

MARCH 2001

President's Message

As I write this message on February 26, it's an unusually warm, crystal blue "spring" morning. It's hard to envision detrimental air quality or the wrangling of the political machinery in Montgomery. Yet these are the problems weighing on my mind. Regardless of the pleasant beauty of this day, hot weather will soon bring on asthma attacks and other health problems associated with the rising index of ground-level ozone. And the temperature of the Alabama state house will also rise as legislators begin to wrestle with the most divisive legislation.

Unfortunately, many of the bills that they will consider have no business on the legislators' desks. Many of the issues over which they'll be quibbling should be debated in the courthouses and city

halls of Alabama, including bills which relate only to Jefferson County and Birmingham municipalities. Couldn't their time be spent more wisely? Shouldn't they exclusively consider legislation which could improve the economic welfare and quality of life for all Alabamians—such as environmental measures?

Perhaps it's a stretch to consider the problem of lack of home rule in the same breath with air quality and other environmental issues, but an absurd, antiquated, convoluted Alabama constitution brings us to that point. Air quality in the Greater Birmingham area is detrimentally affected by three of the largest coal-burning power plants in the state. We can't do much about that locally, because regulations to improve air quality are under the control of our state

legislature (as it should be). But even if they had the political will to make improvement, that governmental body is busy with the minutia of Jefferson and other counties. Things just get curiously and curiously in our wonderland.

This issue of the *Voter* has information on several events that will inform citizens about our constitutional dilemma and promote reform. There's a forum on March 6 sponsored by Vestavia Voters with Visions and a rally in Montgomery on April 4 sponsored by the Alabama Citizens for Constitutional Reform. It will be the central focus of our LWVAL Convention in May right here in Birmingham. Let's do all that we can to attend and support these events, raise public attention, and provide citizen education.

V3 — Vestavia Voters with Vision

— will host a panel discussion on a rewrite of the 1901 Alabama State Constitution. The meeting will be Tuesday, March 6, 6:30p.m. at Vestavia Hills High School auditorium, located at 2235 Lime Rock Road. Panelists include Dr. Thomas Corts, Honorable Howard Hawk and the moderator, Professor Howard Walthall. This is open to anyone interested in Constitutional Reform.

STATEWIDE RALLY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

Can't seem to get excited about Constitutional Reform or don't think enough is being done to get the attention of our elected officials? Then join us to caravan to Montgomery on Wednesday, April 4th for a statewide rally on the capitol steps.

The rally is being organized by Alabama Citizens for Constitutional Reform, ACCR. This is going to be a good ole' get-some-attention rally. Mule-drawn carts will be coming in from the four corners of the state. A variety of speakers will have only three minutes to say what is on their mind and lots of signs to get our message across. To get our group ready to go we will have a sign making

party on Saturday, March 31st at 10:00 am. at Dave's Pizza in Homewood. Anyone interested in going to the rally can plan on meeting in the parking lot at the Days Inn in Hoover located at the intersection of I-65, Hwy 31 and Lorna Road. We will meet beginning at 8:15 am, to allow time to "decorate" the cars, and depart at 9:30 for Montgomery.

Don't miss out on these activities, mark your calendar.

- **SIGN PARTY**—Saturday, March 31
- **RALLY**—Wednesday, April 4

Contact Sarah McDonald for more info 967-2829 or e-mail smcdonald3357@charter.net

Your internet site for information: LVAL.org

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NATIONAL LEAGUE PRESIDENT IS NOTED AUTHOR

Dr. Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins, the 15th president of the League of Women Voters of the United States, is a recognized authority on the voting rights of African-Americans and is the author of *The Road to Black Suffrage* and *One Man One Vote: The History of the African-American Vote in the United States*.

A recipient of numerous awards for her voluntarism and civic involvement, Dr. Jefferson-Jenkins has been recognized by *Who's Who Among Successful African Americans*, *Who's Who in American Education*, and the Outstanding Young Woman in America Award. Most recently she was the recipient of the National Coalition of Black Civic Participation's Civic Leadership Award.

Dr. Jefferson-Jenkins leads the education and advocacy work of the League on public policy issues. She also works to encourage women and ethnic minorities to run for public office. Much of her tenure as president has been focused on a "Vision for the 21st Century" which emphasizes League impact, visibility and organizational development. Forward thinking outreach under her leadership is exemplified by the "Take A Friend to Vote" Campaign and DEMOCRACYNET or DNET (www.dnet.org).

Don't miss a unique opportunity to meet and hear Dr. Jefferson-Jenkins speak at the state convention banquet on Saturday, May 5, 2001 at the Tutwiler Hotel.

ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES COMMISSION COMPLETES ASSIGNMENT

On February 14 during a special unit meeting at Thirgood C.M.E. Church, Dr. Mable Anderson gave the League an update on the activities of the governor's task force on environmental initiatives. The task force, comprised of 63 members, met between August and December, 2000 and identified 64 issues to be addressed. The members then organized themselves into subcommittees: Air and Water, Natural Resources and Land Usage, Health Education and Environmental Management and Review. Dr. Anderson served on the latter subcommittee. She indicated that town meetings were held in twelve cities which gave the public opportunities to have their say in the form of concerns,

proposals and suggestions. These were included in final reports of the sub-committees to the full commission where a consensus vote was taken. The results of the voting on issue priorities can be found on this website: www.jsu.edu/depart/epic. The next step will be Governor Siegelman's resolve to bring this information to the attention of the Alabama legislature and the forthcoming legislation coming from that body to provide the desired results.

In addition, the group discussed the importance of Alabama constitutional reform and what our members can do to help make it happen. (See additional information this issue.)

Happy March Anniversary

The League appreciates your saving the League the expense of a dues notice by sending your dues (\$40 individual, \$60 family) on seeing this reminder.

