

May, 2013



# 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*

## MAY ACTIVITIES

**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](mailto: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](mailto:bobalouiemom@yahoo.com) or 666-7914.

**May 17** – Naturalization ceremony at the US District Courthouse, 113 St. Joseph St., Courtroom 2A – 11:00 a.m. For more information, contact Andrea Pennington at [appreferee@hotmail.com](mailto:appreferee@hotmail.com).

**May 22** – Lunch with the League at the Marriott Hotel – 11:30 a.m. (Please note that this is a change from our regular third Wednesday) Speaking about the value of Mobile Bay and Coastal Alabama, economist Dr. Semoon Chang will help us to understand how the coastal waterways are so crucial to the state's economic fabric. Dr. Chang is the chief economist of the Gulf Coast Center for Impact Studies. RSVP to 432-2492 OR [lovjan42@comcast.net](mailto:lovjan42@comcast.net)

President's Letter

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First, in my very first President's Letter, I would like to thank all of you for trusting me, only a two year veteran of the League of Women Voters of Mobile, to be your President. It is an awesome honor, but also rather a daunting responsibility! I will need, and definitely plan to ask for, help from each of you, so plan to be an active LWV member this year.

Think about what rings your bell, whether the Observer Corps; Vote 18; Candidate Forums; Special Projects, such as Restoration of Voting Rights; Membership; Event Planning; Vote Reporting or Study Group (We will be looking for volunteers to head up and do research on both of our study items for this year, Healthcare and Agriculture). You can even come up with a new special project or interest that you would like us to work on and that idea will be presented to the Board to decide whether we can spend time on it this year. Whatever you decide upon, please call or email me or the appropriate Committee Chairman and offer your help. I truly believe that I am your President now because I volunteered for some things that interested me early on and therefore got to meet people and be included in many things, including a trip to the National Convention in Washington, D.C. You will enjoy your association with LWV much more if you get involved. We have a sort of informal "policy" that every activity should have a "socializing" component to make it fun, as well as "good citizenry" and useful, so be prepared to offer up some modest refreshments now and then to amplify the fun factor.

There are so many members whom I haven't met, that I have much to look forward to in the coming months. One of my goals when I retired in 2011 was to meet as many new people and make as many new friends as possible in this next phase of my life. I wouldn't trade the friends I have made in the League of Women Voters for anything in the world. Thank you for embracing me!

*Andrea Pennington  
President*

*League of Women Voters of Mobile*

## **LWVM Holds Annual Meeting**

The League of Women Voters of Mobile held their annual meeting on Friday, April 19, 2013, at the Marriott Hotel. New officers and directors were appointed for the coming program year, and two topics were chosen for study: health care policy in the state of Alabama and the National Agriculture Policy. David Perry, Chief of Staff for Governor Bentley, discussed many subjects of interest to the League such as health care, the Recovery Act and economic development.

Many league members were recognized for their outstanding service at the meeting. Thanks to Beth Hardaway for wording our “fun awards.”

**Marching on Washington Award:** They know us in D.C! This group of talented and dedicated folks has had such success in presenting Vote18, in registering new voters and in completing the Vigor Civic Engagement Project over the past year, that the Mobile League is a household word at National League headquarters! All these efforts resulted in the Mobile League’s winning a national Strengthening Democracy Award. Many, many League members participated in these projects, but tonight, to highlight this sterling achievement, we salute this year’s Vote18 Presenters: **Andrea Pennington, Lella Lowe, Mary McGinnis, Janet Miller, Myra Evans, Kelly Nolte, Stacy Steiner and Beth Zotter.**

**Boardmen Awards:** Yes, we know. “The League of Women Voters is not for women only.” We prize our male members of the League and especially recognize two who have served on the board itself, manning up to endure the inevitable “female chatter” and recipe swapping that just happens at the start of meetings. Special recognition goes to **Mark Berte**, who is completing a term on the board and sadly having to resign from the Board due to other obligations; and to **Jay Higginbotham**, whom we are awarding the designation **Board Member Emeritus**, for his long service on the board.

**Royalty Award:** This person is exchanging King George’s crown for Queen Ruth’s tiara. After an outstanding job leading the Vote18 charge as well as many other projects, she is to be initiated into rarified royalty as a **League of Women Voters Ruth Shur Fellow** – one of only 14 nationwide! She will reign over a couple of other states in helping improve League performance there- just as she has enhanced the face of the Mobile League. Couldn’t have happened to a more deserving or appropriate person. Someone who makes us proud: **Myra Evans**

**The “Way Better Than Martha Award”:** This gracious individual won a Martha Stewart Hostess With the Mostess Award at last year’s meeting for her willingness to host a group of Leaguers once a month on a Monday night to study one of the League’s issues of the year. Well, she’s gone and done it again! That’s another whole year of having to dust and sweep on the second Monday of the month, get the wine glasses out and come up with yet another delicious appetizer. This “Way Better Than Martha Award,” along with our thanks, goes to Hostess with the Mostess **Jane Gordon.**

