



The Mobile Voter



A Publication of the League of Women Voters of Mobile, Alabama

The League of Women Voters, a national, nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences policy through education and advocacy

OCTOBER ACTIVITIES

LUNCH WITH THE LEAGUE ó An opportunity to socialize with League members and listen to guest speakers presenting issues of importance to the League. Luncheons are held the **third Wednesday** of the month from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Marriott Hotel on Bel Air Boulevard. The buffet lunch is \$16.00. Reservations required.

MONTHLY STUDY GROUP ó Please join us on the second Monday of each month for our evening study group sessions. We are looking at voter suppression and dilution for the first half of our program year. Evening study group is not only enlightening and informative but also quite enjoyable. We begin with an array of treats and appetizers and light conversation. We meet at Jane Gordon's house, 2116 Sheffield Court, from 5:30 until 7:00 p.m.

VOTE 18 - Schools are calling and scheduling our national-award-winning, young-voter engagement program. Contact Myra Evans to learn more: bobalouiemom@yahoo.com or 251-666-7914.

October 13 – 5:30 p.m. – Evening Study Group ó We plan to discuss voter ID laws ó Jane Gordon's Home, 2116 Sheffield Court.

October 14 – 5:30 p.m. ó LWVM Board Meeting at the VIA Center, 1717 Dauphin Street.

October 15 – 11:30 a.m. - Lunch with the League -Chris McCauley, director of the David Mathews Center for Civic Life, will discuss how best to tackle major issues plaguing the state's prison system. Reservations required before noon on Monday. You may be held responsible for payment if you make reservations and don't attend. Call or email Jane Gordon at 251-626-3386 or lovjan42@comcast.net.

October 28 – 6:30 p.m. ó Candidates Forum for House District 98 ó Mattie T. Blount High School.

November 4 – Election Day VOTE!

November 4 – Election Reporting. Volunteers needed to go to Mobile, Baldwin, Escambia, Washington, Clarke, Conecuh, Monroe and Choctaw Counties to call in election results. Contact Anne Walsh at walsh102@comcast.net



President's Letter

You may have to endure some football analogies this month as I am writing this while watching the Tide try to Roll against Ole Miss. Too soon to have a feel for the game yet.

Just like football, our "season" is just beginning again. That means that more people have to "step up" to make things function as they should. We have a lot of things in process right now, so we need a lot of stepping up. We are in the process of trying to organize a forum in the race for State Representative in Prichard. Anne Walsh, as always, has been heading up this effort. We were having a hard time trying to arrange a venue and then Erica Perkins stepped up and got a commitment from Blount High's Principal that we could use their facility. Each of us has contacts and talents that, if we get our enthusiasm in gear, can yield results like this. Many people are needed to get a forum to come to fruition. People willing to contact candidates as to their participation are a key to success. People are needed to craft questions that will cover both statewide and local issues of importance.

We also just completed National Voter Registration Day, where Betty Shinn, Betty Jones and Ken Kronebusch stepped up and managed to register 56 people at the Courthouse. Since I read in the LWVUS blog that the New York City LWV was very proud of the 60 people they registered, I feel that 56 for little, old Mobile was outstanding. I cannot forget the great job that was done by the newly-formed Publicity Committee, consisting of Erica Perkins, Rhoda Pickett, Kathryn Cariglino and Cora Cade Lemmon. We had great coverage of our last luncheon, with a corresponding great crowd for the speaker. Holly Wiseman, one of our own members, made an outstanding presentation.

On the same day, Vote 18 was in action at Blount High School. Myra Evans, Rose Johnson and I stepped up to register an additional 19 first time voters at Blount. With the 22 Myra registered the previous week at Vigor, we turned in a total of 90 new voters on National Voter Registration Day. Barbara Caddell and Gina Finnegan also went to Stone Street Baptist Church for a requested voter registration table at their Fall Festival.

Finally, we have recently been hired to report the vote on November 4 for al.com and WALA thanks to Anne Walsh's continued "stepping up" to keep us funded. This means, as you know, that we will need help in covering the eight counties involved: Mobile, Baldwin, Escambia, Washington, Clarke, Conecuh, Monroe and Choctaw. We have had multiple "step-ups" here, Fred South, Hank and Barbara Caddell, Erica Perkins, Myra and Dennis Evans, Anne Walsh, Stacey Steiner, Kathryn Cariglino, Al and Andrea Pennington, Nancy Hanna, Suzanne Schwartz among others.

