



The Mobile Voter

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



LWVM WINTER ACTIVITIES

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LUNCH WITH THE LEAGUE – 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 \$15.00. RSVP to 432-2492 or lovjan42@comcast.net.

MONTHLY STUDY GROUP – In-depth objective study of a selected issue held on the **second Monday** of the month from 5:30-7:00 p.m. at the home of Jane Gordon, 2116 Sheffield Ct., Mobile 36693, 662-3386. Light refreshments served.

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 666-7914.

February 18 - evening study group, home of Jane Gordon. We will recap last month's discussion with Mitch Reid of the Alabama Rivers Alliance and hear from Mary McGinnis on economic development as a facet of state-wide water management. RSVP to Jane at lovjan42@comcast.net.

February 19 – LWVM Board Meeting – 5:30 p.m. – VIA!

February 20 – Lunch with the League - 11:30 at the Marriott Hotel. AL.com reporter Ben Raines will discuss the need for transparency in the Public Service Commission's regulation of Alabama's utility companies.

February 21 - LWV candidate forum for House District 97 - 6:00-8:00 pm – VIA! Center, 1717 Dauphin Street (see page 5)

February 26 – **Special** election for House District 97 - (see candidates on page 5)



Co-President's Letter

Dear League members and friends,

I'd like to let you all know about a very important, ambitious and exciting venture being undertaken by the League's evening study group.

As you may know, Gov. Bentley has ordered state agencies to develop a comprehensive water policy by December. The state currently does not have a water policy and often agencies have been making decisions based upon their organizations' individual missions and not on a consistent set of values that prioritize water quality or quantity. The policy aims to coordinate state actions and priorities in a number of important areas. To read the draft report, go to the following website:

http://www.adeca.alabama.gov/Divisions/owr/awawg/Documents/2012_08_31%20WAWG_Water_Issue_Report_31.pdf

The working agencies have invited public input on the draft and the evening study group is putting together a response to send to Montgomery as this crucial piece of public policy is developed.

At our January meeting, we were very fortunate to have Mitch Reid of the Alabama Rivers Alliance to work with us. Reid has been very active with the Alliance in analyzing and critiquing the state's water policy development and educating citizens throughout the state about it. Members Carol Adams-Davis, Betsey Wooten and Lisa Hirsch discussed three aspects of the water policy: interstate coordination, which includes water conflict among Alabama, Georgia and Florida; interbasin water transfer, which involves taking water out of one natural drainage basin or area and transferring it to another, separate basin; and drought planning and response. Mary McGinnis will discuss economic development and water at our next meeting, on Monday, February 18. Our study group is discussing each of those four areas and plans to create a response to submit to the state. Reid was very helpful in helping us to understand many of the background issues and history involved in the water plan. He advised me that our response does not have to be highly technical in nature, particularly because we are a citizen group. A general response would be good, he said. Any one who would like to participate is welcome to attend Monday. Or e-mail me for more information (ginaofinnegan@gmail.com).

I'd like to heartily thank Mary, Lisa, Betsey and Carol for the work they have put into this project. And I'd like to thank all of you for your involvement with the League of Women Voters of Mobile. One thing I personally appreciate about the League is the ability to participate at whatever level one is able to, because they all have an impact. Thank you to those of you who faithfully attend our luncheons, meetings and forums. Thank you to those of you who help plan and run them. It is because of all of you that we are successful.

As you consider your roles, please give some thought as to whether you are in a position to share some of your unique talents and perspectives with either the Mobile or Alabama League of Women Voters. Contact nominating chairs Kathryn Cariglino for Mobile or Stacy Steiner for state positions. Both our local and state leagues are looking for new faces to share leadership roles on both boards of directors and in officer positions.

And PLEASE mark the date of our next annual meeting and dinner on your calendars. It will be Friday, April 19, and our speaker will be Gov. Bentley's chief of staff, David Perry.

