



The VOTER

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

October 2020

IN MEMORY OF DOROTHY GAMBRELL BAKER

LWVGB was saddened to learn of the [passing](#) of long-time member Dorothy (Dot) Baker in March 2020. Dot, a champion for human rights and social justice, was a founding member of the Greater Birmingham Chapter of the United Nations Association-

USA, and also active in [Alabama Arise](#) and the [American Association of University Women](#). Dot was truly an inspiration to all who knew her.



Dot Baker [R] at the 1994 LWVAL Council Meeting in Sheffield (Shoals area)



DUES ARE PAST DUE!

LWVGB dues were due in September. If you have not yet renewed your membership, please [submit](#) your dues payment **ASAP**.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS HIGHLIGHTS

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

- Oct 24:** United Nations Day
- Oct 29:** Absentee Ballot Application Deadline
- Nov 02:** Deadline to cast Absentee Ballot
- Nov 03:** ELECTION DAY
- Nov 11:** LWVGB Board Meeting
- Nov 19:** LWVGB Membership Meeting
- Dec 01:** Annual Giving Tuesday
- Jan 18:** MLK Day of Service
- Feb 14:** LWV Birthday
- Mar 14-20:** Sunshine Week
- Apr 22:** Earth Day

LWVGB DUES ASSISTANCE FUND

Members are encouraged to support the LWVGB Dues Assistance Fund by [making a contribution](#) to the LWVGB General Fund. Members in need of financial assistance with 2020 dues may apply [here](#).

LWVGB MEMBERSHIP MEETING November 19, 2020 @ 6:00 P.M.

Voting Rights Restoration

Register at <https://bit.ly/2HjiLxI>

Many in Alabama believe that citizens with a previous felony conviction have lost their right to vote. In fact, most convictions do not result in the loss of voting rights. For those that do, there are processes for restoring those rights.

At this meeting, Kathy Jones, Voter Services Committee Chair, LWV Tennessee Valley and Blair Bowie, Campaign Legal Center Counsel and Restore Your Vote Manager will educate us about voting rights restoration in Alabama and hear about the excellent work League members are doing throughout the state.

Additional meeting details TBA.



Kathy Jones



Blair Bowie

VOTER SERVICES REPORT

Ida Tyree-Hyche Hill

To say the mighty, dedicated volunteers of The League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham have been busy the month of October is actually an understatement. Our volunteers have been **busier than ever** this month and scattered at various sites throughout Greater Birmingham. Donned in face masks, and, sometimes, plastic gloves, and loaded with voting forms, voting education handouts, pens, clipboards, League signs, and printers, LWVGB voters socially distanced further the cause in making democracy work. This month we positioned a total of 18 volunteers the field. I am pleased to share their reports.

"Wherever you turn, you can find someone who needs you. Even if it is a little thing, do something for which there is no pay but the privilege of doing it. Remember, you don't live in the world all of your own."
- Albert Schweitzer`

to
in

Grace Klein Community, Inc.

Over several weeks volunteers Nancy Sales, Sally Harris, Becky Laurent, Barbara Lewis, Becky Castleberry, Anne Sockwell, Valerie Gordon, Julie Reese, and Dana Ellis **served 480 persons** by providing Greater Birmingham Ministries' 2020 Voter Guides and League voter education handouts at the drive-thru entry point.



Bryant Chapel AME Church Drive-In Absentee and Voter Registration Drive

Volunteers Ida Tyree-Hyche Hill, Jeanne S. Merchant, Scottie McClaney, Starr Culpepper, Nancy Sales, Julie Reese, and Sally Harris assisted **four persons** with application for absentee ballots (two of which were family members of the citizen present at the drive).



Magic City Bar Association & Alabama Lawyers Association Piggly Wiggly (West End) Voter Registration

Volunteers Ida Tyree-Hyche Hill and Jeanne S. Merchant participated with volunteers from the Magic City Bar Association and Alabama Lawyers Association. The voter registration/education drive served **146 persons** in the following ways: 26 persons registered to vote, 2 applications for absentee ballots completed, 46 applications for absentee ballots given to interested citizens to complete on their own, 72 voter registration forms given to citizens to complete on their own.

America's Thrift Stores, Inc., Greater Birmingham locations

Volunteers scattered throughout Greater Birmingham at America's Thrift Stores located in Bessemer, Gardendale, Huffman and Alabaster. Many thanks to Julie Reese, Cindy Lowry, Jan Colson, Jeanne S. Merchant, Becky Laurent, Connie Arnwine, Ann Ray, Dr. Pamela Murray, Donna Florio, and Scottie McClaney. Throughout the America's Thrift Stores, The League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham were instrumental in servicing 68 persons with voter registration applications, absentee ballot registrations and voter education materials.



Volunteer Connie Arnwine reports the following: "Employees at America's Thrift Store in Bessemer went out of their way to welcome us and set up a registration table by the store entrance. Jeanne Merchant brought a copier to make copies of voter IDs. (The copy machine is courtesy of H.I.V.E.). Thrift store staff helped her run an extension cord to her car. The majority of thrift store customers with which we spoke said they were already registered voters, and several said they have been to the Bessemer office of the Absentee Election Manager. They spoke highly of the assistance they received there. We had only one voter complete a registration form

at our table. He said he had not voted in 30 years! Jeanne provided a stamp for his ballot and he insisted on repaying her for the stamp. We gave out 3 blank voter registration forms. We mainly answered questions about absentee voting and provided a few blank absentee ballot applications for thrift store customers to take to friends/relatives. Since there is some confusion over which areas/municipalities fall into Bessemer cutoff, we were able to obtain a map from Jefferson County. We gave information to voters who preferred to check their status later either by accessing the myinfo.alabamavotes.gov website or calling Bessemer absentee ballot office number 205-497-8513. People were cordial and thanked us for being there."

