



# The VOTER

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

February 2019

## LWVGB PROGRAM PLANNING FOR 2019-20

Leonette Slay, LWVGB President

Article IX of our Bylaws explains what "program" consists of (anything that implements LWVUS principles and "local governmental issues chosen for concerted study and action"). The annual business meeting is the time when we entertain new program suggestions. However, our Bylaws require your board to consider Program suggestions two months before the annual meeting. Since our annual meeting is May 23<sup>rd</sup>, the board needs your suggestions no later than March 23<sup>rd</sup>. The board considers proposals and publicizes all program suggestions to all members 30 days before the annual meeting, with recommendations to support the proposals or not. All proposals will be voted on by the membership at the annual meeting, even those that may not be recommended by the board.



## UPCOMING LWVGB MEETINGS

**March [tentative]**

Transit

**April 16<sup>th</sup>**

NATO

**May 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Annual Business Meeting

Homewood Public Library

6:15 p.m.

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS HIGHLIGHTS

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

**March 2019:** Women's History Month

**Mar 10-16:** Sunshine Week

**Apr 16:** Membership Meeting

**Apr 22:** Earth Day

**May 17-19:** LWVVAL Convention 2019

**May 23:** LWVGB ABM

**Jun 20-22:** LWVUS Council 2019

### DID YOU KNOW?

During the 2018 mid-term elections, several initiatives of interest passed in other states:

- Florida banned offshore oil and gas drilling in state waters.
- Georgia passed a measure to dedicate a % of sales tax from sporting good stores to support land conservation.
- Nevada approved an initiative for the state to draw 50% of its energy from renewable sources by 2030.

Please review our [current program](#) and send your ideas for local issues to study to [Connie Arnwine](#) by March 23<sup>rd</sup>. To help the board analyze your suggestion, include names of those who might participate in organizing the study, an estimate of any costs involved, and a short statement as to the goal of the study (such as a fact sheet, proposed policy or ordinance change locally, educational forum on results of study, etc.)

## VOTING RIGHTS IN ALABAMA

Nancy Sales, LWVGB Director

LWVGB is planning a workshop on voting rights, the restoration of those rights, and better outreach to unregistered voters who may not know they can register. Mr. John Paul Taylor will lead this training. Mr. Taylor is the North and Northeast Alabama Regional Representative for The Alabama Voting Rights Project, a coordinated project of the Campaign Legal Center and the Southern Poverty Law Center.

The workshop will be about 1½ hours in length, on an afternoon in March or April, at Beloved Community Church in Avondale. All members are welcome, but the targeted audience will be our voter registration corp. The information provided in this workshop will be helpful when encouraging persons to register to vote or to know whether they are eligible to do so.

## PRESIDENT'S PARAGRAPHS

### Leonette Slay

We are entering a busy time of year for League administration and leadership selection for the coming year. Our Bylaws give us specific guidance on timelines for the Nominating Committee (already proactive and finished with much of their work); the budget committee (discussions underway); and new program ideas (see more information above because all members have a role to play).

Despite these behind-the-scenes activities, we have continued to offer programs that have drawn substantial audiences. The criminal justice panel in January and Desegregation in Alabama panel in February drew diverse and question-filled audiences while others watched them via live streaming courtesy of Jean Johnson.

Here's what we have planned through early summer:

March: meeting with Acting Executive Director Frank Martin of BJCTA. We have suggested several dates and are awaiting Mr. Martin's confirmation of a date. We want to get an update on transit plans and finances since we visited the new transit facility in February 2018.

April 16<sup>th</sup>: Major General (Retired) James W. Darden, Army Reserve ambassador for Alabama, will discuss NATO and other global coalitions in the 21st century.

May 17-19<sup>th</sup>: LWVAL Convention in Tuscaloosa with the theme of environmental justice. Go to [LWVAL.org](http://LWVAL.org) to make hotel reservations. One of the panels will deal with toxic chemicals in North Birmingham and another will discuss climate change. This promises to be a great convention so try to come, even for one day.

May 23<sup>rd</sup>: LWVGB annual business meeting, Homewood Library, 6:15-7:30 p.m.

June 4<sup>th</sup>: On this date 100 years ago, Congress passed language contained in the 19th Amendment granting women universal suffrage. It then was sent to the states to begin the ratification process. It took 36 states to ratify the amendment. Over the next 17 months we will track the amendment's ratification progress and include historical context.

June: possible daytime field trip to a nearby water source, led by Cindy Lowry, Alabama Rivers Alliance (and LWVGB member) or Justinn Overton, Coosa Riverkeeper. NOTE: this might occur on a Saturday to accommodate more LWVGB members.

