



The VOTER

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

October 2018

NEW LWV YARD SIGNS ARE HERE!

Check out the new LWV yard signs just in time for Election Season 2018.



You may purchase a yard sign with a \$20 donation to the LWVGB General Fund. Please contact [Leonette Slay](#) to coordinate payment and delivery.



JEFFERSON COUNTY JUDICIAL CANDIDATES FORUM

Monday, October 8, 2018

5:30 P.M.

[Gardendale Civic Center](#)

857 Main St.

Sponsored by

League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham
Upsilon Eta Omega Chapter, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.
Magic City Bar Association

Download the [forum flyer](#) to share with friends.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS HIGHLIGHTS

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

- 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
- Jan 21:** MLK Day of Service
- Feb 14:** LWV Birthday
- May 17-19:** LWVAL Convention

SAVE THE DATE! Remember the League



WE'RE WITHIN REACH OF OUR GOAL! BUT WE NEED YOUR RENEWAL TO GET THERE Leslie O'Neil, LWVGB Treasurer

A third of our members have already paid their dues, along with more than 10 enthusiastic **NEW** members. Let's all join together and go into the November election with a full roster of paid members.

Dues are:	Individual	\$55.00
	Household	\$75.00
	Student	\$15.00

Please consider joining the Board members in giving a little extra with your dues.

To pay your 2018-2019 LWVGB dues online, go to:
<https://www.lwvgb.org/about/dues/>

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

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

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT.

A BUSY WEEK FOR LWVGB!

Annual Membership Social

Leonette Slay, LWVGB President

LWVGB had another successful membership social at City Club on Thursday, September 27th. Over 30 League members and guests enjoyed hors d' oeuvres and beverages courtesy of City Club and heard updates on upcoming local and state League activities. A number of current members took the opportunity to renew LWV memberships, and more than **TEN** new members joined!



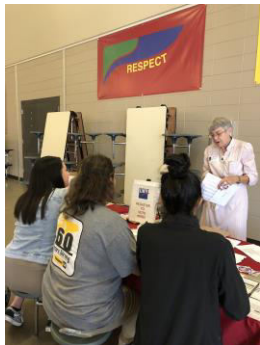
National Voter Registration Day Update

Nancy Sales, LWVGB Director

Thanks to 18 members and friends of LWVGB, working at 5 sites on National Voter Registration Day, 172 voter registrations were submitted to county registrar offices this week. Most of these are first time registrations due especially to the events in three high schools. The others were nearly all change of address forms turned in from Lovelady Center where our member, Retired Judge Pete Johnson, was greeted with real thanksgiving by several who knew him from their experiences in drug court.



Midfield High School



That is great, but we have 5 more registration events scheduled between October 1st and 16th. We will need help from experienced hands as well as from some new LWVGB members who have already expressed interest in voter registration. Email [Nancy Sales](#) to volunteer.

Recently I was impressed to hear of a project to help girls understand that while voting for the president is exciting, voting in the mid-term elections is also very important, and that many adults are pledged to vote on November 6th, 2018. We hope all of you are and that we will remind friends and neighbors and offer rides to the polls to those who may need it.

Tarrant High School



LWVGB Social 2018



NVRD @ Lawson State CC



LWVGB Social 2018

PRESIDENT'S PARAGRAPHS

Leonette Slay

The Many is a national, online community of women of all political viewpoints. It is a closed Facebook group sponsored by Spaceship Media, al.com, and the Birmingham Public Library.

I attended a live discussion on Sunday, September 23rd, at the downtown library to learn more about how this group is interacting and tools being used to foster a constructive dialogue.

Five Alabama women who have been part of The Many met (most for the first time) to discuss their experiences and allow attendees to ask questions. Spaceship media moderated the discussion while al.com and Library staff were also on hand.

The five panelists explained their reasons for joining The Many, which included concern over increasing civic divisiveness after the 2016 election, and to better understand points of view that do not align with their own.

Alejandro, the moderator, asked the panelists where no common ground has been found. The two issues everyone agreed have proven to be most intractable are immigration and reproductive rights. One panelist, who self-identified as liberal, was adopted from South Korea. Another panelist is the child of naturalized immigrants. A panelist commented that she had posted an opinion about US-North Korea overtures and then realized she should perhaps have waited to get input from the South Korean Group member to better develop her own views. Members' positions on reproductive rights and abortion are deeply held. One panelist described her pro-life views as "womb to tomb" meaning that she does not support abortion or the death penalty. On line discussion got quite heated surrounding this issue, so the FB moderator told everyone to take a step back.

On some issues, when the group is at an impasse or needs additional information, the moderator enlists the assistance of the library research staff. The library then sends balanced facts from a variety of sources to provide a new starting point. In the case of pro life/pro choice discussions, participants found out that the US abortion rate is the lowest it has been in decades which surprised many. Participants gradually realized that an opposing view does not make the person holding that view the bad guy. One woman said, "I am not looking for who is on my team but to challenge my views and to be open to listening." Another said, "This issue has many shades of nuance. Being pro choice does mean you favor abortions. We do not take enough time to listen."

