



The VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GREATER BIRMINGHAM

<http://www.lwvgb.org>

May 2017

Former President's Paragraphs

Jean Johnson

What a productive year it has been for the League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham! You can see the details in the article "LWV of Greater Birmingham – the Year in Review," but let me share a few highlights with you here. This year the LWVGB has held voter registration and education events in 13 locations (with three more planned before the end of the school year), kept citizens informed about elections and voting requirements through postings on our website, Facebook, and Twitter accounts, offered rides to the polls, trained and certified 16 [observers](#) to serve as the eyes and ears on local government boards and agencies, educated ourselves and the public about payday loans in Alabama, taken member consensus to help establish the state position on that issue, made citizen interaction with elected officials much easier with the major update of LWVGB's most popular publication "[Alabama Government at Your Fingertips](#),"

and even delved into little-known history of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing through a luncheon presentation by renowned Birmingham author T. K. Thorne. Our visibility has risen in the Greater Birmingham community. These league projects and volunteer works have been shared with members and the public through our newly revived newsletter, *The Voter*. Regular publication of *The Voter* and a fantastic Membership Cocktail Reception at the Summit Club (now Club Birmingham) inspired current members and attracted many new members. What is the result of all this activity? I believe that it has filled our League with purpose and is the fundamental reasons for our renewed growth. These events and accomplishments did not happen of their own accord. It was because of the dedicated efforts of many LWVGB volunteers. These volunteers were not just those in the administration. Many, many grassroots members made these things happen. On behalf of the Board of Directors, thank you all, LWVGB Members, for making this a most successful league year.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS HIGHLIGHTS

Mark your calendar. See this issue or [LWVGB Online Calendar](#) for event details.

- May 14:** Mothers Day – Remember a special woman in your life.
- May 29:** Memorial Day
- June 22-25:** LWVUS Council; D.C
- June 14:** Flag Day
- July 4:** Independence Day
- August 15:** Special Primary Election - U.S. Senate
- August 22:** Birmingham City Municipal Elections
- September 26:** Special Primary Runoff Election - U.S. Senate (if necessary)
- October 3:** Birmingham City Municipal Runoff Elections (if necessary)
- December 12:** Special General Election - U.S. Senate



LWVUS COUNCIL

June 22 – 25, 2017

The National Conference Center
Leesburg, VA

LWVAL WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE MEMORIAL FUND

Honor that special woman in your life on Mothers Day with a gift to support the national Women's Suffrage Memorial.

On Thursday evening, April 27th, LWVGB members elected a new board to carry our League forward. Congratulations to you all, and thank you for serving our league in leadership. I particularly thank LWVGB President Starr Culpepper for stepping in to offer her service as president. This position unexpectedly opened, and Starr unselfishly answered the league's call. The new LWVGB Board is made up of President Starr Culpepper, Vice President Leonette Slay, Secretary Mikesha Harvill, Treasurer Leslie O'Neil, and Directors Connie Arnwine, Maria Hawkins, Maggie Howard, Nancy Sales, and Tyrone Williams, Sr.. I am certain that the LWVGB will continue to grow and strengthen under their leadership.

Thank you, Members, for the opportunity to serve you as LWVGB president. Because of your moral and volunteer support, this has been a very gratifying year for me. All of us on the 2016-17 LWVGB Board – Vice President Arlene Godwin Woods, Secretary Starr Culpepper, Treasurer Rev. Albert Hyche, and Directors Maggie Howard, Mikesha Harvill, and Nancy Sales, and I - thank you for your unflinching support. I look forward to helping LWVGB continue to pursue the league's mission in the coming year – to encourage the active and informed participation of citizens in our democracy, influence public policy, and educate citizens about complex public issues. Will you join me? Let's go!

New Board Leads LWVGB Forward



LWVGB Board of Directors, 2017-18

Left to right: Dir. Maggie Howard, Dir. Nancy Sales, Dir. Maria Hawkins, Pres. Starr Culpepper, VP Leonette Slay, Secretary Mikesha Harvill, Treasurer Leslie O'Neil, Dir. Connie Arnwine, Dir. Tyrone Williams, Sr., and outgoing President. Jean Johnson

On Thursday, April 27th, the League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham looked toward the 2017-18 league year at the organization's annual business meeting. At Nabeel's Cafe and Market in Homewood, members elected a new Board of Directors, set the budget for the coming year, changed bylaws, and readopted LWVGB issue positions.

