



The VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GREATER BIRMINGHAM
<http://www.lwvgb.org>

September 2018

FAREWELL MAGGIE HOWARD

The LWVGB is sad to see Maggie Howard leave the Birmingham area but pleased to know she has already made plans to join the League in Volusia County, FL where she will be making her new home effective August 29th. She has been a stalwart worker in voter registrations and a strong supporter of all League activities. We wish her the best and know that she will be a major contributor to Volusia County League efforts.



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL MONTH

September is our traditional Dues Renewal Month. Please submit your dues payment [online](#) or by [postal mail](#).



CALENDAR OF EVENTS HIGHLIGHTS

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

- Sep 17: Constitution Day
- Sep 21: UN Day of Peace
- Sep 25: National VR Day
- Sep 25: LWVGB Board Mtg.
- Sep 27: LWVGB Cocktail Reception
- Oct 08: Judicial Candidates Forum
- Oct 22: Voter registration deadline Gen Electn
- Oct 23: LWVGB Board Mtg (tentative)
- Oct 24: United Nations Day
- Nov 03: Absentee Ballot Application Deadline
- Nov 05: Deadline to cast Absentee Ballot
- Nov 06: ELECTION DAY
- Nov 27: Annual Giving Tuesday
- Dec 01: LWVGB Holiday Luncheon

Save the dates!

LWVAL CONVENTION 2019

May 17-19th

Embassy Suites by Hilton
2410 University Boulevard
Tuscaloosa, AL 35401

More details soon!

LWVGB COCKTAIL RECEPTION

9/27/2018

Birmingham City Club
1901 6th Ave. N.
5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Reservation Deadline 9/25/18

Contact [Yvonne Brakefield Knowles](#) with your reservation count.

You don't want to miss this!



**Bring your friends!
Don't forget your business cards!**

Q&A WITH BIRMINGHAM MAYOR RANDALL WOODFIN

Jean Johnson, LWVGB Off Board Director

On May 17th, 2018, Birmingham Mayor Randall Woodfin addressed members of the League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham and the public at [Beloved Community Church](#) in the Avondale neighborhood. At the conclusion of his presentation, the mayor answered audience questions. The event was live-streamed on Facebook [@LWVGB](#), and the captured [video is posted here](#).



Because there were more questions than time would allow, Mayor Woodfin agreed to answer other submitted questions at a later time. Here are the [follow-up questions submitted and Mayor Woodfin's responses](#) received Aug. 21st, 2018 via email from Mr. Edward Bowser, a member of Mayor Woodfin's public information team. The League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham thanks Mayor Woodfin for speaking to our members and the public and for answering all questions.

SUPPORT FOR THE LEAGUE

Leslie O'Neil, LWVGB Treasurer

Membership is open to anyone, man or woman, 16 years of age or older.

Dues are:

Individual	- \$55.00
Household	- \$75.00
Student	- \$15.00

Since the national League is emphasizing the development of young leaders, the LWVGB has reduced the membership fee to \$15 for a student enrolled in a high school, college, university, community college, technical school, or similar institution. If you know any local high school or college students who would be interested in joining the League, we urge you to reach out to them.

When you pay your dues, please join your Board members in giving a little extra. All additional contributions enable the local League to be more visible and to provide more services.

To pay your 2018-2019 LWVGB dues online, go to:

<http://www.lwvgb.org/about/dues/>

If you can afford to add "something extra" to your online dues payment, follow this procedure:

1. Add your membership category to the Cart.
2. Click out of the Cart with the gray "x" in the upper left corner
3. Go to the bottom of the page and add an amount for "something extra."
4. Click "Add to Cart" and follow the PayPal payment procedure.

To pay your 2018-2019 LWVGB dues by mail, send a check made out to LWVGB to:

Leslie D. O'Neil
LWVGB Treasurer
1964 Rocky Brook Drive
Birmingham, AL 35243-1762

Contributions to the general fund may be added to your dues check. If you want to make a tax-deductible contribution, donate online to the LWVAL Education Fund (for use in the Birmingham area) or send a separate check to Leslie made out to the LWVAL Education Fund and indicate "Birmingham Account" on the check.

