



# The VOTER

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

DECEMBER-2011

## **LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS MARKS BILL OF RIGHTS DAY** *League President Calls for Greater Civility in Politics*

The League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham's President, Ida Tyree-Hyche, marked the 220<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Bill of Rights with a call for inclusive political discourse and greater civic participation in Birmingham, Alabama.

"For more than 91 years, members of the League of Women Voters have defended civil liberties and promoted balanced, nonpartisan discussions on issues that are important to our community, and we continue this work today," Ida Tyree-Hyche said. "Our mission is to increase public participation – to help empower individuals to exercise the rights that are afforded to them through our democracy."

"As we reflect back on 2011 and witnessing democratic movements take hold around the world, there is much to celebrate. But, it is also a reminder that we cannot take our liberties for granted," said Ida Tyree-Hyche. "Every day, League members work in our community to protect our liberties by encouraging voting, discussing critical issues, and holding elected officials accountable for their actions and decisions. In the highly partisan environment throughout our nation, our role in creating a 'safe' venue where all sides of the issues can be discussed civilly and thoughtfully is more critical than ever. We encourage all to join us and make their voices and opinions heard; it's our right!"

### **The LWVGB has participated in the following events in our community:**

- SOS, Sustain our State Environmental and Social Issues Rally
- Civic functions regarding HB56 to seek knowledge and support LWVUS positions on immigration challenges
- Jefferson County Delegation meeting to address Jefferson County's financial crisis
- Hosted LWVGB Education Consensus work session
- Veterans Day Parade and Luncheon
- Observed public meetings on issues concerning transportation, public utilities, education, County Commissions and City Councils
- Hosted Birmingham City Schools leaders to address educational issues
- Hosted State Representatives John Rogers, Jr. and Paul DeMarco to discuss legislative role in Jefferson County financial crisis.

**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

## **JANUARY MEETING**

The League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham will center its January membership meeting on Alabama's Immigration Law (HB56).

The League will invite people close to this issue to discuss the law's challenges and implementation in the areas of Education, Law Enforcement, and Economics.

This meeting is tentatively scheduled for **Monday January 16, 2012**. More details will be provided soon.

The protection of the individual liberties laid out in the Bill of Rights has been central to the League's work throughout its history. During World War II, the League worked to balance the preservation of civil liberties with the importance of national security. During the Communist "witch hunt" period of the early 1950s, the League conducted a community education program known as the Freedom Agenda, providing Americans with the opportunity to discuss and learn about the Bill of Rights. More recently, League members have promoted a diverse and independent judiciary, advocated against harmful elements of the PATRIOT Act, and worked for government transparency and accountability.

## **STATE OF THE BIRMINGHAM LEAGUE**

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*Note: This report was delivered to the League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham at its Holiday Luncheon on Wednesday December 7, 2011. Each Board Director who was present at the meeting delivered her status report.*

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### **TREASURER AMANDA SIMMONS MCGRIF**

LWVGB, thanks to a couple of generous bequests several years ago, has a good reserve fund of approximately \$24,000. Between our checking and money market accounts, we currently have a little over \$10,000. In our Education Fund account with the state league, we have a little over \$1,300. As local leagues go, we are in a very good financial position. The board tries very hard to make sure that we are good stewards of dues money and other monies contributed to the general operating account, the money that members contribute to the Education Fund, and these bequests.

Every member of the LWVGB board has made a commitment to contribute financially to the League over and above her dues. We would ask each member to consider doing the same. Donations to both the LWVGB operating account and the Education Fund can be made through the website or via mail (PO Box 530522, Birmingham 35253), or we'll be happy to take those today.

Please also remember, as end of the year tax planning begins, that donations to the Education Fund are tax deductible as charitable contributions. In order to receive the deduction for 2011, please make sure that your check or online payment is received by December 31st. Any checks intended for the Education Fund should be made payable to LWVAL Education Fund, designated in the memo line for LWVGB. Donations made to the LWVAL Education Fund and designated for LWVGB cover activities like "Get Out the Vote" public service announcements; research, education and forums on public policy issues; and factual, non-partisan information on candidates and ballot issues.

Donations made to LWVGB and annual membership dues payments are not tax deductible. These monies are used for regular operating expenses like meeting room rentals, materials for voter registration drives, maintenance fees for our wonderful website, and costs incurred while participating in advocacy work supporting LWVGB's positions.

### **CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM DIRECTOR NANCY EKBERG**

For Constitutional Reform, Observer Corps, and Public Transit: We have participated in two transportation Summits with Councilwoman Kim Rafferty and County Commissioner Sandra Little Brown.

We participated in the Save Our State (SOS) Rally, one phase of which was transportation, and we participated in two of the marches in Linn Park against the new Immigration Law.

We have attended the two Jefferson County Delegation meetings to deal with the County's funding problems, and we saw the County usher in the new County Manager, Tony Petelos in October - an effort supported by the League and Rep. Paul DeMarco. We have participated in monthly Alabama Transit Coalition meetings to represent the category of a Civic Organization.

We attend County Commission meetings once a week and Jefferson Personnel Board meetings once a month. We have attended all the meetings of the new Constitutional Review Commission in an effort to push the Committee toward including home rule in the Legislative Article. We helped write a testimony given by the LWVAL in support of home rule, read on November 26th by League member Ruth Ott.

