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YOUR BOARD MEMBERS

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 Ellen Roston, *1st Vice Pres.*
 Elizabeth Major, *2nd Vice Pres.*
 Jo Matthews, *Treasurer*
 Enid Sisskin, *Secretary*

Directors:

Vivian Faircloth - *Communications*
 Paula Montgomery - *Education*
 Shirley Lewis - Brown - *Social Justice*
 Vacant - *Voter Services*
 Tricia Spencer - *Gun Safety*
 Jennifer Wasilenko - *Women's Issues*

Off-Board Action Team Leaders

Mary Gutierrez, *Solar/EV Initiative*
 Jo Mathews, *Naturalization*
 Paula Montgomery, *Education*
 Cathy Scott, *Membership*
 Mary Louise Winter, *Website*

Nominating Committee

Carol Pulley Tricia Spencer
 Annelise Reunert Jo Mathews

Contact Us

www.lwvpba.org
 LWVPBA [facebook page](#)
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 Phone: (850)937-7769

LWVUS - www.lwv.org
 LWV Florida - www.lwvfl.org

In Person

Current Status of Local Governments in Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties February 18, 2023

*Speakers: Debbie Bowers, Escambia County Assist. Administrator
 DeVann Cook, Santa Rosa County Administrator*

**10:15 AM Coffee, 10:30 AM Meeting
 Tryon Branch Library, 1200 Langley Ave.**



Debbie Bowers



DeVann Cook

Join us February 18, 10:15 AM, Tryon Branch Library, 1200 Langley Ave, for a presentation on the Current Status of Local Governments in Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties. Our speakers will be Debbie Bowers, Escambia County Assistant Administrator and DeVann Cook and Santa Rosa County Administrator.

Debbie Bowers was recently appointed to the County's local government. She is a graduate of Tate High School, and has been a Pensacola area consultant since 2018. She holds a law degree from the Chicago-Kent College of Law, a master's of business administration from Florida Atlantic University and a bachelor's degree from the University of South Alabama. Bowers spent 10 years as chief commercial officer for the City of Los Angeles, five years with Broward County in roles that included interim deputy airport director for administration and an assistant to the county administrator.

DeVann Cook grew up in Pace and graduated from Milton High School and the University of West Florida. He began working for Santa Rosa County in 1978 as Emergency Medical Service director. During his 42 years, Cook has served as Safety Director, Risk Manager, Human Resources/Risk Management Director and interim county administrator. In a Pensacola News Journal interview, Cook said "Transparency will be very important to me," adding he plans to return to providing detailed agendas with supporting documentation for meetings. He also plans to offer each commissioner the chance to thoroughly discuss each agenda item prior to meetings.

LWV of Florida Joins Campaign for Florida’s Right to Clean & Healthy Waters



The League of Women Voters of Florida has joined the campaign to support getting a constitutional amendment on the ballot in 2024 for civil action to enforce our right to clean and healthy waters in Florida. The “Right to Clean and Healthy Waters” is a stopgap, declaring that “no more harm” will be allowed to our waters. The campaign’s mission is to take this to Florida’s voters; to educate them, to collect their petitions, and to ensure their voice is heard.

Why has the League agreed to help regarding this?

- Everyone needs and deserves clean water.
- Our health, our economy, and nature all depend upon clean water.
- But thousands of Florida’s waterways are polluted because polluters have rights and special interests have undue influence in Tallahassee.
- The buck stops with the state.
- With a Right to Clean and Healthy Waters amendment, citizens can hold the state accountable.
- We can stop pollution at the source and protect our families, secure our livelihoods, and help nature flourish.

You can now go to floridarighttocleanwater.org to download blank petitions and refer people to the site. We need to collect 223 thousand by March 1st. Please print, fill out and mail out to:

FloridaRightToCleanWater.org
 13300 S Cleveland Ave, Ste 56
 Fort Myers, FL 33907



The League extends condolences to **Sallie Brown** on the death of her husband, Norborne A. "Sandy" Brown, Jr. The League also extends condolences to **Jo Mathews** on the death of her mother, Rosalie Rouchon.

Why Serve on the LWVPBA Board?

Serving on the LWVPBA Board of Directors is one of the many meaningful ways for members to share their time and talents. The Nominating Committee is currently seeking and interviewing members who are interested in serving on the Board.