Please pay dues for 2018-2019 by September 30.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

NATIONAL LOBBY CORPS VISITS SENATOR DOUG JONES

Barbara Caddell, LWVAL President

The National Lobby Corps approached the LWVAL in late July informing us that they were sending Ms. Jacqueline Coolidge to talk to Senator Doug Jones about questions he could ask of Supreme Court nominees. Ms. Coolidge asked for information about Alabama in general and the Senator's views in particular so she could craft her approach. I appreciated the "heads up" and offered some advice, reminding her of the Senator's past support for pro-choice views and the tenuousness of his current position vis-a-vis Alabama's political climate. I also asked if she could discuss voting rights issues with him as well.

Ms. Coolidge reported that she met with the Senator's staffer, Stephen Davis on August 1st. (Because they are not usually constituents of the legislators they visit, Lobby Corps members usually meet with the staff rather than the legislator.) Mr. Davis would not, of course, commit the Senator to a position on the nominee. He stated that the Senator was conducting a thorough review of the nominee's background (including his written work) before deciding how to vote. He was impressed with the quality of the LWV questions and indicated that the Senator would be interested in discussing voting rights issues with us.

Because Ms. Coolidge was sent only to discuss the Supreme Court nominee, she only mentioned Alabama's concerns with voting rights/voter suppression, etc. in passing. Instead, she encouraged me to contact Senator Jones to schedule an appointment for this purpose. Although I tried to schedule such an appointment, the senator's Alabama schedule did not permit time for one. I will be talking with Ms Brantley Fry, Senator Jones' Alabama chief of staff, on Wednesday afternoon, September 5, in Mobile. Accompanying me will be Elizabeth Gonce (Greater Shoals MAL Unit president and LWVAL Board Member) and Mary Anne Wilson (LWV Mobile President). We look forward to discussing with Ms Fry how we can work together to 'Make Democracy Work' in Alabama.

VOTER SERVICES

Nancy Sales, LWVGB Director

[National Voter Registration Day](#) (NVRD) is **Tuesday, September 25th** (the 4th Tuesday in September). We will hold a voter registration for high school students at Bessemer High School from 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. We appreciate the school administration's support for this important civic activity and the hard work done by LWVGB member Barbara Lewis to coordinate this event. In addition to Bessemer High School, we plan to schedule additional voter registrations on 9/25. Stay tuned for more details.

We also have scheduled a voter registration on Wednesday, 10/3 at Bluff Park United Methodist Church Food Pantry from 8:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Do you or your family members/friends want to join us in this incredibly important part of the life and work of our democracy? Please contact me by [email](#) or on 205-613-6569 to add your name to our list of voter registration volunteers. We look forward to your participation!

Volunteers, please remember to take pictures and/or video at voter registration events. We want to let citizens know about the good work that we do to help make democracy work, and a picture is worth a thousand words! Also please make note of number of registrations, changes of address, materials given, etc.

Thank you!



PRESIDENT'S PARAGRAPHS

Leonette Slay, LWVGB President

Judicial Candidates Forum

We are working on plans for a Judicial Candidates forum to be held on Monday, October 8th at 6:00 p.m. Fourteen (14) candidates will be invited to participate. Final details, including location for the forum, will be communicated to the membership as soon as possible.

Senator Doug Jones' Town Hall

At least eight LWVGB members attended Senator Doug Jones' town hall on August 13th at Parker High School in Birmingham. This followed a similar town hall Jones held in Hoover on July 28th.

Over 100 attended the Birmingham town hall, which opened with a welcome by state Rep Juandalynn Givan (D-BHM). Senator Jones emphasized his priorities: health care--saving medical facilities in rural areas and the expansion of Medicaid in AL; broadband access in rural areas which will help telemedicine for underserved areas; mitigation of tariffs (AL is third in the nation in auto production, behind MI and SC). In Jones' words, "The president's ill-conceived actions on tariffs will really hurt Alabamians." Jones also said much more bipartisan work is being done than is being reflected in the media. Of the 90 bills he has cosponsored so far, 80 are bipartisan.

