



The VOTER

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

MAX Director to Address League of Women Voters February 25 Meeting

MAX director Peter Behrman will speak on public transit issues in Birmingham at the League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham's February meeting. **The meeting will be held on Friday, February 25th at 11:30 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. in the Electra Room of the Alabama Power Building on North 18th Street.** The Electra room is adjacent to Alabama Power's cafeteria and guests are invited to buy their lunch to eat during the meeting.

Behrman began his career as a bus driver in Los Angeles and has worked at other systems around the country, including Albuquerque, New Mexico. That city is roughly the size of Birmingham but had a larger transit system because of strong lobbying and funding at both the federal and local levels.

He is dedicated to making the MAX system efficient and finding funding to sustain it. He will share viewpoints about transit from around the country as well as viewpoints from observers about the Birmingham system



LWV MISSION STATEMENT:

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

More on Local Transit

Your League has been invited to participate in transportation summits sponsored by area elected officials!

Councilor Kim Rafferty has asked us to help with a mini-summit she will hold at Vulcan Park on February 10th for mayors and heads of MAX, Clas Tran and Kid One. She will hold another mini summit at the end of February for legislators.

Commissioner Little Brown will hold a summit on March 7th at the Birmingham News for elected officials and Clas Tran providers.

In both cases, the League is assisting with details. We will not be on the program or moderate. Note that neither meeting is open to the public because in these first efforts to get the elected officials and the ride providers together, the goal is education. The public is already aware of the need and will be included in follow-up summits.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February 14, 2011: Birthday of the LWV. Listen for our PSA on WBHM. Consider a gift to the LWVGB or our Ed fund in honor of your sweetheart!

February 25, 2011, 11:30am: Monthly Membership Meeting at Alabama Power, Electra Room. Topic: Mass Transit.

March 14-19, 2011: National Sunshine Week.

March 15, 2011, 6:30pm. Monthly Membership Meeting at the Homewood Library. Topic: Sunshine Week Review.

April 22, 2011: Earth Day.

April 28, 2011, 6:30pm: Annual Meeting, Dale's in Vestavia Hills.

April 30-May 1, 2011: LWVAL Convention, hosted by Mobile and Baldwin County LWVs

A change in approach for Constitutional Reform

As you all know, ACCR Inc. have been holding Listening Sessions from Headland in Henry County, to Huntsville in Madison County and spots in between. We have listened to what you and others were saying. The message came out loud and clear that people want more than one choice in the type of legislation we urge our legislative sponsors to offer to fellow legislators and to the voters.

Some wanted to stay with the Resolution for a constitutional convention that we have urged for the past few years. Some also wanted to give the legislators who said they would rather support an article by article approach a chance to do so. Consequently, we plan to have a bill that will provide for Home Rule (county government control over county matters). And some were also in favor of asking the Governor to support those options as well as a Commission, similar to the one sponsored by Governor Brewer in 1971 or the one sponsored by Governor Riley in 2002.

So we listened and we paid attention. Consequently, we are going to work with legislative sponsors to provide two types of legislation: one that offers a Resolution calling for a constitutional convention, and another that offers a bill that will allow for Home Rule (local government control for counties). In addition, we will talk to Governor Bentley to see if he will support both of those approaches and if he would consider setting up a Commission of persons to recommend changes to the Constitution.

As soon as we have more specific information about the legislation that will be offered, we will inform you so you can contact your local member of the House and Senate to ask them to support that legislation when they convene in March.



Ruth Hinerfeld,
LWVUS President (1978-1982)

Alabama Government at Your Fingertips

The newest version of *Alabama Government at Your Fingertips* has been updated to include the results of the November election. It will shortly be posted on the LWVGB.org web site and hard copies will be available for use at events. Thanks for all the hard work (and it is a lot of digging and verifying) goes to Yvonne Brakefield the chair of this team, Beverly Rausch and Cyron dys Jackson. This pamphlet and the on-line version, which has more detail, continue to be popular items for the public.