Gina Finnegan
Co-President
League of Women Voters of Mobile

Member Profile – Beth Zotter



Beth Zotter joined the LWV when she moved to Mobile in 2011, and was attracted to the idea of joining with other women who were equally driven to educate voters about local issues - but also to educate herself as a new resident. With a background in

alternative energy, Beth most recently worked for a startup seaweed-to-biofuels company, where she managed the research and development of a pilot seaweed aquafarm located in Chile, and is now looking for her next professional project. In the meantime, Beth has taken on the task of improving the league's online presence.

Beth's husband is a helicopter pilot in the Coast Guard and together they spend time exploring Mobile with their four-year-old son, Remy, with weekly jaunts to the beach at Dauphin Island and riding 'round the town with Mobilians on Bikes.



April 19 will be our Annual Meeting which will feature Mobilian David Perry, the governor's chief of staff - stay tuned for details!! This Friday night event will be well worth your while!!

April 26-28 - League of Women Voters of Alabama's Convention in Tuscaloosa

Membership News

Congratulations to the Winners of the Prospect Outreach Contest!

LWV of Mobile was one of three winning Leagues in LWVUS's *Prospect Outreach Contest* for reaching out to 211 prospective members. Winning Leagues followed-up with prospective members in a variety of ways including: sending personal emails with an invitation to become a member; asking prospects to share their interests; asking them to volunteer for activities such as election night reporting; and personal phone calls inviting prospective members to the next League event. As our prize, we won a supply of LWV buttons which we immediately put to use at the January 22 Tuesday evening legislative session. All the LWV members who attended were identified with a League button.

There is another contest related to increase in membership which will be determined after the various leagues update the national roster this month. If we do win that contest, the prize is one free registration for national convention. Cross your fingers.

We're Growing: In preparing this edition of "membership news," I happened to review the membership news that appeared in the February 2012 Voter. Our current "paid-up" membership of 87 reflects a nice increase over last year's January membership numbers. Over the course of 2012, our membership swelled to over 100, so I predict that 2013 numbers will surpass that. Thanks for all you do to enhance the League, in membership growth and in other ways!

If you know of someone interested in the League, please email me with the names and email contact information: bhardaway@southalabama.edu.

Beth Hardaway/VP Membership



Health Care in Alabama – Facts and Issues

The 2013 regular session of the Alabama legislature began on February 5, and health care in Alabama is certainly destined to be an important issue as our state wrestles with Medicaid funding, shifts in demographics in our population, shortage of adequate medical resources in parts of our state, and related issues.

The League of Women Voters of Alabama (LWVAL) believe the first step to solving these problems is a clear understanding of the complex issues from an objective viewpoint. To that end, the LWVAL recently produced a publication entitled “Health Care in Alabama: Facts and Issues” and delivered a copy to each State Legislator.

The report is divided into two sections. The first section, “Recurring Issues in Health Care: Facts and Issues,” discusses some of the major issues that face the health care system in the U.S. and Alabama and highlights the degree to which the problems are interrelated.

The second section, “Challenges and Opportunities for the Nursing Profession,” focuses on issues related to the single largest group of health care professionals -- nurses. Nurses are the focus not only because of their sheer numbers, but an important issue is whether their scope of practice may need to be extended as a means of addressing the shortfall of medical services in many parts of the state.

You can find the report here www.lwval.org

This publication was made possible by funding from the League of Women Voters Education Fund, and as such, presents the facts and issues

objectively, without the purpose of trying to persuade readers one way or the other.

We hope you will find this material helpful to you.
Sincerely,
Kathy Byrd, President LWVAL

LWV Mobile editor's note: The research for “Health Care in Alabama – Facts and Issues” began at the request of League members who wished to know more about health care issues and the problems being faced both nationally and in Alabama. Mobile's own Rhoda Vanderhart was a part of the research team! Thank you Rhoda for lending us your curiosity and research talents! The League of Women Voters is a member driven grassroots organization that studies relevant issues selected by members. If you would like to be a part of a study please contact our Program Chair, Gina Finnegan.

Mary McGinnis
251-378-8378
mmcginnis2008@yahoo.com



You are invited to a special film screening of “Iron Jawed Angels,” the award winning docu-drama focusing on the defiant young activists who risked their lives to help women gain the right to vote. This free film will be screened at the Fairhope Unitarian Fellowship, 1150 Fairhope Ave, Fairhope, on Wednesday evening, February 27, from 6 to 8:30 p.m., and is sponsored by the LWV of Baldwin County in honor of the LWV's 93rd Birthday. Refreshments will be served.