I don't want to leave out that on the recent Voter Photo ID distribution opportunity from the Secretary of State's Office, Gretchen McDermott volunteered for our League to provide rides to anyone needing transportation to the Senior Center to obtain the required ID.

The point to this ramble is that there is a place for everyone to contribute in their own way. You don't have to be an officer or a board member to be a part of things. Anyone who comes forward and offers help whenever they can is an LWV Superhero.

Thanks from your President to all of you Super heroes!

***Andrea Pennington, President,
League of Women Voters of Mobile***

National Voter Registration Day

By Betty Shinn

With national and state elections taking place this November, we need to make sure every American is registered and ready to vote in 2014! On September 23, 2014, volunteers and organizations from all over the country "hit the streets" for National Voter Registration Day to create awareness of voter registration opportunities, and the League of Women Voters of Mobile was a part of this movement by conducting a voter registration drive at Mobile Government Plaza and Blount High School.

Even enormous scaffolding and construction zones at Government Plaza did not deter LWVM from participating in National Voter Registration Day and having a very successful voter registration drive. Volunteers pressed forward even with the huge construction project and registered voters; some first-time voters, some who needed to change addresses, some with felony drug charges under the misguided belief they had lost the right to vote [not true, drug offenders do not lose the right to vote]. Government Plaza was chosen because of the diversity of people coming into the building for permits and all manner of business with local governance agencies. Overall, Government Plaza is a unique architecturally and controversial landmark containing both City and County employees and a cross-section of citizens, spelling win-win for the League and a fantastic place for voter registration. I felt at home since I was one of the first to work in that building on the 10th floor when it opened in 1994. It was like a homecoming, meeting old friends and co-workers. The first registration form I received was from an old friend who had moved recently. The last form was from a person who works for the County and reports to work at 4:00 p.m. So many people thanked us because they didn't have to make an additional trip to the Board of Registrars to register to vote.

Thanks to our volunteers Ken Kronebusch, Betty Jones, Holly Wiseman, Andrea Pennington, Myra Evans, and Rose Johnson who participated in this enriching experience. Volunteers had an amazing time, positive energy, lots of laughs and great connection with the public. Ken Kronebusch and I did a line dance called Jamaican Funk whenever we got 10 votes. We enrolled 56 at Government Plaza. Other volunteers from the

League collected 40 voter registration forms, giving us a grand total of 96 registered voters for National Voter Registration Day.

More importantly, we started a dialogue and continued it throughout the day, one on one with citizens visiting our table. We decided instead of asking "are you registered to vote?" which 99% of the time was met with "yes" and a hurried exit; we changed the strategy to asking "what is happening on November 4, 2014?" From there, discussions started about the power of the vote, what's on the ballot, and the power to select the next governor of the State of Alabama. Additionally, we had a sample ballot to help citizens become familiar with the ballot. It was rewarding to see the smile on the face of a guy who has given up hope after a drug conviction to learn that after parole, probation, and fines are paid, he can exercise the right to vote.

According to **The*Voter*Participation*Center***, there are 17,318,000 unmarried women in America who are eligible to vote but not registered. There are also 9,632,000 Latinos and more than 7 million African Americans who are not registered to vote. It was President Lyndon Johnson who, at the signing of the Voting Rights Act nearly 50 years ago, declared that "the vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice." Let's take maximum advantage of this powerful instrument and register people to vote.



Betty Jones, Ken Kronebusch & Betty Shinn registering new voters

Why did feds sue Texas over voter ID law but not Alabama? Government lawyer explains

Brendan Kirby | bkirby@al.com By **Brendan Kirby**



MOBILE, Alabama ó The U.S. Justice Department last year pounced on a Texas law requiring voters to show photo identification at the polls, but the agency chose not to challenge a similar statute in Alabama. Why?

Holly Wiseman, the civil rights enforcement coordinator for the U.S. Attorney's Office in Mobile, told the local **League of Women Voters** chapter at a Wednesday luncheon that she is not privy to those decisions. But she contrasted the two laws. She said Texas has stricter requirements for the types of identification that a voter can produce, and when documentation is needed to obtain an ID, the state charges for it. In addition, she said, residents in some cases have to drive hundreds of miles to get to the registrar's office to obtain an ID.

Wiseman said Alabama's law, on the other hand, provides a photo ID for free to voters who do not have one. The state also issues copies of documents like marriage and birth certificates to voters who need them to obtain IDs. "It's amazingly lenient in the documentation you can produce," she said. Wiseman said examples include a driver's license, a voter identification card and student and employee IDs. Military records and school transcripts also can be used to obtain a photo ID. In addition, she added, voters are allowed to cast ballots if two elections officials sign affidavits vouching for their identity. And whereas Texans in remote areas may have a burden traveling hundreds of miles, Wiseman said Alabama has vans visiting all 67 counties to help people in their communities obtain photo identification.