Any additional contribution is gratefully received! If you wish to make a tax deductible contribution, it must be by separate check made out to the LWV of Alabama Education Fund.

Lois Albright

Grady Nunn

Anne Findley Shores

Mrs. Clinton Tatum

Got questions about
constitutional re-
form and our
League's support on this
issue?

Need convention in-
formation? Visit the
LWVAL's web site at

www.lwval.org

LWVGB SEEKS WAYS TO IMPROVE AIR AND WATER QUALITY IN THE GREATER BIRMINGHAM AREA

"The issue isn't whether Birmingham has an air pollution problem. Or how bad it is. The issue is what needs to be done about it - and at what cost." So states the Birmingham News editorial of October 20, 2000, "Costs of dirty air—We're going to pay one way or another." According to a major environmental study released last spring*, a substantial amount of Alabama's air pollution is attributable to pre-1985 coal-fired power plants. Relative to more modern facilities, these plants produce high levels of sub-micron particulate, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, carbon dioxide, and mercury. These contaminants contribute to ground-level ozone, acid rain, global warming, and pollution of water resources, and therefore pose substantial health and environmental risks.

On February 16, LWVGB President Jean Johnson met with representatives of the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy

(based in Knoxville, TN), the Alabama Environmental Council, and other non-profit, non-partisan organizations to consider forming an alliance. The goal of the alliance would be to reduce pollution from coal-fired power plants and to encourage the use of renewable energy sources. The group will tentatively be named the Alabama Clean Air Action Network.

As LWVGB considers joining this alliance, our Board is reviewing the mission statement and goals of the group. A close relationship looks promising. The LWVGB supports the enforcement of existing legislation to reduce air pollution, and we support the provision of reasonable incentives and adequate financing of measures which would reduce air pollution. At the national level, the League of Women Voters also promotes high environmental standards. The LWVUS seeks to "promote an environment beneficial to

life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest by recognizing the interrelationships of air quality, energy, land use, waste management and water resources."

Dr. Steven A. Smith, Executive Director of the SACE, will conduct a workshop in Birmingham at our LWVAL Convention on May 5 to present the problems posed by Alabama's coal-fired power plants and to seek solutions. Air pollution is a concern of high priority to Leaguers in Alabama and especially in the Greater Birmingham area. Let's attend this workshop and seek ways to improve our air and water quality. A good environment is integral to the economic well-being and quality of life for all our citizens.

(* Report of the U.S. Public Interest Research Group, released April, 2000. More information at www.pirg.org)



MARCH UNIT MEETING

Since a majority of our members expressed an interest in the environment on the membership survey, I thought it would be interesting to hear from some of the local environmental groups. On Wednesday, March 21st a speaker with the Cahaba River Society will be speaking on the effect of land management with water quality. For the future I want to have someone from the Water Works Board and the county air quality monitoring. If you have any suggestions I would appreciate hearing from you. Gayle England, telephone 979-7102 or e-mail geengland@compuserve.com

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKING

CONVENTION—May 5-6, 2000
Public Relations—this job has been simplified with the assistance of the Birmingham Convention Planning. All we need is a person to follow-up with them and other local media.

Registration—several people have said they will help with this but we need a few more people to get this done.
Hospitality—this is the "fun" job. If you enjoy being with people or entertaining then this is the job for you. Colette has some ideas that can really get you going with this job.

Program—if you like working with a computer or want to do a job in the comfort of your home or office this job can be yours. e-mail or fax access is helpful. Contact Colette Scott at 988-0868 or e-mail bobandcolette@mindspring.com.

ELECTION MONITORING—Now is an opportune time to help your local league by signing for one of the following jobs now. If you don't take a minute to contact the person in charge of the project that you are interested in doing, someone else may beat you to it. Or you will get a telephone call asking you to do something you may not be as interested in. **DON'T DELAY, CALL NOW** and sign up to get involved.

Election monitoring at Tuxedo Junction, Thursday, March 29th. We need six people to work a three hour shift beginning 9:00 am until 6:30 pm. This is an easy job and one that the League has been doing for many years. Contact Rose Packer at 592-2729 or e-mail RMPACKER01@AOL.COM

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

CONVENTION DEADLINES—see State Voter for additional information

- **Registration:** April 15, 2000—(late fee added after this date)
- **Hotel**—April 4, 2001 for the preferred rate of \$109 single/double plus tax—322-2100
- **BANQUET**—Additional banquet tickets @ \$38 available for guests until April 30, 2001—only!!

MARCH CALENDAR

Tues., March 6	V3 Panel Discussion of rewrite of Alabama Constitution Vestavia Hills High School Auditorium 2235 Lime Rock Road	12:00 noon
Wed., March 21	Unit Meeting Civil Rights Institute Speaker from Cahaba River Society	12:00 noon
Wed., March 28	LWVGB Board Meeting BACC 8th Floor Conference Room	12:00 noon - 1:00 p.m.
Thurs., March 29	Monitoring of Tuxedo Court Housing Community Elections	9:00 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.
Sat., March 31	Sign Making Party for Constitutional Reform Rally Participants Dave's Pizza in Homewood.	10:00 a.m.
Wed., April 4	Constitutional Reform Rally in Montgomery Meet at Days Inn Hoover Depart Hoover	11:00 a.m. 8:15 a.m. 9:30 a.m.
Sat., Sun., May 5-6	Alabama League of Women Voters State Convention	

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The League of Women Voters is a national, nonpartisan organization, whose purpose is to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government, and to act on selected governmental issues. The League does not support or oppose any political party or candidate. It is financed by membership dues and contributions of interested citizens who realize that the League is the spirit of democracy in action. Membership is open to anyone.