



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF PENSACOLA BAY AREA

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Why Newspapers Survive

Saturday, January 19, 2013

Shannon Nickinson, Pensacola News editorial writer, and Carl Wernicke, former Pensacola News Journal editorial writer, will be featured speakers. The discussion will be facilitated by journalist Charlotte Crane.

Tryon Branch Library, Langley Ave.

NOTE Time: Coffee 10:15 a.m. Program 10:45 a.m.

Join us Saturday, January 19th for an informal conversation with two of our prominent local journalists, Shannon Nickinson and Carl Wernicke. The exchange of ideas about the "Fourth Estate" will be facilitated by journalist Charlotte Crane.

Community Meeting

Saturday, January 26th, 10:00 am

First United Methodist Church, Wesley Abbey

(Wesley Abbey is directly behind the Governor Perry Home, 6 E. Wright Street)

Youth Justice in Escambia County

Join the League of Women Voters and the members of the Escambia Youth Justice Coalition in a Community Meeting (EYJC) on January 26th to discuss the pressing problems and possible solutions for Youth Justice in Escambia County. You can make a difference.

On January 10, The Reverend Rick Branch, Minister of Music at the First United Methodist Church, spoke on behalf of the Escambia Youth Justice Coalition, a group of churches, businesses and other community members who have come together to advocate for an education and juvenile justice system that protects children, families and communities and improves public safety. He painted a dire picture for Escambia's youth at the recent Escambia County Legislative Delegation hearing.

- **1,391**-the number of Escambia's children arrested last year. Our arrest rate was 24% higher than the state average.
- **710**-the number of children arrested for misdemeanors last year. To put that in perspective, Miami-Dade, a county with more than 9 times the number of children aged 10-17, had just slightly more than twice the number arrested in Escambia County.
- **414**-the number of children arrested from Escambia's schools. Not only is our school based arrest rate 67% higher than the state average, 265 of these arrests were for misdemeanors even though our state's zero tolerance laws mandate that arrests are to be reserved for "serious threats to school safety."

Continued on page 4 - **Community Meeting**

Co President's Message

We made it through the election in November, though not without embarrassment over Florida's election laws. Changes in legislation created longer lines and frustrated voters at the polls. The shortened period of early voting, as well as the plethora of long, confusing proposed amendments, covering issues that could have been addressed by legislation, added to the difficulties for voters. As Leaguers, we now are working to get the harmful laws changed.

The League of Women Voters of Florida is back in court on the subject of redistricting. Voter protection has to be ongoing. When the Legislature more closely reflects the make-up of the citizens, we will know we have it right. When the districts are drawn in compliance with the constitutional amendments that over 60% of Florida asked for and voted for, we will know we have it right. Till then the struggle goes on.



Photo by Steve Marvin

The Christmas party for the Pensacola Bay area was a time to relax and enjoy the company of intelligent, active men and women who are working to make our area and our state a

better, fairer and more environmentally friendly place for us all. It was a great success, thanks to Rosemary for the use of the party room, to the hard working folks who turned out to decorate, to the donors of food and wine, and to the clean-up volunteers. We know how to have a party! And we know about teamwork in both work and play.

Then...

Just when we were taking a breather, enjoying the break between the election and the time to address the important issues in the next session of the Legislature.... Just as we thought we could relax a little, with Holidays around the corner, a little town in Connecticut broke our hearts. As a nation and as individuals we all stopped in our tracks to ask, "How can this have happened? Again???" And yet we know how it happened. Look at statistics. According to the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, the United States averages 20 episodes of mass shootings per year. During July, there were 6 episodes including the shooting in the movie theater in Aurora, Colorado. The real question is, "What are we going to do about it?"

Both the League of Women Voters of the United States and the League of Women Voters of Florida have strong positions on gun control. For decades, the League of Women Voters of the United States has supported



Co President Paula Montgomery

legislation to "limit the accessibility and regulate the ownership of these weapons (handguns and semiautomatic assault weapons) by private citizens. The League supports regulating firearms for consumer safety."

President Obama has set up a committee headed by Vice President Biden to come up with actions to be taken immediately. They have had their first meeting. I don't know the scope of their study. I do know that the deadline for their report is in a matter of weeks. We the people want action, and I believe that the white House does as well. Let us all do what we can to support them.