The Nominations Committee encourages LWVPBA members – especially our newer members – to consider volunteering for leadership positions. Our younger and newer members have much to gain from serving in a Board or an Off Board committee position. Mentoring, encouragement, experience, knowledge, self-awareness and confidence are just a few things you will gain through League service. These valuable tools will serve you well in your personal and professional life.

Contact a member of the Nominating committee (*Carol Pulley, Annelise Reunert or Jo Mathews*) to volunteer or make suggestions for board members in 2023-2024. *Check the attached Roster for contact information.*

Selecting Issues of Concern for League Study or Action in 2023-24

Program Planning for LWVPBA has begun.

The League of Women Voters is a grassroots organization and your input is vital as we strive to make democracy work for all of us. As we undertake program planning, consider the following questions:

- Who is concerned about this problem?
- What evidence do we have that this is an issue of concern?
- Is there a real possibility that citizens could bring about positive change?
- Is this an issue of concern to a group we would like to engage with the League?
- Does League have particular expertise in this area?
- Is there a special role for League to play in helping to resolve this issue?
- Would people want to join League to be involved in working on this issue?

Please send your suggestions to the Board at lwpvba@gmail.com. Your input will help the Board to decide on studies or action to recommend for your adoption at the Annual Meeting in May.

The Membership roster has been updated. All those who had not renewed membership by December 31 have been removed. If that was not your intent, send your dues to the treasurer now or use the website.

School Choice: What It Is in Florida and What It Means for District Schools

Paula Montgomery, Education Committee Chair

This year, the Florida Legislature is considering **HB 1** with potentially enormous funding impacts on Florida's schools. **The proposal is a universal voucher program for all of Florida's students.** It includes removal of family income restrictions on the Family Empowerment Scholarships, thus opening the funds to use by any student in any school in Florida. According to the Education Law Center, if HB1 is enacted it is predicted to cost the State of Florida 4 billion dollars in the first year for the Family Empowerment vouchers. It would reduce the per pupil allowance from the state budget by \$900 a year. This is clearly detrimental to the schools that most Florida children attend. Even if HB1 is not passed in its current form, taxpayers need to know that any version of an expanded voucher program in Florida would further erode every district's public education system in the state.

Being able to choose among viable alternatives is valued in a free society. However, the choices we make need to be based on understanding and comparing the things we choose. Just saying that you have a choice does not guarantee a good outcome.

Let us examine our choices as far as schools are concerned.

First, let us look at traditional Public Schools. They are funded by tax money that is provided through legislation and signed by the governor. These schools are required by the state constitution to provide all children with a quality education. Within the public school system, children with special needs must be provided with accommodations. There are also designated schools with "academies" that offer special educational content which will lead to preparation for the workforce after graduation. Additionally, there are special programs that students can select for advanced placement in college and to prepare for an academic future. All of this is accomplished using certified school administrators and teachers to ensure the best possible quality of education. Traditional public schools are accountable to the Department of Education for money spent, meeting curriculum standards, and outcomes of students. All of these special programs designed to accommodate each student require money. Eighty to ninety percent of Florida's children attend traditional public schools.

Next, what are charter schools? Charter schools are schools set up using the same designated public school funds. They operate independently with their own boards. They are required by law to be "not for profit",

but many of them are run by contracted "for profit" management companies. There is a generous outlay of public funds as start-up money for a new school. Charter Schools are not required to accept every student, so can refuse those students who would require extra accommodations of any sort. The teachers are not required to be certified, nor the buildings required to meet the same safety standards as traditional public schools. There is little oversight into how the money is spent. If one of these schools closes, there is no requirement that the school return any money or assets to the state or district school systems that gave them the start-up money. If they bought a building with the start-up money, the charter company gets to keep it as well as any funds received for capital improvements. Since their funding is public money, charters are considered to be public schools.