#### **EDUCATION DIRECTOR WANDA GODFREY**

- Attended Birmingham Board of Education Meetings and Birmingham Transit Forums during month of October
- Facilitated the Consensus Study for the Role of the Federal Government in Public Education in the month of November and submitted the document ON TIME.

#### **VOTER EDITOR KAREN THRELKELD**

Karen requested any feedback from our members about the VOTER. Are any changes needed? Are members actually reading it?

#### **COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR CYRONDYS JACKSON**

LWVGB Communications has worked diligently to identify media and public relations opportunities designed to promote the League, its membership and our work.

League members receive "email blasts" pertaining to upcoming membership meetings, League sponsored events and any other relevant information approved for dissemination.

The LWVGB has promoted the following events to local media:

- September Membership Meeting featuring Human Rights Attorney Kathy Johnson
- October Membership Meeting featuring Birmingham City School Superintendent Dr. Craig Witherspoon and BCS Board President Mrs. Phyllis Wyne. (ABC 3340 covered this event).
- November Membership Meeting featuring State Representatives Paul DeMarco and John Rogers, Jr. to address Jefferson County Financial Crisis (Covered by ABC 3340, Fox 6, CBS 42 and NBC 13. Also contributed write-ups in the Birmingham News.
- Interviews conducted for 98.7 KissFM and 610 WAGG, 33/40

LWVGB also participated in several events designed to increase public exposure including Veterans Day World Peace Luncheon, which included a League sponsored table, and representation on the Dias. Also, the LWVGB participated in the Veterans Day parade. A red, convertible Mustang GT was made available to the League for the day on behalf of Adamson Ford of Birmingham. *(See photos below.)*



Communications utilizes The Voter, and Website to promote upcoming events, and to re-cap League events as well.

Our Board has worked efficiently in having an informative and visible League.

#### **NATURAL RESOURCES DIRECTOR JOYCE LANNING**

The LWGB was a co-sponsor (along with LWVAL) of the Interfaith Environmental Initiative of Alabama (IEIA) Forum, Building Forward – Sustainable Communities through Collaboration, which was held from 8:30-3:30 on October 13, 2011 at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. Over 90 people heard Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Gwen Keyes Fleming discuss collaboration activities at the EPA as she affirmed the work of IEIA for finding ways for individuals and groups with disparate environmental viewpoints to come together around a common purpose.

LWVGB co-sponsored S.O.S. project in support of United Methodist Women. This event was held in Kelly Ingram Park and focused on preserving natural resources, and public transportation. We receive a small grant from this project to continue our efforts in Natural Resources preservation awareness.

The LWVAL is submitting a recommendation to the Alabama Permanent Joint Legislative Committee on Energy Policy to create an energy plan as called for in their enabling legislation and to investigate legislation aimed at improving public involvement in the energy planning process. The reorganization meeting for that committee was November 15. Joyce Lanning represents the League on two of the subcommittees, Environmental Issues and Efficiency and Conservation.

#### **MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR LEONETTE SLAY**

Our new members so far this year include the following:

- Barbara Powell
- Trisha Cain
- Barbara Calhoun
- Arlene Godwin

- Karen Ameen
- Debbie Sellers Hamby
- Ann Day Lawrence
- Maple Jones (part of Wanda Godrey's household)
- Suzanne Oparil (previous LWVGB member who renewed after being gone awhile)
- Cynthia Jackson (part of Cyron dys Jackson's household)
- Albert L. Hyche
- Carolyn Culpepper

#### **IDA TYREE HYPHE – PRESIDENT**

- Facilitated a Neighborhood Association meeting featuring County Commissioner Sandra Little Brown to educate public about the JEFFCO financial crisis
- Attended Veterans' Day World Peace Luncheon, participated in parade
- Issued LWVGB Alert, with LWVAL approval regard Home Rule Bill during the last session of the Alabama Legislature
- Issued a press release on Immigration & the League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham Position, which is the National Position
- Issuing a press release on the Bill of Rights & The League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham position, which is the National Position
- Participation in an Immigration Rally in downtown Birmingham
- Provide information on our FACEBOOK page and feed information to Webmaster, Jean & Communications Director





## Board of Directors, 2011-2012

Ida Tyree-Hyche	President
Cyrodys Jackson	1st VP
Angelyn Simmons	Secretary
Amanda McGriff	Treasurer
Nancy Ekberg	Director, Constitution Reform
Karen Threlkeld	Director, The VOTER
Wanda Godfrey	Director, Education
Joyce Lanning	Director, Environment
Cyrodys Jackson	Director, PR/Communication
Joan Burroughs	Director, Health
Leonette Slay	Director, Membership
Michael O'Donnell	Chair, Nominating Committee
Jean Johnson	Technical Director (Off Board)
Donald Marks	Social Media (Off Board)
Diane Marks	Social Media (Off Board)

## QUOTABLE QUOTES

Peace can only last where human rights are respected, where the people are fed, and where individuals and nations are free.

*-- 14th Dalai Lama*

The day will come when men will recognize woman as his peer, not only at the fireside, but in councils of the nation. Then, and not until then, will there be the perfect comradeship, the ideal union between the sexes that shall result in the highest development of the race."

*-- Susan B. Anthony*

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