Specifically, we need background checks for the purchase of weapons, with waiting periods before purchase to permit the background checks to occur. We need to limit the capacity of the clips that feed the guns that are sold. Semi-automatic weapons are not needed for hunting or for other sports. They should not be sold to civilians. We need gun safety, education and annually renewable licenses. The license fee should be adequate to cover the cost of the education and verification.

We also need to appoint a strong head of the ATF (Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms). There have only been part-time heads of that department for the last 6 or more years due to political obstructionism in Congress. If the ATF is to enforce and regulate the arms in the hands of citizens, it needs to have strong leadership and strong backing. This is a big job.

Many of us may agree with the part of the League's position that says, "The LWVUS acknowledges that the U.S. Supreme Court and the lower federal courts have ruled consistently that the second amendment to the U.S. constitution confers a right to keep and bear arms only in connection with service in a well regulated militia - known today as the National Guard (League position 1990, amended 1994, 1998)." Though the courts have expanded this interpretation, it is consistent with what exists in many countries in the industrialized world. The U. S. has too many gun deaths and injuries per capita, and part of the reason for this is the easy availability of instruments of death and serious injury. Though gun violence will not be ended by stronger controls, they are surely part of the answer to this serious public health and safety problem. It is a rare day that we do not see in the news a report of the accidental death of a child by a parent's weapon, the murder of a spouse or domestic partner by an easily available gun, or the drive-by shooting (often of innocent bystanders). This is incompatible with "domestic tranquility" and in that sense is a violation of our Constitutional rights!

And today, the members of the League of Women Voters of The Pensacola Bay Area need to contact our representatives in state and national government and urge them to respond to this moment of horror and grief with meaningful legislation. If we do nothing, the shock will fade and life will go on until the next shooting, and the next one. Let us make this our New Year's resolution: To do what we can to reduce gun violence.

Paula, 438-8891

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS WELLHEAD PROTECTION

Andrea Walker, 723-2112

The Natural Resources Committee presented four speakers on the protection of groundwater Saturday, November 17.

The initial discussion was led by Etta Lawlor and Wallis Mahute, Santa Rosa citizens. They initiated the Wellfield Protection Project and outlined the steps they have taken since 2008 when Mahute, in response to her inquiry on a Construction & Demolition solid waste facility application, received a letter from the DEP . . . 'our permitting standards do not address local zoning and land use compatibility.'

According to Lawlor, "It looks like we are losing the battle on having a good Wellfield Protection Ordinance for the Inland Sand-and-Gravel Aquifer located between the Yellow and Blackwater Rivers. We do not have the deep pockets the real estate investors and the County have to pay for attorneys and reports. We need all the help we can get to make the County understand 'Groundwater is Drinking Water: Protect It.'"

Lawlor and Mahute are ordinary citizens who have become advocates on this issue. They are the kind of citizens who get involved and hold government accountable for its actions. Public support is needed to protect our groundwater.

The second part of the program featured Tim Haag and Keith Wilkins. Tim Haag, ECUA Director of Community and Government Affairs, maintains Escambia County has made a coordinated effort in working with ECUA. In 1986, the leakage of dry cleaning fluid resulted in the loss of a million gallons of elevated storage and affected 1/5 of all Escambia wells. The response was to install granular activated carbon to counteract the effect. The \$650,000 replacement costs of the filters are assumed by the ratepayers.

The Northwest Florida Water Management District uses two protection models: the seven-year time travel model and the twenty-year time travel model. ECUA sewer expansion program has also helped to protect the wellheads.

Keith Wilkins, Director of Escambia County Community and Environmental Services, emphasized that Escambia County, ECUA and the water management district, working together, is providing in greater Wellhead Protection. He reminded us everything we spill goes into our groundwater. Five-year and seven-year cycles give us time to respond and implement best practices for spills. Responsibility for contamination falls to the owner, but incentives and reimbursement plans have been developed to reduce incidents.

The sand and gravel aquifer serves both counties and lies below the bay. Rivers, creeks, and bayous serve as discharge areas.

DEP Oculus has an online site with public records and documents concerning hazardous waste, storage tanks, waste cleanup, permitting, and more with a public login option. <http://dwmedms.dep.state.fl.us/Oculus/servlet/login>

GET STARTED ON THE NEW LEAGUE FORUMS

The LWVUS discussion list is being updated and now is a great time to join. They have designed new League Forums, a new online community exclusively for League members and leaders.

