



# The VOTER

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

January 2019

## LWVGB PROGRAM PLANNING FOR 2019-20

Connie Arnwine, LWVGB Director

The LWVGB Board of Directors is currently preparing for the Annual Business Meeting that will take place in late May. This preparation includes soliciting recommendations for changes to the LWVGB Program, which includes the existing positions taken on issues after study and member consensus, study (existing or new study) and issues for emphasis.

We invite LWVGB members to review the [current LWVGB Program](#) and submit ideas for changes to our existing positions and/or ideas for future study. Please send your input to LWVGB Director [Connie Arnwine](#) by Monday, February 18.



### UPCOMING LWVGB MEETINGS

#### "Criminal Justice: Effect of Recent Reforms and a Look to the Future"

Monday, January 28th, 2019  
*See below for more information.*

#### "School Desegregation in Alabama"

Thursday, February 21st, 2019  
Location and Time TBD  
Moderator: Trish Powell Crain

### LWVGB Membership Meeting

"Criminal Justice: Effect of Recent Reforms and a Look to the Future"

January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019

6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

[Beloved Community Church](#)

131 41<sup>st</sup> St. S.

Birmingham, AL 35222

### LAST CHANCE!

LWVGB dues for 2018-19 are **OVERDUE**. Please take a minute to [renew your dues](#).



### CALENDAR OF EVENTS HIGHLIGHTS

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

- Jan 21: MLK Day of Service
- Jan 28: Membership Meeting
- Feb 14: LWV Birthday
- Feb 21: Membership Meeting
- March 2019: Women's History Month
- Mar 10-16: Sunshine Week
- Apr 22: Earth Day
- May 17-19: LWVAL Convention 2019
- Week of May 20: LWVGB ABM
- Jun 20-22: LWVUS Council 2019



*The public is welcomed to attend. Invite friends!*

At our membership meeting in January, LWVGB will focus on criminal justice reform in Alabama and in the metro-Birmingham area. Our guest speakers will be Ala. State Representative and retired Circuit Judge James E. "Jim" Hill, Jr. (left), Officer Patrick Bishop with the AL Board of Pardons and Parole (middle), and Professor Emeritus Foster Cook, former Director of Government Affairs and Special Programs at UAB (right).

Please see the [LWVGB website](#) for additional information and share the [Facebook Event](#).

## PRESIDENT'S PARAGRAPHS

### Leonette Slay

It is with sadness that I report the death of Mikesha Harvill's grandmother Mrs. Evelyn J. Thomas and LWVGB members Bill Sylvester and Pat O'Donnell. Please keep their families in your thoughts.

As we turn our attention from 2018 to 2019, your LWVGB board has packed several provocative discussions into the first several months. We trust you will mark your calendars to attend and share meeting details with friends/family.

Our January 28<sup>th</sup> program deals with criminal justice reform in Alabama. We have assembled a prominent panel: State Representative and retired Circuit Judge James E. "Jim" Hill, Jr.; Mr. Patrick Bishop, a probation officer, law student, and pastor; and Professor Foster Cook, recently retired Director of JeffCo's Treatment Alternatives for Safer Communities and a member of the AL Prison Reform Task Force. Be sure and come early to Beloved Community Church, 131 41st Street, as social media interest in this program is high. The meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. See additional details on the [LWVGB website](#).

Trish Crain is organizing a panel discussion Thursday, February 21<sup>st</sup> on efforts by Jefferson County and Hoover City Schools to end federal desegregation oversight. Georgia State University's Dr. Joe Bagley will join us to talk about his recently-published book [The Politics of White Rights: Race, Justice, and Integrating Alabama's Schools](#). We are exploring venues now.

Joi Travis is overseeing our March program that will be an update on Birmingham's transit authority after a very tumultuous year. She is reaching out to Mr. Frank Martin, recently named as interim executive director of BJCTA. We anticipate that this may be an afternoon meeting, depending on Mr. Martin's schedule.

As you see, the League will be discussing locally relevant policy issues, and we hope to see many of you at these meetings.

Looking farther ahead the board decided to hold our annual general meeting after the LWVAL Convention on May 17-19<sup>th</sup>. We will arrange a time and venue during the following week. This will allow us to report on convention activities and any new program adoptions. Convention is in Tuscaloosa and you can make hotel reservations now by going to [convention2019.lwval.org](#). The theme of the convention is "Environmental Justice".

It is at all League annual meetings that new officers are elected, a new budget adopted, any bylaws changes accepted, and new program adopted. Our bylaws require that these changes be presented to members well in advance of the meeting for prior thought and discussion. For that reason the Nominations Committee (Yvonne Brakefield, Knowles, Chair; Jean Johnson, Nancy Sales) has already met as their proposed slate of board members must be sent to members one month before the general meeting. Give them [your ideas for board nominations](#).