National Voter Registration Day, September 22, 2020

Volunteer Ellen Buckner offered the idea of a virtual ZOOM Open Door on National Voter Registration Day and we did it! Also, Director Ida Tyree-Hyche Hill released a video on social media about application for absentee ballot process on NVRD.

LWVGB Voter Services "Project:#SeniorsVote"

We received a directory of nursing/senior citizens homes from the President, National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Central Alabama. The organization has requested to enter into a partnership with The League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham for virtual activities. I will prepare a report of request to present before the Board for decision.



PRESIDENT'S PARAGRAPHS

Leonette Slay

We are entering the final laps before the November 3rd election and what a full schedule LWVGB has had! We have had a breathtaking number of voter registration/voter information events throughout the metro area (see the complete Voter Services roundup led by Ida Tyree-Hyche Hill on page 2, monthly meetings centered on the upcoming elections organized by Vice President Dana Ellis, media interviews, a video of young people on the importance of voting organized by member Ellen Buckner, and board members distributing voter information to local businesses. In addition, our [email address](#) has received queries on rides to the polls, postage required for absentee ballots, and many interested citizens wishing to volunteer. If you have procrastinated in renewing your membership, I trust you can see what a difference the League is making to empower democracy.

Your elected leaders want to hear what your priorities are and how we can best communicate with you on late-breaking action requests and monthly news updates. We are reevaluating the need for, or perhaps the frequency, of our monthly e-newsletter, The Voter. Let us know whether this is an inbox item that you regularly read, sometimes scan, or would rather not get as currently structured. Your opinion matters!

We are also sad to report the death of long time LWVGB member Dorothy (Dot) Baker. Please take a moment to review her fascinating obituary on page 1. What a force she was, working tirelessly for nuclear disarmament and in support of the work of the United Nations. She made us much more globally minded citizens.

LWVGB WELCOMES LONG-TERM OSCE-ODIHR INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVERS

Jean Johnson

The League of Women Voters welcomed two international long-time election observers to Alabama in mid-October. Ingo Buetner of Germany and Gayane Hovhannisyan (pictured right)

of Armenia came to Alabama at the invitation of the US Department of State. They are long-term observers with the [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe \(OSCE\) - Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights \(ODIHR\)](#). They were not here as poll watchers but rather to observe election activities leading up to the 11/3 General Election. Their mission was to "...[meet] with various election stakeholders to discuss electoral processes, including preparations for early, absentee and in-person voting and tabulation of results, political campaigns, election legislation at state and federal levels, the media and new voting technologies." Thanks to LWVGB member Kathy Johnson, also an OSCE-ODIHR international election observer, for welcoming Buetner and Hovhannisyan to Alabama and introducing them to Leagues around the state.

In a Zoom meeting, LWVAL Voter Service Chair Mary Anne Wilson and LWVAL VP Jean Johnson spoke with Buetner and Hovhannisyan at length to share information about elections and the voting process in Alabama. Topics discussed were LWVAL state and federal legal efforts to make voting safer and less confusing, the absentee voting process, voting rights restoration, gerrymandering, difficulties facing women and racial minorities seeking elected office, and more. LWVAL provided the observers with legal documents and voter service materials produced by the League.

Buetner and Hovhannisyan spent several days in Montgomery and made trips to Birmingham and other locations in the state to observe. By arrangement with LWVGB Voter Services Chair Ida Tyree-Hyche Hill, one of their trips brought them to Liberty Church on Old Rocky Ridge Road in Hoover for a Grace Klein Communities, Inc. food sharing event. GKC volunteers provided boxes of produce to families in need while LWVGB offered drive-through voter registration and other voting assistance. Volunteers Nancy Sales, Becky Laurent, and Sally Harris explained the League's services to the observers.

Buetner and Hovhannisyan have observed in several states in the South. After their time in Alabama, they are scheduled to be in Tallahassee, FL on October 21st.

OBSERVER CORP

The Observer Corps helps ensure that local citizens are aware of the decisions that impact their lives and promote government transparency and accountability. Observers attend government meetings, such as local city councils, school boards, public health departments, etc., note what happens and report back to the League. By attending public meetings, observers serve as "the eyes and ears" of the community by learning more about what the government is doing and about issues facing the community. They also learn how, and indeed if, issues are being addressed.

In our present COVID reality, observers will be able to join meetings by livestreaming, ZOOM, Webx or teleconferencing as well as in person. There is a simple form to be completed for the meeting the observer chooses to attend which will then be submitted to the League president. We hope to start observing at the beginning of 2021 and will let you know about training in the near future. If you are interested in becoming part of the Corps, or if you have comments, questions or suggestions, I would love to hear from you.

[Janet Colson](#)



Board of Directors, 2020-21

Leonette Slay	President (2021)
Dana Ellis	Vice President (2021)
Jennifer Sanders	Secretary (2021)
Leslie O'Neil	Treasurer (2022)
Brooke Adams	Director, Chair Finance Cmte (2022)
Jan Colson	Observer Corp Director (2022)
Cindy Lowry	Membership Director (2022)

Nominating Committee (2021)

Michael O'Donnell, Chair
Jean Johnson
TBA, Board Appointee

Off Board (2021)

Jean Johnson	Vote411/Communication Mgr
Ida Tyree-Hyche Hill	Voter Services Chair
Nancy Sales	Voter Services Advisor
Yvonne Brakefield Knowles	THE VOTER Editor

QUOTABLE QUOTES

"The signs of awakening womanhood in the world today are legion. The best novelists are women. Some of the keenest essayists and graceful writers of verse are women. Women are among the greatest leaders of Social Reforms."

~ [W.E.B. Du Bois](#)
1909

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