Some have questioned how one can become part of the various discussions. Now is a good time to begin.

Why should you join the League Forums?

1. Like the discussion lists, the League Forums provide an opportunity to interact with fellow League members on specific topics and to share experiences and tools.
2. The Forums notifications system allows you to decide if you want to follow a group (topic), a single discussion within a group, or even just a single person.
3. All messages are archived online for future reference.
4. You can easily build and manage your own personal profile.

LOGIN TODAY!

Go to www.lwv.org, click on LOGIN in the top red bar. Once logged in, click on the Forums link in the left navigation bar. Members interested in learning more are welcome to view a [recorded webinar](#) introducing the new Forums. If you have questions after listening to the webinar, contact Vivian Faircloth, 438-5539, for assistance.

League in Action:

- **Deirdra Macnab**, president LWVF, was listed in the Orlando Sentinel as one of the 25 most powerful people in Central Florida.
- The League joined over 100 organizations in sending a letter to the U.S. Senate urging ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW is a landmark international agreement that affirms principles of fundamental human rights and equality for women around the world.
- **Carolyn Kolb** presented the League's Legislative priority issues for the coming legislative session at the Santa Rosa Legislative Delegation Hearing.
- **Rosemary Hays-Thomas** made the League presentation at the Escambia County Legislative Delegation Hearings. (See page 5 in this Voter to read her statement.) **Vivian Faircloth** urged the delegation to hold hearings and vote for ERA this session. **Nancy Lake** addresses issues on Kid Care. **Claudia Brown-Curry** presented the impact our juvenile justice system has on African-American youths.

Continued from Page 1 - Community Meeting

- **865**-the number of Escambia admissions to our juvenile detention center last year, and just to keep the comparison going, Miami had 2957 admissions last year, 242% more than Escambia did-but with a youth population 802% larger than ours.
- **219**-the number of Escambia's children sent to DJJ's juvenile prison system. Miami-Dade-with over 249,000 youth compared to our 27,133-only sent 36 more children away than we did. With a recidivism rate of 75%, if you follow the child for 5 years after release, we are clearly not getting the best return on the millions spent to lock up our children.

These numbers should concern us, not just because we are throwing these children's lives away, but because we as a state are spending over \$525 million a year on juvenile justice. The arrest of children for minor infractions, overusing juvenile detention and locking away children in residential care, when they can be better served in the community, makes us less safe, not more.

The EYJC requests your support for the following:

1. Civil Citation must be available in lieu of arrest and referral for prosecution to all children accused of misdemeanors. Our school system must include community and parents to address the racially disproportionate and harsh school discipline practices such as suspensions and expulsions, and adopt proven approaches to school discipline, such as Positive Behavioral Supports and School Offense Protocols.
2. Escambia must become part of the Annie E. Casey's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, an effort led by the DJJ that limits secure detention to those youth for whom it is absolutely necessary and utilizes alternatives to detention whenever possible. Currently available only in four jurisdictions (Broward, Duval, Hillsborough and Palm Beach), Escambia must adopt this proven, effective program to improve public safety.
3. Escambia must institute more informal mechanisms to handle juvenile offenses and develop a plan to handle more cases outside of the court system.
4. Escambia must stop sending our delinquent children into the damaging, ineffective, and expensive juvenile prison system and demand more effective alternatives, such as Multi-Systemic Therapy and Functional Family Therapy. Both are less expensive and more effective than incarceration and our taxpayers and children deserve these proven community-based sanctions. Escambia must work to shut down expensive and ineffective juvenile

prison beds and reinvest those dollars in effective community-based programs through an inclusive process that works with the community and local programs, including its strong faith community.

Claudia Brown-Curry, Executive Director of the Teen Empowered Mentoring Parent Program, also spoke to the Legislative Delegation on behalf of the Escambia Youth Justice Coalition. She presented the picture of the disproportionate impact our juvenile justice system has on African-American youth. "We need reform, and we need it urgently, because the teens and families I work with are being hurt".

- **34%**-the percentage of African-American children within our population of 10-17 year olds.
- **64%**--the percentage of African-American children within the total population of juvenile arrests last year.
- **73%**-the percentage of African-American children within the total population of children sent to Florida's juvenile prisons last year.