Page 5
**LWVM to Conduct Candidate Forum
for Alabama House District 97**

If you want to help define your city, state and country, you have to vote every time you have an opportunity. It's not just about the big elections. Democracy is a forever process and voting is our most powerful non-violent tool for change. You've got to vote and you've got to pay attention. Unfortunately, there is very low voter turnout for special elections. For example, only 5,501 voters cast a ballot for the recent AL State Senate District 35 election to fill Ben Brooks' seat. That means only 7.7% of the 71,118 registered voters in that district made a decision for everyone else.

For the first time in thirty years, voters in AL House District 97 will have to make a choice of who will best represent their interests in Montgomery. On February 26, 2013, there will be a special election for AL House District 97 to fill the seat formerly held by Dr. Yvonne Kennedy.

To help voters get informed and learn about the candidates and issues, LWVM will hold a Candidate Forum on February 21, 2013 from 6-8 pm, at the Via! Senior Center. Come out and learn more about the candidates.

**Candidate Forum for
Alabama House District 97
Thursday, Feb 21 – 6:00-8:00pm
VIA! Senior Center, 1717 Dauphin St., Mobile
Bring your questions and become informed!**

**You are invited to a free forum on
Restoration & Recovery in Coastal Alabama
Co-hosted by the Environmental Law
Institute and the Alabama Coastal
Foundation
Thursday, February 28, 2013
11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. (lunch provided)
The Oyster House on the Causeway
RSVP: jtanner@joinACF.org**

ELECTION INFORMATION

SPECIAL SENATE 35 Run-Off is March 12, and General Election will be April 23.

CANDIDATES:

Jim Barton jbarton104@gmail.com

Bill Hightower hightower.bill@gmail.com

SPECIAL HOUSE 97 PRIMARY is Feb. 26; Run-Off is April 9 and General will be May 21. If a run off is not needed, the General will move up to the April 9 date. Don't forget to vote if you are registered in this district! To learn if you are registered to vote in this district go to <http://www.alabamavotes.gov/> and click on "My Polling Place and Registration Status".

CANDIDATES:

William Carroll
Carrollwilliam8@gmail.com

Adline C. Clarke
blackbkgft@aol.com

Karlos Finley
Karlos@bfw-lawyers.com

Jeffery Ray Jones
car1480@aol.com

Kimberly Williams Pettway
kpettway@gmail.com

Ronnie L. Williams
rwilliams@williams-llc.com

Levi Wright, Jr., 251-773-9459



**Sunshine and Heat: The LWV Looks for
Transparency at the Alabama Public
Service Commission
February 20, 11:30-1:00 p.m.**

MOBILE – In February’s grey gloom, the Mobile League of Women Voters will be looking at sunshine and heat as it welcomes al.com reporter Ben Raines, who will inform members and friends about the PSC and the need for greater transparency in the utility regulator’s oversight of the pricing allowed for monopoly companies in Alabama.

Raines has been reporting on the PSC and high utility prices in Alabama since 2005. His in-depth coverage has shown that Alabamians consistently pay more for natural gas and electricity than citizens of most of the rest of the country. He notes that little has changed since when he began covering the issue.

Raines will also explain the history of how the state arrived at its current situation, in which much information is blocked from public access. He will compare Alabama’s PSC with similar agencies in other states. He will also discuss the steps necessary to increase openness at the commission.

Raines’ presentation comes as Leagues across the nation prepare for sunshine month in March to highlight the importance of transparent government workings.

The Alabama League of Women Voters has asked for more openness at the PSC as well.

“We strongly support transparency in all levels and forms of government to provide citizens their rightful access to information regarding the formation of policies, ordinances, and other

positions taken by our elected and appointed officials,” said Kathy Byrd, president of the Alabama LWV, noting that questions have been raised concerning higher charges, expenses and profits allowed for Alabama’s utilities. “These differences may be appropriate, but citizens of Alabama have had no way of knowing.”