**The Vigorous Vigor Award:** League members tend to bring lots of energy and vigor to most projects, but the **Vigorous Vigor Civic Engagement Project** was more vigorous than most. Several hundred folks filled the Vigor High School Auditorium to witness the culmination of vigorous efforts with Vigor seniors: to research, plan and implement a mayoral candidate debate. Primary planner for this civic engagement activity, **Mary McGinnis**, led Vigor with energy and vigor, along with her able, and equally vigorous assistants, **Cora Cade Lemmon, Myra Evans and Andrea Pennington.**

**Eyes and Ears Award:** Their eyes are peeled, their ears miss nothing while they faithfully attend city and county board meetings as members of the League’s Observer Corps. These Eyes and Ears help make

government transparent! **Caroline Atkinson** and **Betty Brandon** are recognized as having some of the best eyes and ears around.

**Writer in Residence Award:** She can edit, she can desktop publish, she can make sense of the convoluted conversations at Board meetings. Our Secretary and Editor of the Voter cares about making the League look literate on paper, and succeeds in a big way: **Mary Ann Merchant**

**The Cut Above Award: Fabulous Forum Folks:** Why do something halfway when you can be FABULOUS! A proud moment for the League came this year at the fabulously organized, fabulously conducted and fabulously attended candidate forum for the District 97 seat, held at the VIA Center on February 21. Kudos to the following Fabulous Forum Folks. They are truly “a cut above.” We are proud to recognize the fabulous **Anne Walsh, Stacy Steiner, Mary McGinnis**, PowerPoint Genius **Myra Evans**, Moderator **Wanda Cochran**, Emcee **Barbara Caddell** and timekeepers **Charletta House** and **Aimee’ Walsh**.

**WAAB (WayAboveAnd Beyond) Awards:** This is a first-time award for a couple of very special WAABs. As if being a fulltime mom, operator of a bed and breakfast, and teacher of Spanish to preschoolers were not a full plate, this honoree graciously agreed to fill the breach left in the League presidency when our former president, Jane Everest, passed away unexpectedly last August. This person’s “Co-WAAB,” apparently realizing that fulltime social work in the Mobile County Public Schools did not provide nearly enough daily excitement or challenge, jumped into the breach as well. Our League is forever grateful to **Gina Finnegan** and **Barbara Caddell** for their artful leadership and exceptional selflessness as Co-Presidents during the past 8 months. They went Way Above and Beyond!

**WAAB Junior Awards:** To Gina’s children who have had to endure Board meetings and other League events, although they did get to snack on some fine treats!

**Legacy Banner Award for 2013:** This is a relatively new award which recognizes an outstanding League member by having that person’s name embroidered on the League Legacy Banner. The award spotlights members for any of a variety of reasons: for having a long, sustained loyalty to the League; for developing innovative projects for the League; for being “unsung heroes” who have worked tirelessly in jobs that do not always receive recognition. In other words, recognizing individuals who “Wave the League banner proudly” by just being who they are and doing what they do best.

This year’s award goes to someone who literally has done all of the above and more. In her relatively short time as a League member, she has held several offices, worked tirelessly to initiate and bring to fruition a myriad of League projects, been an outstanding spokesperson for the League, networker extraordinaire.....just the epitome of the League at its best. We are so sad that she will shortly be flying to the other side of the world to live, for awhile..... but perhaps to return in the future: **Mary McGinnis**





Pictured above: (top L-R) Barbara Caddell, Gina Finnegan, Caroline Atkinson, Betty Brandon  
(middle L-R) Andrea Pennington and Jane Gordon  
(bottom L-R) Barbara Caddell, Charletta House, Mary McGinnis, Anne Walsh, Aimee Walsh, Stacey Steiner, & Myra Evans



### **Myra Evans Appointed as a Ruth S. Shur Fellow**

The overall work that LWVM has undertaken in the past couple of years has received attention from the national office of the League of Women Voters. We received the national *Strengthening Democracy* award in June 2012, and just last month LWVM received an award at the State Convention for membership growth. Now, our own Myra Evans has been appointed as a Ruth S. Shur Fellow, with the endorsement of the state president, Kathy Byrd, local co-president Barbara Caddell, and state coordinator Mary McGinnis.