June or July: incoming board orientation (date TBD by incoming president)

**\*\*Be sure to "like" LWVGB on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to get updates between Voter publication\*\***

## PAYDAY LENDING UPDATE

On February 19<sup>th</sup> a coalition of organizations (Canterbury UMC, Zonta, YWCA) sponsored a panel discussion on payday lending, a subject that LWVAL studied several years ago. At least 6 LWVGB members attended. What made this meeting interesting was that several area legislators were in attendance and have committed to introducing legislation dubbed "The 30 days to Pay Bill". It will make a minor change to current law but may significantly benefit borrowers. The bill adjusts repayment period for payday loans to 30 days from the current 10-14. Extending repayment periods will give borrowers more time to manage finances and reduce the rate at which interest grows and fees pile up. While this is a small step (reducing interest from a max of 400+% to a max of 211%), it is a step in the right direction.

The legislators who have indicated support are Sen. Jabo Waggoner (R-JeffCo); Rep. David Faulkner (R-JeffCo); Rep. Danny Garrett (Republican whip, JeffCo); Rep. David Wheeler (R-JeffCo); and Rep. Neil Rafferty (D-JeffCo). The Birmingham Business Council has made this bill a priority for the 2019 session, and mayors of Alabama's four largest cities support it, as do leaders of all faiths.

Alabama has more payday lending stores than McDonald's. The legislators on this panel said hearing from as few as 10-15 constituents makes a difference.

The LWVAL advocacy team will be monitoring bills of interest as the session begins next month.

## LWVGB MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

LWVGB thanks Rep. Judge James E. Hill, Jr. (District 50), Officer Patrick Bishop, AL Department of Pardons and Paroles, and Dr. Foster Cook, UAB Associate Professor, for sharing their expertise at the Criminal Justice Reform meeting on Monday, January 28<sup>th</sup>. League members and the public got a behind-the-scenes look at the Alabama criminal justice system and the consequences of financial, legislative, and administrative decisions made. See the [LWVGB website](#) for details about the meeting and follow-up answers to questions submitted by the audience.



Cook (L) Bishop (C); Hill (R)



LWVGB also thanks (from left): Dr. Joe Bagley (Georgia State University), Attorney Whit Colvin, (Bishop Colvin Law Firm), Dr. Orletta Rush (Executive Director of Special Initiatives at JeffCo Board of Education), and moderator Trisha Powell Crain (LWVGB member and [AL.com](#) Education Analyst) for their panel presentation on “Segregation in AL Schools”. The panel discussed the history of school desegregation, the status of legal cases, and current efforts to obtain unitary statewide status in Alabama school systems.

## REPORT FROM LWVUS

In March 2019, the Supreme Court will hear redistricting case *League of Women Voters of North Carolina v. Rucho* in conjunction with *Common Cause v. Rucho* and Maryland redistricting case *Benisek v. Lamone*. We are in the process of submitting an amicus brief in the Maryland case. The addition of the Maryland case is significant because the court will review partisan gerrymanders designed by both parties. (the Republicans in North Carolina, and the Democrats in Maryland). Because of this dynamic, we are optimistic that the court will set a standard for determining partisan gerrymanders.

The Supreme Court’s ruling in *Rucho* could curtail the undemocratic practice of partisan gerrymandering nationwide. LWVUS will rally at SCOTUS when the cases are heard. Stay tuned for additional updates.

In November 2018, we launched the “2018 Election Activities Survey” to gauge impacts made by state and local leagues during the mid-term election cycle. We secured responses from a record 500+ leagues. This represents a significant increase of more than 100 leagues since the 2016 survey. Highlights include:

- In 2018, 18,000 league members and volunteers participated in 15,000 election-related events. An estimated 180,000 hours, worth more than \$5M, were donated to this national effort.
- Leagues registered approximately 188,176 voters in 2018. Combined with LWVUS/EF activities, an estimated 250,000 voters were registered nationwide.
- 373 leagues reported hosting at least one debate or forum in 2018; 205 Leagues produced a voters’ guide.
- 265 leagues held more than 1000 meetings with elections officials to discuss the elections process and/or needed improvements in their communities.
- Leagues contacted 45,000 voters for “Get-out-the-Vote” and reported receiving more than 14,000 direct inquiries from voters.
- 388 leagues reported recruiting new volunteers and/or members to carry out their election work in 2018.

## LWVGB MEMBERSHIP GROWS 36%!

**Leslie O’Neil, LWVGB Treasurer**

At the official membership count on January 31, 2019, the League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham had 80 members compared with 59 members a year ago. This week three additional members paid their dues, so we are now 83 members strong, the largest membership count in this century.

Our visibility in the community has been enhanced through a series of programs directed toward timely issues, the VOTER, frequent opportunities to register voters, and social media.

We look forward to hearing suggestions and concerns of new members and seeing how their participation will further strengthen our local League.

## Board of Directors, 2018-19

Leonette Slay	President (2019)
Vacant	Vice President (2019)
Yvonne Brakefield Knowles	Secretary (2019)
	VOTER Editor
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

### QUOTABLE QUOTES

"Segregation has no place in the education system."

~ **Richard Dawkins**

"The segregated schools of today are arguably no more equal than the segregated schools of the past."

~ **Senator Ed Markey**

### Let's grow the LWVGB Social Network!

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