Wiseman, a Mobile native who recently joined the U.S. Attorney's Office, has worked for the Alabama Attorney General's Office and spent two decades with the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Justice Department. She said one of her first cases was defending the Clinton-era motor voter law, which provides people to register to vote at the same time they apply for driver's licenses.

Gina O'Brien Finnegan, the vice president of the **Mobile chapter of the League of Women Voters**, said her

organization invited Wiseman to speak as part of its project to study voter ID laws. She said the group may take a position on the issue later this year but so far has not done so. "Voting rights is a key issue for the League of Women Voters," she said. "It's one of our core values that everyone be able to vote."

Thirty-four states require identification at the polls. Alabama in 2011 strengthened its law, requiring a photo ID for the first time during last summer's primaries. The law has been controversial. Critics contend it is more likely to disenfranchise poor people and minorities, who are less likely to have valid identification. The group Empower Alabama pointed to the case of a 93-year-old World War II veteran whom elections officials in Escambia County turned away from the polls in June. Many experts contend that in-person voter fraud ó the kind that photo ID laws is designed to combat ó is exceptionally rare. Justin Levitt, a constitutional law professor at Loyola University Law School, has said that he found just 31 allegations of fraud out of more than 1 billion votes cast since 2000.

Said Wiseman: "Voter fraud is almost nonexistent across the country. Is there any need for it (photo ID laws)? The position of the Department of Justice is no." On the other side, advocates contend the laws are necessary to ensure the integrity of elections. They point to reports like one in April that four Alabama counties had more registered voters than adult residents. In May, former Justice Department lawyer J. Christian Adams told the Mobile chapter of the conservative Federalist Society that "wranglers" in Perry and Hale counties have coerced voters by the hundreds to sign absentee ballots that had been filled out in advance. Earlier this year, Election Integrity Maryland and the Virginia Voters Alliance claimed that they discovered 43,983 people registered in both states and that 164 of them appear to have cast ballots in both states during the 2012 presidential election.

Fighting Southern states of election regulations has been more difficult since the U.S. Supreme Court last year struck down a part of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that required officials in states with histories of racial discrimination to get advance approval from the Justice Department before making any changes to the voting system.

Critics contend that the proliferation of voter ID laws is proof that states have abused the looser regulations. But Wiseman said the government still has plenty of arrows in its quiver. She noted that the provisions struck down by the high court originally were meant to be in place for only five years. Even with those rules gone, the Justice Department still can go to court to challenge any law enacted by any of those states ó just as it can in states that were not covered by the special "preclearance" sections. "Has anything changed since 1965 in Alabama," she asked, before answering her own question. She said the government even when she joined the Justice Department was on precarious ground defending a law that treated some jurisdictions differently than others. "At the time, I thought Section 4 and Section 5 were vulnerable," she said. "Twenty years later, the Supreme Court agreed."

Membership News

At the August 2014 League Retreat, a membership goal of 100 members was set. Here it is barely a month later, and our membership already stands at 109!

As usual, word of mouth advertising by current League members is often all that is needed to bring new members in. League members are usually our best advertisement.

A thank you goes out to the 48 League members who have already responded to the annual dues renewal notice. Please see information about dues renewal on this page.

A warm welcome to our newest members

**Susan Bell
Genevieve Dardeau
Mike Dardeau
Thayer Dodd
Rose Johnson
June Jones
Kenneth Kronebusch
Sara McCoy
Laurie Shorter
Bobbie Turley
David Walsh
Melissa Wold**

IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Membership dues for 2014-15 are now due!

Dues: Individual - \$45;
Student - \$22.50;
2 members in a household - \$67.50

You may pay your dues on: Monday, October 13 at the Study Group meeting or Wednesday, October 15 at the monthly luncheon. (You can use your credit card at the luncheon).

OR mail dues to: LWV of Mobile, PO Box 40602, Mobile, AL 36640. Dues may also be paid online using PayPal by going to: lwvmobile.org

Beth Hardaway
VP Membership

Tech Talk

If you have not checked out the LWVM sites recently, please do so. We have a website <http://lwvmobile.org/>, Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/LWVMobile?ref=bookmarks> and a twitter handle [@MobileLWV](https://twitter.com/MobileLWV).