"These numbers should alarm us all, black or white." But the problem is not only in the juvenile justice system, it begins in our schools. As you may know, the U.S. Dept. of Education's Office of Civil Rights recently opened up an investigation about our county's school discipline system." Those numbers indicate something seriously wrong as well. Even though African-American students comprise 36% of the public school population, they make up:

- 57% of all in-school suspensions
- 65% of all out-of-school suspensions, and
- 69% of school based arrests.

The Coalition is eager to work to fix our broken juvenile justice system as well as our broken school discipline system.

Join the League of Women Voters in the Community Meeting on January 26th to discuss this pressing problems and possible solutions. You can make a difference.

B

All League meetings are open to the public

Our Condolences to Charlyle Parrish and Elizabeth Cook on the deaths of their Mothers.

Our Sympathy is also extended to the family of Hulda Carastro, a longtime League member. Donations in her memory have been received from David and Sherlee Aronson and Frankie Van Horn - Harris

Calendar



January

9 Wednesday, **Board Meeting** - 5:30 pm at the new Tryon Branch Public Library. 1200 Langley Ave. Members are welcome to attend.

16 Wednesday, 11:30 am - 1 pm, **Natural Resources Committee**, Tu-Do Vietnamese Restaurant, 7130 N Davis Hwy. For more information contact Mary Gutierrez, *gutmry at cox.net*.

15 Tuesday, 10 am **International Relations Committee**, Azalea Trace Auditorium; Speaker: Gene Feicht, *Future of the EURO*. For further information, contact Gene Feicht at 479-3352 or *gf1 at students.uwf.edu*.

General Meeting
 Saturday, January 19, 2013
"Why Newspapers Survive"
Conversation with journalists Shannon Nickinson and Carl Wernicke, facilitated by journalist Charlotte Crane
 Coffee 10:15 am - Program 10:45 am
Tryon Branch Library, Langley Avenue

Community Meeting
 Co sponsor: League of Women Voters
 January 26, 2013, 10:00 am
"Juvenile Justice in Escambia County"
 Joins us for a chance to learn what this means for our community and how you can make a difference.
First United Methodist Church, Wesley Abbey
 6 East Wright Street, Downtown Pensacola

February

12 Tuesday, 5:30 pm Board Meeting, Downtown Library on Gregory Street in the new Conference Room. Members are welcome.

13 Wednesday. 11:30 am - 1 pm, **Natural Resources Committee**, Tu-Do Vietnamese Restaurant, 7130 N Davis Hwy. For more information contact Mary Gutierrez, *gutmry at cox.net*.

Ethics Committee Begins Research

Jim Hunt, 968-2133

Jim Hunt is the chair of the local LWV Ethics Committee. At the initial meeting of the group, Jim led an informal discussion related to the public's perception of unethical behaviors among politicians. Various members were assigned specific areas to research.

A blog has been set up for communication and a discrete link can be found on the League website under the "Projects" tab. For directions to access the blog, contact Jim Hunt at *jameshunt at cox.net*. Your ideas, comments or concerns on the question of ethics in our government will be greatly appreciated.

Pensacola Downtown Library Grand Opening

by Elizabeth Vickers, 484-9183



Ribbon cutting ceremony † Photo by Steve Marvin

The Pensacola Downtown Public Library, 239 N. Spring St., opened its doors on January 11, and welcomed about 300 enthusiastic Pensacolians, who came to participate in the Grand Opening Festivities. Library Administrator, Darlene Howell, Mayor Ashton Hayward, County Commissioner Gene Valentino, City Council President PC Wu, Library Board of Trustees President, Betty Hooton and the Chamber of Commerce Ambassadors, cut the traditional ribbon. The festivities continued in the Community Room, where the overflow crowd heard remarks from the dignitaries and the dedication of the Maurice J. Bartholemew wing which is on the site of the old Fire Station #1. Fireman Bartholemew, a regular visitor to the library, lost his life in the line of duty while assigned to that station.

Saturday's festivities were dedicated to children and their families. Entertainment included storytelling, lessons in making crafts, music and dance, square dancing, dogs and refreshments.