The budget committee must be appointed three months prior to the annual meeting. Michael O'Donnell will chair the committee and Leslie O'Neil will serve as a member.

"Program" includes action to implement the principles adopted by LWVUS and local governmental issues chosen for concerted study and action. This is where members can suggest areas that the local League needs to study, reach consensus, and take action. Program suggestions must be sent to board members TWO MONTHS prior to the annual meeting. The board considers the recommendations and then reports to the annual meeting those they recommend for adoption and those they do not recommend (all suggestions must be reported to the annual meeting). If you have a suggestion for study of a new program area or an update to a current position please send them to [Connie Arnwine](#) with a cc to [me](#).

Meanwhile LWVGB is actively engaged in several ongoing projects: an update to Government at Your Fingertips; continued work with Samford's marketing class on a transparency in government project, overseen by Barbara Lewis; and regular meetings with the AL Bar committee working on celebrations for the centennial of women's suffrage. Joi Travis is the LWVAL and LWVGB liaison to this committee.

If you see an initiative that you'd like to assist with, reach out to a board member or the member in charge of the project. And by all means attend meetings and add your voice to the discussion!

## **WE'RE LOOKING FOR LWVGB LEADERS!**

### **Jean Johnson, LWVGB Nominating Committee**

The Nominating Committee is looking for energetic, motivated leaders to serve on the 2019-20 Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham. We invite all Birmingham League members to suggest nominations. Self-nominations are welcomed. Who will you nominate for vice-president (rising to LWVGB president after one year), secretary, or director? See more information and offer your nominees by Feb. 15 at <http://bit.ly/2FDoVqv>. Thank you for helping the LWVGB Nominating Committee identify league leadership talent!

## **NEW MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS**

### **Nancy Sales & Leonette Slay, LWVGB Board Members**

#### **Phyllis Mark**

Phyllis Mark and her partner, Rev. Jennifer Sanders, have joined recently LWVGB, but they are not new to a wide variety of aspects of life in Birmingham. Here is a chance to get a bit acquainted with Phyllis.



It is possible we have encountered Phyllis in the work world as a clinical psychologist in a large private practice. That could have been as an individual, or one of a couple, or in a group. On the other hand it might have been on the day a week she works with the Integrative Oncology Clinic of UAB, teaching mindfulness and meditation to groups of cancer patients and their supporters.

Born in the Bronx Phyllis wasn't far into young adulthood before she hitchhiked cross country, followed with time living in FL and CA. Back in NY for undergraduate studies, work, and graduate studies, she always worked and studied full time which limited her anti-war and gay rights activism. That must have been hard for one who believes showing up for what you believe in should be a high priority.

Before arriving in Birmingham in 1996 Phyllis had lived in MA and TN. In one of those early years here she became involved in - now highly trained and practiced in - meditation, serving in many roles at the Shambala Center. Another place where she regularly shares mindfulness and meditation is the Magic City Acceptance Center.

As a Jewish female from NY, lesbian, long in an inter-racial relationship, and involved in inter-faith relations, her strong commitment to issues of cultural disenfranchisement makes the most sense. All of that makes her living in family with Jennifer Sanders and their 18-year-old daughter, Lillian, where all traditions are honored is what would be expected.

#### **Harmony Thomas**

Harmony is a student at the University of Alabama at Birmingham with a pre-nursing major. After graduation from Nursing School, she plans to earn a Masters Degree in Nursing to become a Nurse Practitioner, and with a goal for to become a traveling Nurse Practitioner. Harmony was inspired to join the league by her mother, LWVGB Vice President Mikesha Harvill and is passionate about voter engagement.



## **SUNSHINE WEEK 2019**

### **Barbara Lewis, LWVGB Member**

Sunshine Week was established in 2005 by the American Society of News Editors (ASNE) to highlight the need for transparency in public information. Each March, seven days which coincide with the birthday of James Madison—March 16<sup>th</sup> - are designated as a time to involve interested citizens in evaluating the degree to which public information is easily accessible.

During Sunshine Week 2019 (March 10-16<sup>th</sup>), the LWVGB will participate in a joint project with selected students from Samford University. The groundwork for this project was laid out by Stacy Smith, a friend of the LWVGB, who invited Dr. Betsy Emmons to participate. Dr. Emmons teaches journalism and mass communications at Samford University and kindly agreed to ask her students, as part of a research project, to audit websites for various municipalities and/or other entities. Planning is scheduled to start shortly after the beginning of Spring Term.

## Board of Directors, 2018-19

Leonette Slay	President (2019)
Mikeshia Harvill	Vice President (2019)
Vacant	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, Board Appointee

### Off Board

Yvonne Brakefield Knowles                      VOTER Editor

## QUOTABLE QUOTES

"Experience hath shewn, that even under the best forms of government those entrusted with power have, in time, and by slow operations, perverted it into tyranny."

~ *Thomas Jefferson*

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