Additionally, as a member of LWV you are entitled to access to the member restricted area of the LWV website - <http://forum.lwv.org/> where lots of membership information is stored such an archive of the webinars that have been offered, convention materials and handouts

If you have a small group that needs some assistance with technology issues or if you need one-on-one assistance, please contact Myra Evans bobalouiemom@yahoo.com



Member Profile – Erica Perkins

Erica Perkins is the type of strategic communications professional who brings levity to an intense meeting. When all departments are on the verge of homicide, time is running out and the creative objectives still have to be met, she's likely to tell a joke. And then get the business done! A refreshingly authentic voice from the "thirty-is-the-new-twenty" generation, Erica Perkins is a brand strategist who has lent her expertise to Fortune 500 clients like Verizon and RJRT. In 2008 she pursued her passion for politics serving as Kevin Powell's 2008 campaign manager in his bid for the 10th Congressional Congress representing Brooklyn. More recently, she served as the president of the Forgive Clarence Aaron Campaign, a local effort to raise awareness about Clarence Aaron who is a fellow LeFlore graduate sentenced to three life terms in prison for his involvement in a drug conspiracy case. After serving 20 years, President Obama released him this April 17, 2014. Passionate about success and making a difference, Erica desires to build and grow brands that positively impact the humans who engage them.

Erica currently works at Cumulus, home to the Big Station 93BLX, 104.1DLT, 900/660GOK and 97.5WABD. Her responsibilities include growing small businesses, managing the internal creative development process and making sure her clients succeed. She was named 2012 Cumulus Sales Rookie of the Year and 2013 Account Executive of the Year. A Thurgood Marshall Leadership Scholar, the first African-American to receive the Dr. Bruce Roche Scholarship for Advertising, an Academic 2 Scholar for Alabama State and recipient of Advertising Federation of America's Most Promising Minority Award, she is a graduate of Alabama State, Columbia University and most importantly, LeFlore High School of Communications and Art. With a deep passion for promoting positivity in the community, Erica worked to ensure young boys had haircuts with Christmas Cuts

2013. She also helped secure nearly 200 coats for young people with an Emergency Coat Drive supported by 93BLX, Franklin St. Baptist Church and Mobile Housing Board. The daughter of Alfred (Emma) Perkins and Earnestine (Mike) Williams, she is a sister, niece, and mentor to teenagers throughout the city.

Erica says she joined the League of Women's Voters because "we do the work necessary to ensure that the community is educated and engaged in the political process." The League of Women Voters of Mobile is thrilled to have someone with Erica's enthusiasm and expertise joining the team.



MOBILE PLEDGE

I believe that every person has worth as an individual. I believe that every person is entitled to dignity and respect, regardless of race or color. I believe that every thought and every act of racial prejudice is harmful; if it is my thought or act, then it is harmful to me as well as to others. Therefore, from this day forward I will strive daily to eliminate racial prejudice from my thoughts and actions. I will discourage racial prejudice by others at every opportunity. I will treat all people with dignity and respect; and I will strive daily to honor this pledge, knowing that the world will be a better place because of my effect.

Jim Rotch, a Birmingham lawyer, wrote the Birmingham Pledge in 1997 on a return trip from a Leadership Alabama meeting in Mobile. Organizers of the second community conversation on race adapted it for the Mobile Pledge, which those in attendance signed after the event

Programs

By Gina O. Finnegan

Evening Study Group

Our voter suppression and dilution study is progressing. We plan to discuss voter ID laws at our next evening study group session, Monday, October 13, at 5:30 at Jane Gordon's house. Last month, we distributed information from a recent national study on this issue. LWV-US advocates strongly against voter photo laws and has developed an excellent toolkit on the issue. Unfortunately, it can be difficult to find on the LWV.org website. Please send an e-mail to ginaofinnegan@gmail.com if you would like to have the file e-mailed to you.

In November, we plan to discuss redistricting concerns. Just as Alabama has experienced recent change with the Shelby County vs. Holder decision, which was discussed last month, and the state's new voter-ID law, the state will likely be in the news again as the U.S. Supreme Court prepares to hear oral arguments regarding a lawsuit that claims Alabama's new redistricting plan is discriminatory. The Democratic party and the Black Legislative Caucus claim that the new plan "packs" African Americans into districts that already contain a majority of black voters, so that they make up a supermajority, preventing them from influencing other districts.

We hope you will join us for enlightening conversation and discussion on these important issues. Bring a dish to share before we get started.