Jones said he is looking carefully at Judge Kavanaugh's record and will determine whether or not to support his nomination to the Supreme Court after reviewing all of Kavanaugh's previous opinions and analyzing the confirmation hearings. He has not determined whether or not he will vote to confirm. He is aware of ads being run tying his vote to his reelection and said no matter how he votes, "many people will be mad at me". He said politicization of judicial selections are a troubling development and reminded the audience that Justice Scalia, "the judge that Democrats loved to hate", was confirmed by the Senate 98-0.

On a local Birmingham issue, Jones indicated he had just sent a letter to the EPA recommending that certain neighborhoods in north Birmingham be placed on the EPA Superfund list. This drew a rebuke from state Rep. Mary Moore, who thought she and her constituents should have been informed before the letter was sent.

Jones then accepted questions from attendees. Questions dealt with the Affordable Care Act, confirmation of Kavanaugh (both pro and con), the status of SNAP (the Farm Bill is in conference but the House version stripping SNAP benefits will not pass). One questioner asked if the U.S. is on the verge of World War III. Jones said no, but "Russian interference is getting close to putting U.S. democracy in peril" and reminded the audience that President Putin is a former Soviet KGB (intelligence) officer. Jones also fielded a question on immigration. He told attendees that immigration is a major problem and that Congress had crafted a bipartisan solution but it was unsatisfactory for the president. The local union president for U.S. Postal Service workers asked about efforts to privatize the postal service (Jones is against this). The union president also urged Jones to look into efforts to allow USPS to engage in banking services. According to the questioner, this would reduce the need for payday lending and USPS is already set up to perform certain banking services.

Overall, I was impressed by the variety of questions and the level of knowledge of questioners, as well as the candid answers of Senator Jones. He indicated that other town halls would follow in other Alabama cities.



GREATER BIRMINGHAM ALLIANCE TO STOP POLLUTION (GASP)

Connie Arnwine, LWVGB Director

Our August 23rd membership meeting was held at the historic Bethel Baptist Church, a U. S. National Historic Landmark, in North Birmingham. LWVGB member Haley Colson Lewis, GASP attorney, and Kirsten Bryant, GASP Outreach Director, the featured speakers, shared details about their agency and its advocacy for Birmingham neighborhoods long impacted by air pollutants and other harmful contaminants.

Reverend Dr. Thomas L. Wilder, Jr. welcomed us to his church and gave us a brief history of Collegeville and Bethel Baptist. We learned that Collegeville came by its name because an early college, Lauderdale College, was located there. Dr. Wilder said that Bethel Baptist has been an integral part of the Collegeville community since it was founded in 1904. The original church building was built in 1926 and is adjacent to the modern church building where we met. The renowned civil rights activist, Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, was the pastor from 1953 to 1961, during which time the church was bombed on three separate occasions.



Kirsten Bryant and Haley Colson Lewis gave us an overview of their nonprofit, GASP, explaining that their mission is to reduce air pollution through education and advocacy. GASP was founded in 2009 as an advocacy group called **Alabama First**. In 2010 the name was changed to GASP to honor the 1970's era Birmingham student-led clean air group formed after passage of the Clean Air Act. GASP advocated for Birmingham industry to comply with the Clean Air Act to reduce Birmingham's air pollution.

Kirsten gave us an overview of three neighborhoods, Collegeville, Harriman Park, and Fairmont, that have been most impacted by the contamination. She discussed how segregation policies implemented years ago restricted low-income black families to certain red-lined areas which were also home to heavy industry. Such industries like Walter Coke and U.S. Pipe were the sources for various types of contaminants, including

arsenic, lead and benzo(a)pyrene, which are linked to serious health complications such as cancers, asthma and COPD. Residents of the neighborhoods were alarmed by the high incidence of these and other serious illnesses, and with the leadership of the late councilwoman Maxine Parker, lobbied for the EPA to take action. The EPA's environmental assessment led to the 35th Avenue Superfund Site designation for these three neighborhoods.