The President's Corner

"Putting our presence where our philosophy is". The LWVGB supports public transportation that is organized and funded on a countywide level, preferably encompassing the entire metropolitan area...funding must be area-wide and based on stable and equitable sources so that service will not depend on the willingness of individual municipalities to purchase service for their communities.". While the League has been supportive of public transportation in our program and public statements, how many members have ANY experience being a customer of Birmingham public transit options, much less being regularly dependent on public transit to meet our work, civic, or social commitments? Our February 25 meeting will focus on public transit in the metro area, with Mr. Peter Behrman, new director of the Birmingham/Jefferson County Transit Authority, as our guest speaker. What better way to prepare for our meeting than to experience the current state of public transit in Birmingham for ourselves. If you are able to do so, take a Max bus before our next meeting. Then take another one. Your experience may make you appreciate Mr. Behrman's challenges and his plans, as well as some of the issues behind two transportation summits that the LWVGB is part of (see the article on page 1 of this Voter). See you on Friday, February 25, at 11:30, at the AL Power building, 600 North 18th Street. And bring a friend or neighbor, to show one of the benefits of LWV membership--timely, thought-provoking discussions with policymakers.

Leonette

Government Web Site Review

Sunshine Week begins March 15 and the web sites of local governments are a potential mechanism to offer information to citizens. With that in mind a team consisting of Amanda McGriff, Connie Arnwine, Sarah McDonald, Diane Marks and Don Marks has reviewed some of the web sites for local governments. A review tool was developed and used to standardize the process. One of the items we looked for was if the site offered information about budgets, freedom of information process, names and contact information for elected officials, etc. We will share the results at the Tuesday March 16 meeting at 6:30 in the Homewood Library.

Welcome to new member Renee Saul of Birmingham!

January Meeting Recap: Michael Churchman on Sustainable Living - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle & Renew

We were fortunate to have Michael Churchman, Executive Director of the Alabama Environmental Council (AEC), as our speaker at our January meeting at Homewood Library. He reminded us that Alabama is blessed with natural resources - especially our aquatic biodiversity. However, we also have challenges to air quality and water pollution in part due to mining and power generation, as well as twice the national average pounds daily going into landfills.

Globally, our growing population's use of natural resources is outstripping the ability of the earth to generate new resources and absorb our wastes. Changes in patterns of precipitation have created drought and flood conditions. The Gulf oil spill has shown that without a healthy environment, there isn't a healthy economy. He reported that there is abundant scientific evidence that humanity is living unsustainably.

However there is reason to think that we can live with the future in mind, ensuring a tomorrow for our children and grandchildren that's at least as good as today, preferably better. By changing our focus and moving to consume wisely, reduce our waste, reuse what we can, recycle the rest and improve wherever we can (as in planting trees), we can save money and energy and the environment as well.



If we use less energy as well as non-carbon energy, we can help stop carbon dioxide emissions from warming the planet. We have a natural carbon cycle but our release of long-buried fossil carbon has created an imbalance that the Earth hasn't experienced in at least 800,000 years.

Michael said that now is the time to support EPA and the health and environmental protections it has provided. Opponents said that the 1970 Clean Air Act would ruin the economy, but it created new industries while the economy grew and pollution didn't, protecting our well-being.

On a very practical note, we can start at home: change our light bulbs to compact fluorescents,

turn off power we're not using, including unplugging chargers when not in use, adjust our thermostat lower in winter and higher in summer and hot water heaters at lowest setting for our needs.

We can insulate our homes and work to see that local and state building codes support energy efficient construction. Also, saving water saves energy since it takes energy to extract, filter, pump and heat water - which is too often wasted. AEC has a rain barrel project to help households harness water for later use rather than letting it add to detrimental run-off.

For more information about what can be recycled at the AEC 2nd Ave. North and 25th Street recycling center or how you can get involved, contact Michael Churchman at Michael@aeconline.org and visit the website, www.aeconline.org. Also, the League of Women Voters Toolkit for Climate Action can be accessed from the upper left corner of their web site: www.lwv.org.



Board of Directors, 2010-2011

Leonette Slay, President
Nancy Ekberg, 1st Vice President
Angelyn Simmons, Secretary
Amanda McGriff, Treasurer
Joyce Lanning, Director
Leonette Slay, Director
Ida Tyree-Hyche, Director
Joan Burroughs, Public Relations
Ginny Randolph, Voter Services
Karen Threlkeld, Editor - *The Voter*
Connie Arnwine, Nominating Committee Chair
Jean Johnson, Off-Board Technical Director
Ann Smith, Off-Board Observer Corps Water
Works

QUOTABLE QUOTES

We must be free not because
we claim freedom, but because
we practice it.

~William Faulkner

"People think at the end of the
day that a man is the only
answer [to fulfillment].
Actually a job is better for
me."

—Princess Diana

League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham
P. O. Box 530522
Mountain Brook, AL 35253