The \$7.7 million dollar facility, designed by Townes + architects, P.A has expanded to 51,000 square feet. Funding was primarily through Local Option Sales Tax. The enchanting children's area is double the size of the original one. Library hours 10 am - 8 PM., Monday through Thursday; 10 AM - 4 PM, Friday and Saturday; and noon to 4 PM on Sunday.

League Presentation to Legislative Delegation January 10, 2013

On January 10th, League Co Presidents, Dr. Rosemary Hays Thomas and Dr. Paula Montgomery, addressed our Legislative Delegation on behalf of the League of Women Voters of the Pensacola Bay Area. The League is proud of its record as a respected, nonpartisan organization for over ninety years, neither supporting nor opposing political parties and candidates, but political nonetheless. The 2012 election, with long lines and excessively delayed election returns, proves beyond doubt that punctilious scrutiny of voting procedures is requisite. However, we do take action on issues we have studied and on which we have a position. We would like to mention a few of those this evening and urge your attention and support for constructive legislation in these areas.



Rosemary Hays-Thomas

- Require top officials to disclose major transactions;
- And create an online filing system for financial disclosure.

We would also like to commend Sen. Gaetz for his work on the ethics issue, the improvements already made and those to come.

Third, we support the collection of taxes on Internet sales. This would increase the state's revenue for education and other important services and create a more competitive business environment for Florida's own brick and mortar stores.

Fourth, the League of Women Voters supports a free public school system with high standards for student achievement and adequate financing by the State. We oppose implementation of policies such as the "parent trigger" that would easily turn public schools over to private, for-profit companies. We stress that any private or charter school receiving state funding should be held to the same standards for testing and student achievement as public schools.

Our *first* concern is the state's election system and ensuring that all eligible citizens are able to exercise their right to vote conveniently. The 2012 election, with long lines and excessively delayed election returns, proves we need a lot of changes. Our suggestions for election reform include:

- More flexibility for Supervisors of Elections in choosing early voting sites;
- An early voting schedule that runs two full weeks at a minimum;
- A sufficient number of early voting sites in each county based on population;
- A permanent Florida voter registration system, so that citizens who have moved within the state can update their addresses easily at the polls on Election Day and still cast a regular ballot.

A *second* legislative priority of the League of Women Voters is ethics reform. We believe in open government, and urge your support of laws that will increase transparency and accountability. We ask you to pass legislation that will grant the Florida Commission on Ethics the authority and funding to

- Initiate investigations;
- Create an anti-corruption hotline;
- Expand the ethics code to include all who touch public money (including vendors);

We thank you for your time today and emphasize that the League looks forward to working with you to address the challenges that we all share. Thank you for your commitment to public service and your efforts to improve the lives of current and future Floridians.

HELP WANTED

Have you ever wished you knew more about desktop publishing, do you like being creative, exploring new horizons? Check out this opportunity. Vivian Faircloth has been the sole editor of the Voter for many years but is now experiencing some health problems that may force some interruptions in the timely completion of the Voter. The League needs a volunteer to assist with the monthly publication.

Voter articles are submitted by various members of the organization; however help is needed by someone who can complete the layout and formatting so that our members can keep up with League activities. Please contact Vivian Faircloth at vfaircloth@iname.com.

Volunteers are needed to assist with the local League website where members and the general public can learn of current activities as well as review earlier actions and information.

The League of Women Voters of Florida, 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.

Join the League of Women Voters Today!

It's easy! Just send your check to:

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS ♦ P.O. Box 2023, Pensacola, FL 32513

Name _____ Birth date _____ New Mbr? Yes/No

Address: _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home phone (____) _____ Other (____) _____ E-mail _____

Add Family Member(s): _____

DUES: \$55.00 _____ Additional Mbrs @ \$27.50 _____ Contribution _____ TOTAL _____

Dues are \$27.50 for a student enrolled in a certificate or degree program.

I'm renewing my membership.

I am interested in the following areas (Circle all interests)

- | | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Education | Natural Resources | Social Policy | Speaker's Bureau |
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| County Government | City Government | State Government | National Government |
| Newsletter | Voter Registration | Publicity | Social Media |
| Ethics Study | Historian | Research | Observer Corps |

Membership dues and gifts to the League of Women Voters are not deductible as charitable contributions for tax purposes. (Tax deductible contributions require a separate check written to the LWV Florida Education Fund and should be sent to the treasurer.)



League of Women Voters
of the Pensacola Bay Area
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