And vouchers? In Florida these are called "scholarships" and they are used to send kids to private schools. Let's define private schools: they are schools that set their own standards for teacher qualifications and define their own curriculum. Their money comes from the tuition they charge each student. There is no requirement to test student learning. Private schools run the gamut in quality from excellent to miserably poor. The excellent ones are very expensive. The poor ones may be a few rooms in a home or church building with teachers who have few or no teaching qualifications, using workbooks instead of required state Standards and accepted curriculum. The tuition may be rather low. Because private schools have no accountability to the Florida Department of Education, they also do not have any guardrails to prevent discrimination against children with unique learning needs, LGBTQ children or their families. The "scholarships" which have nothing to do with academics, are awarded to a family and they can choose among the available private schools or even use the money to "home school."

Where does the money for these vouchers come from? Currently some of it comes from corporations which choose to put a portion of what would be their Florida tax dollars into a special fund for "scholarships". Thus, it is "would be" tax dollars that would benefit all Floridians that instead have been funneled through that fund. In Florida, the primary special organization that handles these funneled tax dollars is called *Step Up for Students* and it is very profitable indeed. It handles billions of dollars, owns two lovely new buildings and pays its executives six figure incomes. Under current legislation there are also vouchers coming from the education budget called *Family Empowerment Scholarships*. These are based on special needs or family income. The money for these comes from the money budgeted for the district where the child lives. Any version of HB1 would dramatically increase the

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money going for 'scholarships' and reduce the amount going to district schools.

What choices do parents have to make? They can choose the traditional public schools where all students are accepted and that have a wide array of available educational choices within that system. They can choose charter schools that vary in quality and have no guarantee of accommodations for individual students and can simply refuse to accept students they do not want. Or, they can choose a private school or home schooling using the money donated by the voucher/"scholarship" funds, remembering that currently these funds may not cover the tuition for the better schools.

What is the impact on traditional public schools? The traditional public schools are funded by the Florida government based on the number of students enrolled. If students and their parents choose to go to a school other than traditional schools, the traditional schools lose funding but are still required to accept every student and make accommodations as needed. Florida already is near the bottom ranking as far as school funding and teacher salaries are decreasing further the funding available for educating the great majority of our students who are in traditional public concerned. Yet, a state government hostile to public education is encouraging charters and vouchers, thus schools.

Is state-funded discrimination what Florida taxpayers want with their money? We do have worthwhile state-funded programs, such as SNAP, without which families might starve. But what would we lose if there were no vouchers? No one would starve, children would be guaranteed high quality programs based on state Standards and taught by certified teachers. All children would be accepted.. What's so bad about that? ♦

Welcome New Members!

Carol Campfield Edwinna Williams

Returning Member

Diane Kratochvil

Members' contact information is contained in the attached Membership roster. If you have not received the latest one, have a correction or need to check your membership expiration date, email LWVPBA@gmail.com



Take Action: Tell your Senators to Support the Equal Rights Amendment

History Fair

Sallie Brown, Education Committee

Every year the LWVPBA presents prizes at Elementary, Middle and High Schools in both Escambia and Santa Rosa counties.



County History Fairs

are an extension of National history Day, which annually sends school districts a general theme students must address in their essays, projects, displays or website presentations.

This year's theme is "Frontier in History: People, Places, Ideas" – as usual, it is a theme from which students can wander near and far for their topics.

For our League's medals, we concentrate on entries that deal with rights, broadly interpreted (or example, civil rights, women's rights, First Amendment or voting issuesss social movements, etc.). To understand more about this year's theme, goggle "National History Day 2023: and watch the short video suggesting topic possibilities.

This year Escambia County held its History Fair on February 4 at Spencer Bibbs Center with awards given February 7th at Booker T. Washington High School Santa Rosa's event (judging and awards) will be held on February 16th at the Dillon Administrative Complex 6032 US-90, in Milton.

National History Day has been engaging students for almost 50 years, involving students all over the county. Our local History Fairs are fun and enlightening - you'll be amazed and inspired by the projects you see and the students who tell you about their research. Contact Sallie if you would like to be a part of the fair next year.

Education Committee Minutes January 14, 2023

The Education/History Fair committee met on January 14, 2023 with Pat Jones, Barbara Beck, Sallie Brown, Elizabeth Major, Pam Schwartz and Paula Montgomery in attendance.

HISTORY FAIR

February is History Fair month and this year's topic is **Frontiers in History**. Details of the History Fair are included in the article by Sallie Brown.