The other question posed by the moderator: when has someone from another perspective reached out and found common ground? One answer to that question was the personal, vulnerable stories shared as a response to the #metoo movement and the loving way in which information was treated.

An audience member asked how the experience had affected conversations with friends. Several panelists indicated they have learned to ask more open-ended questions. Another audience member took issue with the decision to limit the group to women only. Spaceship media representatives explained that they wanted to give women a voice. Research shows that some men talk over women and discount their views. The Many experience will allow group members to practice articulating a well thought out argument. These tools can be used in their family, work, and public lives. (Spaceship Media does have other groups that include men. For example, they have an ongoing FB group of young African American men and law enforcement personnel).

Finally, an al.com reporter who indicated she wrote about "women's issues" asked how the pro life/pro choice issue could be framed without causing visceral reactions. All panelists agreed that the media paints with too broad a brush, and this issue has many nuances that are ignored by mainstream media.

The Many is still accepting members into this group and they are forming another group called "Talking About Talking". To inquire about joining a group, go to spaceshipmedia.org/the-many. The League has long supported bridging political differences and developing creative policy solutions through civil dialogue among diverse stakeholders.

A Tour of a Local Recycling Facility

Connie Arnwine, LWVGB Director

During the past year you may have been reading or hearing about how China will no longer accept our plastic exports for recycling. Our Board thought you might want to know how this change in China's import policy is impacting recycling efforts locally.

Alarm bells went off within the nation's waste management and recycling industry when China passed the National Sword Policy in 2017 that severely restricts the import of non-industrial waste including plastics, mixed paper, low-grade metal and textiles beginning January 2018, although China had provided advance notice of the new policy. China is basically banning most plastics and imposing strict contamination standards for cardboard and metals. Many industrialized countries around the world, including the United States, have for years relied on the export of plastics and other waste materials to China as a way of reducing their own waste stream. China and Hong Kong have been importing upwards of 72% of all the world's plastic waste since 1992¹. Researchers state that China's ban means that now about 111 million metric tons of waste must be dealt with, causing headaches for municipalities across the country. Unfortunately the recycling rate of plastics within the US is still very low compared to recycling for paper and cardboard. Per the EPA, 75.4% of plastics generated in the U.S. Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) stream were sent to landfills in 2014. Only 9.5% of plastic material was recycled from the MSW². Most predictions are that our recycling rates will not change and plastic waste will either be incinerated or sent to landfills particularly since more Asian countries are restricting their import of plastics³.



So what is happening locally? I recently toured the City of Tuscaloosa's **Richard A Curry Environmental Services Complex**, which houses the city's recycling facility. The recycling complex opened in March 2014, to replace their building and facilities that were completely destroyed by the EF4 tornado that hit Tuscaloosa on April 27th, 2011. Our tour was led by Ashley Chambers, Environmental Educator with the City of Tuscaloosa. The city has both curbside and drop-off service. The city employees sort at the curbside to eliminate unsuitable or contaminated items. Ashley explained that sound recycling programs reduce the amount of waste that goes into the local landfills, which is a savings for the municipality. She told us that their state-of-the-art complex is able to locate a buyer from within our state for all of their recyclables. According to Ashley, there are 42 manufacturers in Alabama who buy recyclable materials. These manufacturers employ 17,350 workers. By comparison Florida has 28 manufacturers with 4,884 jobs. Felicia Buck, with the [Alabama Environmental Council](#) (AEC), reported they also have local buyers within the state for their products. The problem, she said, is that the prices for their bales have dropped as the price of recyclable items fluctuates up and down like other commodities. Right now there is a great deal of volatility in the market. On the flip side, she is encouraged by Mayor Woodfin's support of sustainability and green practices for the City of Birmingham.



One of the manufacturers in Alabama who is buying plastics to recycle is KW Plastics headquartered in Troy, Alabama. KW is one of the world's largest plastics recyclers of high-density polyethylene and is considered to be a leading innovator in plastics recycling technology. You may want to check out their [website](#) to learn more about their company. If you are ever in Troy, you can see their Smiley Face Silo, which is the world's largest industrial silo, holding up to 30 million pounds of raw material from recycled plastic. I spoke with an employee with KW Plastics who commented that they have more capacity than is being supplied by southeastern states due to the low rates of recycling in the southeast.

Naturally, we hear more about plastics recycling because of their highly publicized negative environmental impact, but there are other materials that we should keep out of the municipal solid waste stream (MSW), including mixed paper, cardboard, metals (cans), electronics and food and yard clippings for composting. Unfortunately, the increase in on-line shopping and home delivery has spurred an increase in materials going into the waste stream and this trend will continue as on-line shopping increases. Critics point out that municipal waste management recycling programs are not profitable, which is a major reason there is not more buy-in.

