



Pensacola Bay Area Chapter:

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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

League dismayed at Citizens Environmental Committee Dismantling

Pensacola, Fla. (January 25, 2011) The League of Women Voters of the Pensacola Bay Area was dismayed to see the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners terminate their Citizens Environmental Committee (CEC). The CEC was created to provide professional advice and citizen input on a variety of key environmental issues.

The League always encourages more citizen involvement as a cornerstone of good government. Indeed, discouraging citizen involvement runs contrary to the basic premise of democracy.

Many members of the CEC over the years have been educators, consultants or involved in environmentally oriented businesses. They represent a great deal of knowledge and experience available to contribute on a volunteer basis.

In these economic times, snubbing such free services shows failure on the county's part to manage those assets, not failure of the committee, as some Commissioners have said.

Most governments plead for more public involvement of its citizens. The CEC has not been without fault – attendance has been poor on the part of some appointees. But the BCC never appointed a full committee, did not replace appointees who were unable to attend meetings, and assigned few tasks to the committee in recent years. As a result, committee members were left to address various environmental issues with little direction. Ironically, in recent months several excellent appointments were made to this committee and those new members were energizing the group and starting to address some important issues.

At the same meeting where the CEC was terminated, the BCC set guidelines for all citizen committees – that an appointee having three unexcused absences in a year would be removed from the committee, and that each committee must submit an annual report to the BCC on the work they have done. However, instead of giving the CEC a chance to meet these new standards, the BCC elected to terminate the committee, despite members' requests. We find this action shortsighted and unfair to those committee members who signed on to make a difference.

The League of Women Voters would like to thank the members of the CEC who over the years have given of their time voluntarily to the service of the county, and who have taken time out of their workdays to enhance the business of the CEC. We have valued your work.

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