, Spring Street, Contact Charlyle Parrish, 932-0854.
- 15 Tuesday, 10:00 am Azalea Trace, **International Relations**, Great Decisions discussion on *Kurdistan*. Herein may be a delicious irony: a people without a country, without established borders, seem to be forming the only bulwark of stability in the roiling Middle East.
- 19 Saturday, 10:30 am program. **General League Meeting**, Tryon Branch Library, 1200 Langley Ave.
 "What are we Teaching About Government?" Cherie Arnette, Social Studies Coordinator for Escambia County Schools will explain what and how it is being taught.

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The League of Women Voters of Florida, a nonpartisan p olitical 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.

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

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February Meeting - "State of the Cities"