¹ [Scientists Calculate Impact of China's ban on Plastic Waste Imports](#), retrieved from [UGA Today](#), June 20, 2018

² [Advancing Sustainable Materials Management 2015 Fact Sheet Assessing Trends in Material Generation, Recycling, Composting, Combustion with Energy Recovery and Landfilling in the United States](#), United States Environmental Protection Agency, July 2018

³ Colin Staub, August 8, 2018, [Where Are the Current Plastics Exports Markets?](#), retrieved from [RESOURCE Recycling, Inc.](#)

A Tour of A Local Recycling Facility, continued

Other critics argue that plastics and other waste should be incinerated to generate electricity. For example, Washington, DC pays \$75 a ton for waste that is recycled compared to \$46 for waste that is incinerated⁴. The pressure to divert recyclables to landfills or incinerators is increasing⁵.

Some recycling critics even blame the pollution in our oceans on lax environmental standards in Asian countries such as China. They claim that much of the plastics sent there were dumped and ended up in the oceans⁶. While this accusation may be a stretch, there is no doubt we must find new solutions for disposing our waste products. More research is needed to find ways to incentivize recycling behavior as well as to educate the public on proper waste disposal to reduce contamination. But we can't continue to focus on just recycling. We must remember the other R's- reuse and reduce. While we work to reduce our consumption, especially our use of plastics, we must also demand that private industry use more recycled plastics in manufacturing and actively commit toward zero waste goals. The recycling industry must review its processes and improve methods to reduce contamination. Better information on market data and jobs creation will also spur more growth in the recycling industry. Finally, we cannot blame China for our waste management crisis. We created it, and we must manage it. Consumers, manufacturing, government and the recycling/waste management industry must come together to find ways to reduce our waste stream.

The LWVGB Board of Directors is considering a program on recycling. Please [let us know](#) if this is a topic that would interest you and if you would attend a program on the subject.

⁴ Ivan Couronne, AFP, July 11, 2018, [Trash Piles Up in US as China Closes Door to Recycling](#),

⁵ David Bornstein, [The Conflict of Interest that is Killing Recycling](#)

⁶ Mikko Paunio, June 28, 2018, [Save the Oceans-Stop Recycling Plastics](#); [GWPF](#)

Special Note: Waste and recyclable collection workers have one of the most dangerous jobs in America. Collection crews walk and or run an average of 20 miles per day. Repeated dragging, lifting and jumping on and off of trucks can cause crippling injuries. Workers in solid waste management collection experience the 3rd highest risk of falling on the job and the 5th highest worker fatality rate for all occupational categories. Worker injury can also result from exposure to the contents of garbage such as broken glass, dead animals, metal blades, hazardous waste, battery acid, chemical waste, needles or animal waste. Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) [released data showing an 18% increase in fatalities in 2017 over 2016](#).

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS – THE GO TO SOURCE FOR ELECTION 2018

Depend on the League of Women Voters to keep voters well informed. The league offers nonpartisan election information on the [VOTE411.org](#) website for state and local elections. Several local and state candidate forums are also planned.

[VOTE411.org](#) is a digital voter guide presented by the League of Women Voters Education Fund. By simply entering one's address, a voter can get unbiased, nonpartisan election information. [LWVAL](#) has invited all candidates in state races in provide their biographical information and answer questions on important issues. Look for the four statewide constitutional amendments and analyses on [VOTE411.org](#). There will be unbiased reviews to examine what will happen if each amendment passes or does not pass. Look to [VOTE411.org](#) for local and district election information, too, from [LWV Tennessee Valley](#) (greater Huntsville), [LWV East Alabama](#) (Auburn/Opelika), and [LWV Mobile](#).

On Oct. 8 at 5:30 p.m., [LWVGB](#), the [UEO Chapter of AKA Sorority, Inc.](#) and the [Magic City Bar Association](#) will host Decision 2018, a judicial candidate forum at the Gardendale Civic Center. All candidates running in contested judicial races in Jefferson County are invited to attend. LWVGB will offer a nonpartisan voter guide with bios of all judicial candidates. This is an important guide since the judiciary is not generally familiar to voters. See the [media release](#) for more information and share this [flyer](#) with friends. See you Oct. 8!

Forums for statewide races are in the planning stages. LWVAL invited the gubernatorial candidates to participate in a televised forum. Only one of the two candidates accepted. (News articles [here](#) and [here](#).) Since the League does not host empty chair (one candidate) forums, that [event was cancelled](#). LWVAL has now offered forum invitations to candidates in the lieutenant governor's race. Stay tuned! Also, [LWV Tennessee Valley](#) is working on forums for secretary of state and state auditor, possibly on Oct. 23 in Huntsville. Save the date. LWVAL hopes to co-host.

Much more Election 2018 information is online. See our [LWVGB](#) and [LWVAL](#) websites. Another excellent election resource is the [AL Secretary of State's website](#). On that site you can register to vote online, verify that you are registered to vote, find your polling place, get an absentee ballot, and more. Urge your friends, family and co-workers to register, be informed, and VOTE on Nov. 6!

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QUOTABLE QUOTES

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

~ *Nelson Mandela*

"Liberty may be endangered by the abuse of liberty, but also by the abuse of power."

~ *James Madison*

Let's grow the LWVGB Social Network!

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