New Board President Starr Culpepper is excited to assume leadership of the LWVGB. Following her election, she said, "The Alabama Senate Special Election Primary is coming up on August 15 and Birmingham Municipal Elections on August 22nd. Our League is educating citizens about the elections, registering them to vote, and encouraging active participation in democracy at all levels. We will continue to pursue this vital part of our mission." The LWVGB is also continuing to observe local government boards and agencies in the Greater Birmingham area. Culpepper continued, "The Greater Birmingham Observer Corps is a powerful tool for assuring government transparency and supporting the people's right to know."

The following members are elected to the LWVGB Board of Directors for 2017-18:

Officers:

President Starr Culpepper
Vice President Leonette Slay
Secretary Mikesha Harvill
Treasurer Leslie O'Neil

New Board Leads LWVGB Forward (cont'd)

Directors:

Connie Arnwine
Maria Hawkins
Margaret "Maggie" Howard *
Nancy Sales
Tyrone Williams, Sr.

* Margaret "Maggie" Howard was previously elected and is serving the second year of her term as LWVGB director. Outgoing President Jean Johnson was elected as chair of the Nominating Committee.

To view the 2017-18 budget, changes in bylaws, Program issue positions established and the Board of Directors elected by the membership at this business meeting, visit our [membership area](#) on the LWVGB website. (Username and password required. Contact [Jean Johnson](#) if you are a league member and need access information.) The business meeting booklet is posted there for your review. All business was passed as proposed.

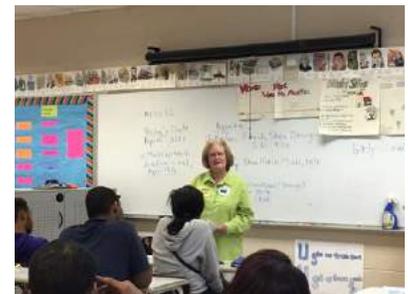
Would you like to offer direction to the new board? All LWVGB members are invited to send your ideas for the coming year to admin@lwvgb.org. Grassroots member input is a vital part of our league operation.

New Voters Ready for August Primary Election: An update on the Youth Voter Registration Project

Maggie Howard and Nancy Sales, LWVGB Voter Services Co-Chairs

A total of 89 seniors from Bessemer and Fairfield High Schools are now registered to vote! On Thursday April 13th volunteers, Jean Johnson, Connie Arnwine, Chris Underwood and Maggie Howard covered Mr. Ciger and Mr. Lyons' senior Social Studies classes at Bessemer High. Our presentation, "Why Voting is Important" included a brief history of voting rights amendments, emphasized the potential influence of the "youth vote" and focused on the importance of mid-term and local elections.

Wednesday, April 19th, Jean Johnson, Jan Colson, Yvonne Brakefield Knowles and Maggie Howard visited Mrs. Mays' Senior Government classes at Fairfield High. Again, our presentation focused on the importance of youth voting with emphasis on state and local issues that directly influence the quality of life of students and their families. Students in both schools were given the opportunity to complete a voter registration form in class and forms have been delivered to the Jefferson County Board of Registrar.



Our project continues with three additional voter registration events next week. Tuesday, May 9th volunteers will cover Mr. Stanley and Mr. Fuller's senior classes at Minor High School in Adamsville. On Wednesday, May 10th working with Mrs. Glasscock, assistant to the principal, a table registration set up during the lunch sessions will offer voter registration to eligible seniors at Tarrant High School. Thursday, April 11th volunteers Chris Underwood and Yvonne Brakefield Knowles will work with the senior advisor, Mrs. Lowe, at Midfield High to assist seniors there who are not registered.

With Governor Kay Ivey's announcement last week that a special election will be held to elect Alabama's Senator to replace Jeff Sessions, newly registered youth voters will have their first opportunity to exercise their right to vote on August 15th, 2017 in the senatorial primary.

Voter Services thanks all volunteers for their help and all members of the League of Women Voters Greater Birmingham for their continued support of the Youth Voter Registration Project.

The LWVGB Year in Review

Greater Birmingham league activity in 2016-17

What a year it's been for the League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham! We want to share the highlights of our league activities with you here and express our thanks and gratitude to the many, many league volunteers who made these accomplishments a reality.

LWVGB kicked off the year with Orientation and Planning at the lake home of Joyce Lanning. LWVAL President Anne Permaloff led board orientation. LWVGB set Voter Service, Citizen Education, and League Development as priorities for 2016-17.