Lunch with the League

Please join us for lunch Wednesday, October 15, for a discussion about Alabama's prison problem. We are delighted to welcome Chris McCauley, director of the David Mathews Center for Civic Life, who is working to engage Alabamians in the discussion of how best to tackle major issues plaguing the state's prison system. The Mathews Center's purpose is fostering infrastructure, habits, and capacities for more effective civic engagement and innovative decision making

Startling abuses and overcrowding at Alabama prisons have featured in the news since the release of a federal report detailing sexual abuse and other significant problems at Tutwiler women's prison. Alabama prisons were built for about half the current 25,000 inmates in

the system, and some individual prisons hold three times the number of inmates they were designed to house. In addition, reporting by al.com has shown that guards accused of severe misconduct have faced little or no repercussions when found guilty of abusing prisoners.

Our monthly luncheon is scheduled for Wednesday, October 15, from 11:30 until 1:00 at the Bel Air Marriott, 3101 Airport Blvd. Please RSVP to Jane Gordon at 251-626-3386 or lovjan42@comcast.net.

AL.com Wants your Opinion on the Alabama Prison Problem:

AL.com recently asked LWV-Mobile to participate in a round-table discussion about its ongoing investigation into abuse, overcrowding and other major problems in the Alabama state prison system. The state of Alabama dedicates about \$400 million to incarcerate about 25,000 individuals and send another 7,000 or so through alternative sentencing programs, yet it is plagued by reports of inmate abuse and other serious problems.

AL.com is very interested in learning what readers think about this issue, and what citizens think should be done. There is a perception in Montgomery that voters don't really care about prisoners. AL.com would like to be able to show our political leaders that citizens do, in fact, care when women are raped by guards at Tutwiler, when new inmates are beaten so that they are almost unrecognizable at Kilby, when prisoners live in facilities designed for one half or one third of their populations and when they are fed food that's labeled "not for human consumption." Please visit http://www.al.com/opinion/index.ssf/2014/09/alabama_prison_reform_approaches.html#incart_maj-story-2 to take the survey and submit your comments on this shameful problem.

Baldwin County LWV Sponsors Forum on Medicaid

By Barbara Caddell

On September 23, LWVM members Carol Adams-Davis, Barbara Brewster, and I attended a forum on Alabama Medicaid at the Fairhope Public Library sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Baldwin County, the AARP, and other citizen groups. The forum was moderated by Ms. Candy Williams, state director of AARP. Three speakers, Dr. Allan Perkins, Chair of USA Family Practice; Dr. Suzanne Tarmoen, physician in private practice in Fairhope, and Mr. Jim Carnes, Director of the Citizens Policy Institute for Alabama Arise, addressed a wide range of issues surrounding Alabama's Medicaid program and the implications for citizens of our state's refusal to expand Medicaid. There was a standing-room-only audience.

While they all alluded to problems in the current system, presenters also discussed the Medicaid reforms recently enacted, especially the move away from a "fee for service" method of payment to a capitated reimbursement for health care providers that rewards health care providers when their patients have improved health outcomes. Senator Vivian Figures also attended and reminded the audience that Alabama lags behind other states in its attempts to address the health care needs of its citizens. She urged the audience to sign petitions available to urge the governor and legislators to support the expansion of Medicaid. The after-presentation discussion was lively and the room was filled with enthusiastic participants.

Good work, Baldwin League!!!



Baldwin County League of Women Voters' Forum on Medicaid

Vote 18

By Myra Evans

Since most of the Government teachers in the public school system teach Government for nine weeks and then switch to Economics, your Vote 18 team has even more opportunities to present its award-winning program to students since it is usually presented during an economics, government, or social studies class.

We celebrated Constitution Day at Vigor High School with Jenni Currie and her students. It was bittersweet as the last of the students we worked with on the Prichard mayoral candidate forum are now seniors and were in one of the classes. We also celebrated National Voter Registration Day at Blount High School with Jane Hildreth's class. We had already been to Baker High with Barb Waltsgott's students and will return in mid-October for Karen Hickman's students.

Many thanks to the Vote 18 team members who made these visits possible - Andrea Pennington, Lella Lowe, Myra Evans and Rose Johnson (a new LWVM member who jumped right in!). Due to their work in 10 sessions, there are more than 40 newly registered voters!

Additionally, LWVM took this program on the road to Tuscaloosa. Barbara Caddell was invited to a meeting there to report on the National Convention, so I hitched a ride and shared Vote 18 at Hillcrest High School with two classes, registering another four students.

We are always looking for new team members to participate in this very rewarding program. Contact me at bobalouiemom@yahoo.com - if you would like to observe a session.



Rose Johnson, Myra Evans & Andrea Pennington at Blount High



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