The Ruth S. Shur Fellowship is a national appointment to mentor and coach, via the phone and the internet, two states along with a partner coach, who has two other states. Selection is a very competitive process involving an application, three references, and review. Nationally, there are now 28 coaches. Myra recently found out not only was she accepted, but her states are Maine and Georgia. Her partner coach, Lottie Fox of Temecula, California, works with New Hampshire and Rhode Island. The Shur Fellow for Alabama is Julie Arneth of Wisconsin. She has worked with Mary McGinnis, the State Coordinator (position now open) and local coaches Scarlette Gaddy, Kathy Byrd and Debra Butler. One of the caveats of the program is that a coach is not allowed to coach his or her own state or league.

“Myra has been so successful in helping our league blossom that we are not surprised that she gained this prestigious position,” says Barbara Caddell, past co-president. “She epitomizes the best traditions of the league.” Myra says that her appointment is a testament to the work that LWVM and the state League are doing.

There are now some vacancies on the State Board. Please contact Myra Evans at [bobalouiemom@yahoo.com](mailto:bobalouiemom@yahoo.com) if you have any suggestions on who could fill these positions.

**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!!!**

**Margene Goecker  
Betty Borden Jones**

## Project H.O.P.E.

By Betty Shinn

It is a privilege to serve with the League of Women Voters Mobile as a member of the Executive Steering Committee of Project H.O.P.E. (Helping Offenders Pursue Excellence). This program is headed by Kenyon R. Brown, United States Attorney, Southern District of Alabama. There are many stakeholders at the table, including companies willing to hire ex-offenders, parole and probation officers offering guidance and valuable information, ex-offenders, community leaders and members of the faith community and many other interested civic and social organizations.

The Ex-Offender Initiative operating as Project HOPE provides a halcyon for ex-offenders in achieving the goals of reintegrating these individuals back into society once they have paid their debt to society and fulfilled all requirements imposed by the criminal justice system. The following data supports the need for Project H.O.P.E. and the Ex-Offenders Re-Entry Initiative:

*Why do so many ex-offenders become repeat offenders? Statistics compiled by the Administrative Office of the Courts in Washington D.C., indicate that ex-offender employment is a critical factor in whether recently released federal inmates are successful. Of the 262,000 federal prisoners that were released from federal prison between calendar years 2002-2006, 50% of those who could not secure any employment during the time of their supervised release (generally two-to-five years) committed a new crime or violated the terms of their release and were sent back to prison. However, an astonishing 93% of those who were able to secure employment during the entirety of their supervised release were able to successfully reintegrate back into society and not return to prison.*

Additionally, gaining the right to vote also help ex-offenders feel they are involved and participating in an important process as a citizen and member of the community. Our major role as members of LWVM is to gain knowledge and information to help with the restoration of voter's right. We also register offenders to vote once the ex-offender completes all sentencing requirements, pay all fines and fees and are eligible to vote once released. There are many ex-offenders whose crimes did not take away the right to vote once they have been released, and in these instances they are eligible to vote once certain requirements are met.

I assure you that in attending my first seminar, any allusions or preconceived notions regarding ex-offenders vanished. There was no way to tell which individuals at the seminar at Bishop State Central Campus were there to help or receive help as an ex-offender.

As a society, we are all in this together to make our world a better place, a more inclusive place to live, and embrace all in an effort to make our corner of the world a brighter place to live. Kudos to Kenyon R. Brown for the tremendous job he does job in bringing together the diverse groups and a plethora of individual willing to help ex-offenders remain ex-offenders which is a win-win for everyone. What a wonderful program Project HOPE is in the City of Mobile. There is room at the table for anyone wanting to participate in this program. Meetings are usually held on the third Thursday of every month at RSA Plaza in the conference room at the United States Attorney of the Southern District.



LWVM members working on the ex-offenders project, meeting with US Attorney Kenyon R. Brown: L-R Myra Evans, Eric Day, Betty Mack Shinn, Kenyon Brown, Kathryn Cariglino, Erica Perkins, and Andrea Pennington

### Keep Powering the Vote in 2013! (Reminder)

It might not be a presidential election year, but we can all keep working together to Power the Vote. Elections are going on nationwide this year, and Leagues are at the center of helping voters get registered, get the facts, and get to the polls. With that in mind, we challenge you to consider the following activities in 2013:

1. Host at least five registration drives at diverse locations, with one of them on National Voter Registration Day, September 24th (details coming soon). [Get our handy planning tips.](#)
2. Host a candidate forum or debate in your community. [Read our FAQ.](#)
3. Pursue an online voter's guide on VOTE411.org. Contact [Megan Brown](#) to learn more.
4. Meet with your local elections officials to discuss what worked and what didn't during 2012. [See our sample 2012 questions to get started,](#) or check in with your state League to see what election reform priorities they are working on.
5. Identify five media contacts and communicate regularly. Keep them in the loop about local voting-related developments. [See our media tips.](#)
6. Follow up with everyone you meet (registrants, volunteers, online networks, etc.) and remind them about upcoming elections. [Tailor these sample get-out-the-vote scripts.](#)



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