An earlier Youth Voter Registration Program grant from LWV-EF allowed our league to register 341 voters in high schools, community colleges, and universities in Jefferson, Bibb, and St. Clair Counties. We celebrated those accomplishments in June at a very fun barbeque at the home of Director Maggie Howard. The Voter Service Team, led by chairwomen Maggie Howard and Nancy Sales, was fired up to continue its work into the fall. During the week of National Voter Registration Day, September 27th, 2017, we held registration and education events at Elyton Village Violence Reduction Kickoff, Smithfield Community Health Fair, Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (in partnership with LWVAL), Jefferson State Community College "Get On Board" (Jefferson and Shelby campuses), Lawson State Community College (Birmingham and Bessemer campuses), UAB, Kelly Ingram Park, Firehouse Shelter, and a Sigma Kappa Sorority member event at UAB. We registered 194 at those 12 events and made strong community connections with other organizations. Some of the many league members and friends who contributed to the voter registration effort were: Nancy Sales, Maggie Howard, Chris Underwood, Yvonne Brakefield Knowles, Barbara Lewis, Anne Permaloff, Rita and Jim Winkates, Kaydey Erdreich Breman, Sybil Breman, Maggie Howard, Rita and Jim Winkates, Connie Arrwine, Jan Colson, Michael O'Donnell, Leonette Slay, Judith Hand, Jean and Pete Johnson, and Ida Tyree Hyche. (If we've overlooked anyone who assisted with voter registrations, please forgive. There were so many outstanding volunteers!) FYI, LWVGB has been awarded a Youth Voter Registration Project grant again for 2017, and we're visiting several area high schools before the end of the school year. See the article on Voter Service in this issue of *The Voter* for more information.

LWVGB's voter assistance and education were not limited to voter registration drives. This past year, LWVGB provided citizens with timely Election 2016 information at lwvgb.org and on social media at Facebook and Twitter @LWVGB. We gave assistance to the statewide Vote411.org voter education effort by providing research on constitutional amendments on the November 8th ballots statewide. For the first time, LWVGB held a social media contest to promote Get Out The Vote. Anyone who posted their "selfie" photo with an "I Voted!" sticker and #LWVGB was entered for a chance to win an Amazon gift card. Congratulations again to Ms. Lillian Bradberry of Center Point, winner of the contest. LWVGB intern Shibani Chakrabarty came up with that very fun tech idea to GOTV. (This is why we need more young members!) Those who wanted a reminder to vote and receive election information gave us their cell phone number and/or email address at voter registrations. Shibani helped us get all that information into a digital database. Prior to the election we shot out heads-up text and email messages to the registered voters to remind them to go to the polls and take valid photo voter id. Also, for the first time, LWVGB offered "Rides to the Polls" on Nov. 8. The program was coordinated by Chris Underwood. She worked with Urban Ministries, YMCA, and Greater Birmingham Ministries to help find those in need of a ride. On Election Day, Chris and her team - Jean Johnson, Carmen Lau, Ann Mitchell, Charles Hawkins, and Sally and Greg Bergquist - were ready and on call. Citizens were further served with an update of LWVGB's "Alabama Government at Your Fingertips," or as we sometimes refer to it, "Fingertips." Yvonne Brakefield Knowles and Judith Hand did extensive research to bring the information in this online document current. "Fingertips" provides contact information for and encourages communication with local, state, and federal government officials. It is information that is often sought on our League's website. See "Fingertips" at www.lwvgb.org/learn-vote/fingertips/

LWVGB renewed focus this year on member service. In August LWVGB reinstated online publication of *The Voter* newsletter to keep members and the public informed about the League's good works and volunteer opportunities. In September Membership co-chairs Starr Culpepper and Mikesha Harvill made all the arrangements for our annual member cocktail reception at the Summit Club (now Club Birmingham). Approximately 90 members and guests attended, and several joined the LWVGB on the spot. Another event that attracted new members was our Holiday Luncheon on December 3rd at The Club. Renowned author Teresa (T. K.) Thorne was guest speaker. She spoke on her book [*Last Chance for Justice: How Relentless Investigators Uncovered New Evidence Convicting the Birmingham Church Bombers*](#). Teresa is the daughter of Jane Katz who was a league legend as LWVAL state activist, lobbyist, and legislative reporter in Montgomery. Teresa shared some very moving remembrances of her mother with us.

On October 16th, members and the public learned much about the practices and current laws governing payday lending storefront operations in Alabama. The educational session was led by Hayley Colson Lewis and informed by the work of the LWVAL Payday Loan Study Committee. The members held an even more detailed discussion in the meeting that followed as we came to consensus on this important state issue. Ida Tyree Hyche led consensus-taking. The LWVGB consensus results were reported to the LWVAL

The LWVGB Year in Review (cont'd)

Board and contributed to our league's ultimate state position on that issue. Once the position was defined, the LWVAL took action to support proposed state payday loan legislation that would better regulate that industry and protect citizens. LWVAL also actively opposed legislation counter to that objective.

