



**Myra  
Van Hoose**  
VIEWPOINT

## *Freedom creates duty to politics*

How many times have we been told, "Oh, I just don't do politics?"

I am always taken aback by the notion that one wouldn't "do" involvement in the very structure that governs our lives. Ironically, isn't that choice one of our country's great freedoms? Americans are so free, we don't have to care what our legislation dictates or who our elected officials are. But shouldn't we engage?

Politics is more than just men (and a small fraction of women; see our August 6 Viewpoint) in a remote building meeting and bargaining. "Politics" encompasses so much more.

What headlines grace our front pages that are without political ramifications? The President is posturing with foreign countries. Does this matter to you? We have rioting and heated public discourse over the existence of Confederate monuments. Does this matter to you? Locally, we have legislation proposed by our freshman Congressman regarding property ownership on Santa Rosa Island. Does this matter to you? There are myriad other issues discussed, debated, and decided with or without your input that impact your life. Does this matter to you?

These are all political matters crying out for our engagement.

Whether you identify as Democrat or Republican, conservative or liberal, certainly there is something in today's headlines that outrages you, that inspires engagement. As Heather Heyer posted on her Facebook page shortly before her murder in Charlottesville, "If you are not outraged, you are not paying attention." Activists, whether you agree with their stance or not, are engaging; they are keeping the dialog front and center in our news stories. This is politics.

But it's not the only way to express our voices. In fact, the protest methodology is an interesting byproduct of our First Amendment rights, but not structurally called for in the Constitution.

Our structure of representation, our elected officials, are the voices elected to speak for us, and they do regularly, whether we are paying attention or not. Their role is to create the rules and regulations by which we live. If we don't like what we are hearing, it is not only our right but our duty to elect better representatives. Or become one ourselves.

The Institute for Women in Politics provides regular networking and education sessions to make it easier for our members to understand the political process and to engage in it.

On September 23, we are excited to bring to Pensacola faculty from The Leadership Institute of Arlington, Virginia, a nationally recognized leader in successful campaigning and political activism, for "Basic Training for Campaign Teams and their Candidates - Where the Votes Are and How to Get Them!" The day-long workshop will provide the tools needed by campaign teams to achieve a win for their candidate focusing on strategic research, including voter analytics. For a modest fee, you will take home the Leadership Institute's presentation by Dena Espenscheid, Director of Grassroots Coalitions, and Patricia Simpson, Director of Career Programs. Breakfast and lunch are included.

Through a generous donation from our 2017-2018 Education Series sponsors, Wind Creek Hospitality and the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, as well as event advertising sponsorship from the Studer Family, we are able to offer a reduced rate not only to our members, but also to the entire campaign staff of our member candidates. This means anyone who may be interested in working in the campaign field should sign on to a candidate right now.

The workshop is available to the public, men as well as women. Advance registration will be open through September 18 and may be done online at <http://iwppflorida.org/workshop-resources/workshop-where-the-votes-are/>. Registration is limited to fifty.

Now more than ever this country needs our brightest, level-headed, critical thinkers to step forward. The workshop on the 23rd is a crucial first step for candidates and campaign staff, or a step for concerned citizens to begin to understand the election cycle process. Engage!

*Myra Van Hoose is Vice President of the Board of Directors of the Institute for Women in Politics of Northwest Florida and offers this Viewpoint on behalf of the IWP Board of Directors. She is a political consultant with campaign management experience at all electoral levels—local, state, and national. To inquire about membership in the Institute, send an email to [contact@iwppflorida.org](mailto:contact@iwppflorida.org).*