HAPPY 93rd BIRTHDAY LWV!!!

On February 14, 1920, suffragist Carrie Chapman Catt founded our great organization to better advocate for women’s suffrage. Since our founding 93 years ago, the League of Women Voters has fought for voting rights and to ensure that our elections are fair, free and accessible to all eligible citizens. Thank you for helping make our democracy work. We couldn’t do what we do without you!

**Everybody counts in applying democracy.
And there will never be a true democracy
until every responsible and law-abiding
adult in it, without regard to race, sex,
color or creed has his or her own
inalienable and unpurchasable voice in
government.**

-- Carrie Chapman Catt

The Vote Is the Emblem of Equality -- and Now It is Under Attack

By Elisabeth MacNamara
President, League of Women Voters

Ninety-three years ago this week, Carrie Chapman Catt founded the League of Women Voters to advocate for women's suffrage. A short time later, in August of 1920, following decades of advocacy, Chapman Catt, League members, and women across the country saw their dream realized with the passage of the 19th Amendment, giving



women the right to vote. *"The vote is the emblem of your equality, women of America,"* remarked Chapman Catt upon its passage, *"the guarantee of your liberty... Understand what it means and what it can do for your country."*

Yet today, 93 years after the League was founded to help democratize the right to vote, the voting rights of all Americans - or the "emblem of our equality"- are at deep risk. Later this month, the Supreme Court will review *Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder*, a case that questions the constitutionality of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965. Based on the 15th Amendment, which gave voting rights to people of color after the Civil War, the VRA ensures that every American citizen, regardless of race, has an equal right to vote by providing for effective enforcement. In its review of the VRA, the Supreme Court will focus on Section 5, which applies to specific states or jurisdictions with histories of discriminatory voting practices and requires that these jurisdictions obtain "preclearance," or federal approval, for proposed changes to elections laws.

Since our founding 93 years ago, the League of Women Voters has fought for voting rights and to ensure that our elections are fair, free and accessible to all eligible citizens. The VRA, with Section 5 in particular, is indispensable to that work. Should the Court rule against the VRA, millions of Americans could face disenfranchisement. That's why we've joined the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights in filing an amicus brief in support of the VRA and Section 5. We firmly believe that for the Supreme Court to do anything but uphold Section 5 would be to turn back 50 years of progress by blocking effective enforcement of voting rights for all.

Since passage of the VRA, Congress has reauthorized Section 5 four times, most recently in 2006 when it held extensive hearings and released an over 15,000 page committee report that exposed large-scale evidence of voting discrimination, particularly in areas covered by Section 5. Not only did these findings lead to an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote to reauthorize the legislation, but Congress also cited the invaluable role of Section 5 in thwarting racial injustice. According to Congress, without the continuation of the VRA's protections, the evidence is clear that "racial and language minority citizens will be deprived of the opportunity to exercise their right to vote, or will have their votes diluted."

Even as recently as this past election cycle, Section 5 helped block a number of proposed election laws that would have discriminated against minority voters. What's more as the Shelby case approaches, disenfranchisement and discrimination based on race remains a sad reality in our election system. Politicians across the country are waging widespread attacks on voting rights, including attempts to mandate restrictive voter ID laws that will limit voting access, redraw districts to maintain their power, and limit early voting options. In January, NAACP president Benjamin Jealous said the nation has been facing some of "the greatest attacks on voting rights since segregation," and the potential repeal of Section 5 is the biggest threat yet.

The Voting Rights Act is an essential part of American democracy. The thought that the Supreme Court might overrule Congress and take away voting rights should send a chill down the spine of every American. Based on an extensive record of current discrimination, Congress reauthorized the VRA in 2006 and President Bush signed it into law. It would be wrong for the Supreme Court to challenge the role of Congress and the President in our constitutional system.

As the League celebrates our 93rd birthday and marks nearly a century of work on voting rights, we hope that the Supreme Court recognizes the importance of blocking racial discrimination in voting and upholds the Voting Rights Act. As our founder, Carrie Chapman Catt said, the vote is the "emblem of our equality," and we must do everything in our power to preserve it.