Ida Tyree-Hyche served the league in several capacities this year. As noted above, she led the consensus process for our Birmingham league. She also served as a director on the LWVAL board and on the state Payday Loan Study Committee that researched the payday loan industry and provided leagues across the state with thorough, unbiased information needed to reach an informed consensus decision. She also served as off-board chair of the LWVGB Advocacy Committee and kept the Birmingham board informed about proposed state legislation in several areas. In addition, she served as the chair of LWVGB's Nominating Committee and was responsible for bringing together the great leadership you see represented in the LWVGB 2017-18 Board of Directors.

LWVGB launched the [Greater Birmingham Observer Corps](#) (GBOC) this year. This program, an outgrowth of the traditional and well-established league Observer Corps, allows trained LWVGB members and select non-members to observe on behalf of the league. Allowing well-qualified, non-league member observers (a new policy) now makes broader coverage possible. Community leaders such as Anne Florie, Odessa Woolfolk, and Carol Clarke (who has since joined the LWVGB) wanted to see greater transparency and accountability in local government. The GBOC was born of this mutual vision. We've found a great fit with the Community Action Committee – Young Partners (CAC-YP). Haley Colson Lewis is president of that organization and is also an LWVGB leader working to promote the GBOC. It was a very fortunate fit! We hope to bring in volunteers from several other nonpartisan community organizations with missions similar to the League's. An after work information session was held on February 23rd at [ArchitectureWorks](#) in downtown Birmingham. Carol Clarke made these arrangements and was even able to get the Richard I Pigford Family Foundation to provide their wonderful facility for free to the LWVGB. On March 15 and as a highlight event of Sunshine Week 2017, LWVGB held a GBOC Training and Certification course over a working lunch again at ArchitectureWorks LWVGB Observer Corps Training Director Ann Smith coordinated and led the session. O. L. "Pete" Johnson informed the group about Alabama's Open Meetings Law and their legal rights and limitations as observers. Jean Johnson gave information about volunteer roles and our reporting process. Nancy Ekberg, a long-time League observer at both the local and state levels, inspired the trainees with real life examples illustrating how observation and reporting can lead to positive changes in the behavior of observed government officials and the resulting actions of those government bodies. Sixteen were certified to observe and/or research on behalf of the League. The following bodies are scheduled for observation by certified volunteers in the GBOC program (observers in parentheses): Housing Authority Birmingham District (Matthew Smith), Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority (Kaydee Erdreich Breman and Chris Underwood), and Birmingham Water Works Board (Leonette Slay and Sherry Lewis). Observers have also shown interest in attending meetings of the Airport Authority, Birmingham and Jefferson County Boards of Education, and Public Library Board. We will post reports at observercorps.lwvgb.org for review by the public, media, and officials. The local press has expressed great interest in this work and will cover news of interest.

Because of unforeseen circumstances that arose during her term, Vice President Arlene Godwin Woods had to resign from the LWVGB Board in February, 2017. Arlene was serving as chair of the LWVGB Fundraising Committee. Although she did not have the opportunity to carry them out, she did provide good ideas to raise funds for our league. The list will be helpful to the 2017-18 LWVGB Board as it explores development ideas in the coming year.

And speaking of funding, all this league work, of course, requires money and a tight eye on our budget. Thank you to our Treasurer Rev. Albert Hyche who has kept our finances straight all year and also served on the LWVGB Budget Committee. We also appreciate the good work of former Treasurer Michael O'Donnell who chaired that Budget Committee. Together, Michael and Rev. Albert developed a sound budget that will carry us through 2018.

This article is quite lengthy, but it is necessary to acknowledge the many, many league members and friends who made this year a success. Here we see living proof that the League of Women Voters is a vibrant, grassroots organization that is actively making democracy work in the Greater Birmingham area. Thank you, one and all, for your dedication to the LWVGB and your active support of our league's mission.

League of Women Voters of Alabama - 2017 Convention

Submitted by: 2017 Delegates Tyrone Williams, Robyn Hyden, Connie Arnwine

Our visit to Mobile to attend the 2017 League of Women Voters of Alabama Convention started on a high note with a progressive dinner and tour of three lovely homes in one of Mobile's historic districts on Friday night. Of course the food and company were superb as Mobile league members are exceptional hosts. Not only did they prepare the delicious food for the progressive dinner, but they also prepared much of the food for lunch and breakouts to keep our expenses as low as possible. After all we are all on a tight budget.