GASP began attending community meetings and working within the community as an advocate for the cleanup. The EPA proposed to list the 35th Avenue site as a National Priorities Listing (NPL), which would expedite the cleanup process, make available additional funding for clean up, and allow the EPA to seek reimbursement from polluters for the cleanup costs. The NPL status would also expand to include Tarrant ABC Coke as a major polluter. Around the same time the EPA proposed to list the 35th Avenue Site on the NPL, GASP petitioned the EPA to perform a Preliminary Assessment in Tarrant. This proposal to list the site on the NPL and possible expansion led to opposition from Drummond Company. Drummond Company, in conjunction with their attorneys, contracted with Balch & Bingham to oppose the NPL designation and expansion of the EPA's investigation into contamination in Tarrant ABC Coke. Haley reported her team was blind-sided by some of the orchestrated activities going on within the community to undermine the EPA's work and to question the legitimate actions of GASP. Both the EPA and GASP were labeled as outsiders by Oliver Robinson and others working with him through the **Get Smart Tarrant** campaign (funded and orchestrated by Drummond Company).

Basically GASP ran up against the underbelly of Alabama politics and corruption and could not understand why Oliver Robinson, a former state representative, was encouraging residents to refuse soil testing and why he was telling residents that soil testing would lower their property values despite information from the EPA refuting the claim. Nor could GASP figure out how the opposition always seemed to be one step ahead of them as they tried to gather support for the NPL with local and state officials. Then details started coming out at the trial of Balch & Bingham attorney Joel Gilbert and Drummond Company Vice President David Roberson. While the corruption convictions were a high note for the community, the damage that resulted from Oliver Robinson's actions in the community continues. Residents are still distrustful and angry. GASP, along with other Alabama environmental agencies, is now asking Governor Ivey to remove the state environmental officials who were implicated in the trial and to request Trey Glenn, EPA Region 4 Administrator, to recuse himself from all EPA actions related to the NPL due to his actions while he was in the state.

If you wish to know more about the trial or would like additional information on the history of the Superfund designation, the [GASP website](#) is a good starting point. Here you may watch a video entitled "*Toxic City: Birmingham's Dirty Secret*" and sign up for newsletters and air quality alerts. Both [al.com](#) and [BirminghamWatch](#) have followed the story from the beginning. [Kyle Whitmire](#) and [John Archibald](#) have written about the complicit actions of Alabama Environmental Management Commission members on behalf of Drummond Company as well as those of Lance LeFleur, ADEM Director. They have also named those elected officials and private industry leaders who opposed the NPL. Finally, as a footnote to the trial, Haley reported the Jefferson County Department of Health recently gave notice that ABC Coke is applying for renewal of their operating permit in Tarrant. The health department is accepting written comments on the application until September 21st.

Board of Directors, 2018-19

Leonette Slay	President (2019)
Mikeshia Harvill	Vice President (2019)
Tyrone Williams	Secretary (2019)
Leslie O'Neil	Treasurer (2020)
Connie Arnwine	Director (2019)
Maria "Vet" Hawkins	Director (2019)
Nancy Sales	Director (2019)

Nominating Committee (2019)

Yvonne Brakefield Knowles, Chair
Jean Johnson
Nancy Sales

Off Board

Yvonne Brakefield Knowles VOTER Editor

QUOTABLE QUOTES

"The free press is the unsleeping guardian of every other right that free men prize; it is the most dangerous foe of tyranny."

~ *Winston Churchill*

"I think the notion that we have all the democracy that money can buy strays so far from what our democracy is supposed to be."

~ *Ruth Bader Ginsberg*

Let's grow the LWVGB Social Network!

Like



Follow



Visit



League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham
PO BOX 530522
Mountain Brook, AL 35253