TEACHERS' MANUAL

Paula is working on the Manual for Teachers of Government and hopes to have hard copies to give to the Escambia School Board at their March meeting. Plan to be there on March 21st at 5:30 at the Hall Center.

BOOK BANNING

The group had a lively discussion about the book banning underway in Escambia County. The person in charge of evaluating the books that have been the subject of complaints is Michelle White (850-595-0030 EX 290). If anyone is interested in helping with this process, Michelle is the person to call. If you plan to attend any of these meetings you should wear the large League of Women Voters button or your League name tag.

The meetings for considering the various books in February are at Spenser Bibb Center (2005 N. 6th Ave.) at 5:30 PM.

- Feb 6 to consider *Court of Mist and Fury* by Sarah Maas
- Feb 7th to consider *New Kid* by Jerry Craft
- Feb 13th to consider *The 57 Bus* by Daska Slater
- Feb 28th to consider *Looking for Alaska* by Jim Green
- The School Board will conduct a special meeting at 5:30 on Feb 20th at the Hall Center to address this issue.

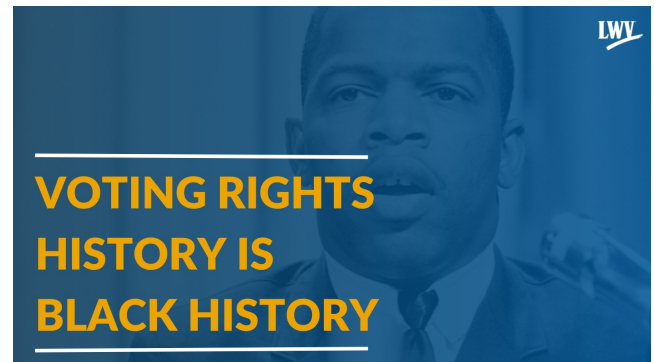
The next meeting of the LWVPBA Education committee will be on February 21, 2023 at 4PM at Paula's house, 641 Connell Drive, Pensacola.

The **Calendar** may be seen on www.LWVPBA.org. The easiest way to join committees now is to click on the calendar date on the home page. The Zoom link to join is blue. Your suggestions for further improvements are welcome.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
103 YEARS
FEBRUARY 14 1920-2023



February is home to Black History Month, a time to reflect and celebrate Black history, as well as uplift the contributions of Black activists who power our democracy



League in Action

- Women's Issues committee started Book Club . Contact Jennifer Wasilenko for details.
- University of Central Florida has founded a Unit of the LWV Orange County with rapidly growing membership. They communicate on [instagram@lwvcucf](https://www.instagram.com/lwvcucf). Check out our new [instantgram@lwvpcolabay](https://www.instagram.com/lwvpcolabay).
- **LWVFL Lobby Days 2023** Tallahassee, March 7-8, 2023, register [here](#). Let Haley know you are interested.
- **Capital Reports** highlights legislative work of the League in the Legislative season.
- League testified in opposition on HB 1.
- League supports HB 19 in support of students with disabilities and their parents when the student attains the age of majority while in school.
- League of Women Voters Responded to President Biden's State of the Union Address [here](#).
- LWVUS Joins Coalition Letter in Support of DC Autonomy [here](#)

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in Government. We influence public policy through education and advocacy. Our goal is to empower citizens to take an active role in shaping better communities worldwide. The League of Women Voters of Pensacola Bay Area does not support or endorse any candidate or political party.

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 or PayPal [here](#).

Name _____ Birth date _____ New Mbr? Yes/No

Address: _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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

Add Family Member(s): _____

DUES: \$60.00 _____ Additional Mbrs @ \$30 _____ Contribution _____ TOTAL _____

Dues are FREE for a student enrolled in a certificate or degree program.

I'm renewing my membership. Date: _____

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

| | | | |
|----------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Education | Natural Resources | Social Justice | Voter Service |
| Communications | Membership | Gun Safety | Women's Issues |

I am also interested in the following areas:

| | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Speaker's Bureau | Website | Observer - Governmental Meetings | Social Media |
| Legislative Action | Naturalization | Newsletter | Voter Registration |
| | | | Publicity |

I am interesting in learning more about joining or would like more information on the following committee/s _____.

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 our local treasurer.) *The League membership year runs from June 1 through May 31.*