Saturday morning the proposed program, two year budget, slate of officers and directors and amendment and bylaws were presented to those in attendance. While this is a pretty heady task, State President Anne Permaloff easily guided us through the process. As many know, Anne is a long time member who has held many positions within the League. If anyone knows the ins and outs of League business, it is Anne. We were equally impressed by the many other league members present who have been members and active participants in the LWV for many years. Their collective knowledge is impressive and invaluable. Likewise, we were pleased to see many younger women present who appeared to be ready and able to step up and move the League forward with fresh and innovative ideas.



Two of our newer and younger members, Robyn Hyden and Haley Colson Lewis, will serve on the State Board as Directors along with Jean Johnson who is incoming 1st Vice President and Starr Culpepper, incoming Secretary. Our league will be very well represented by these outstanding individuals. While Jean could not be present during the convention, her name came up numerous times because of the work she already does for the Board in maintaining our website and social media accounts. Everyone acknowledged her contributions to the League. And of course not everyone present was female. Our own Tyrone Williams attended as one of the three Greater Birmingham LWV delegates and was a great addition to the group. If Tyrone felt any intimidation from being one of three men in attendance, he certainly did not show it.

Saturday afternoon we focused on advocacy. Anne Permaloff, along with Hattie Kaufman from Tuscaloosa LWV, presented League Advocacy 101. They discussed how the league develops advocacy positions from study to position to action. They reminded us that the league is nonpartisan and that the strength of the league is that the League speaks with one voice. They also reminded us that only the president of the local league or of the state league may speak for the league. Members are encouraged to use the research and discussion information developed by LWV when advocating as an individual but a member must never give the impression that s/he is speaking for the league. We were also fortunate to hear David Stout, a legislative coordinator for Alabama Arise. He shared his experiences working as a lobbyist for AEA. Now he is working with the legislature on Arise issues. He gave us updates on current legislation and provided insights into the legislative process. You have been receiving LWVAL action alerts regarding payday lending reform bills that Alabama Arise has promoted for years. In addition to these bills, Anne encouraged everyone present to regularly check the Legislative Report on the LWVAL website which gives the league status on bills in the current 2017 legislature. You may find the link on the main LWVAL web page right below the photo of the state capitol.



On Saturday evening we attended the LWVAL Transparency in Government Celebration in Mobile's historic Saenger Theatre. Mobile Councilwoman Bess Rich (pictured here) won the Transparency in Government Award. It was noted that she governs "with full disclosure to the people she represents of the thought process behind her decisions and a consistent energy for being in possession of ALL of the facts behind all decisions she is asked to make." The event was well attended by local Mobile officials and friends honoring the council woman. It was deliciously catered by the culinary students from the local community college. Birmingham political journalist Kyle Whitmire was the guest speaker at the event and did a bang up job.

Sunday morning, we voted on the program, slate of officers and directors, proposed changes to the bylaws and proposed budget. Delegates also voted to go forward with a planned study on the issue of clean energy. Joyce Lanning (another Greater Birmingham LWV member) explained that even though the study was not completed following the last state convention, membership retains an interest in seeing the study completed with renewed interest and input from the incoming Board. Sunday's business meeting ended early to allow everyone time to travel home before impending storms arrived. Instead of having time at the end of the meeting for current members to give recommendations to the incoming board, members were invited to email Anne Permaloff with their comments. All League members are invited to share information and recommendations to the incoming board including Greater Birmingham Directors Jean Johnson, Starr Culpepper, Robyn Hyden and Haley Colson Lewis. You may email them or Anne Permaloff.

Board of Directors, 2017-19

Starr Culpepper	President (2018)
Leonette Slay	Vice President (2018)
Mikesha Harvill	Secretary (2018)
Leslie O'Neil	Treasurer (2018)
Connie Arnwine	Director (2017-19)
Maria Hawkins	Director (2017-19)
Margaret Howard	Director (2016-18)
Nancy Sales	Director (2017-19)
Tyrone Williams	Director (2017-19)

Nominating Committee (2018)

Jean Johnson, Chair
(Vacant)

Off Board

TBA	VOTER Editor
TBA	Advocacy
TBA	Observer Corps

QUOTABLE QUOTES

"Why has government been instituted at all? Because the passions of men will not conform to the dictates of reason and justice, without constraint."

~ *Alexander Hamilton*

"I praise loudly. I blame softly."

~ *Catherine the Great*

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