



The VOTER

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

FEBRUARY-2012



FEBRUARY MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Join the League on Tuesday February 21, 2012 at 6:30pm at the Homewood Library (Room 116) for our Charter Schools Consensus Study. The League does not currently have a position on charter schools, and we need you to contribute your thoughts about charter schools by attending this meeting! Based on member input, the League hopes to reach consensus and establish a state position statement before the legislature addresses this issue in the 2012 Regular Session. We ask that you come prepared for this meeting by reading the Charter School documents posted on the League

website – <http://www.lwvgb.org>.

League of Women Voters Celebrates 92nd Birthday

The League of Women Voters will celebrate its 92nd birthday on February 14. Founded in 1920 after winning the battle to get women the right to vote, the organization has become synonymous with education and information, especially around elections and voting.

“The League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham is one of more than 800 Leagues in all 50 states,” said President Ida Tyree-Hyche, Esq. “Since 1920, our goal has been to educate and inform. We respect all points of view; we don’t endorse or oppose any candidate or political party. This is what sets us apart from so many organizations, and it is why we are one of America’s most trusted organizations...Our work helps to bridge the gap between voters and elected officials. From registering new voters to holding candidate debates and town hall meetings on important – and sometimes controversial – issues, League leaders in Birmingham are working to inform the public about issues that impact their lives and giving them avenues to express their opinions.”

“The most basic and important of these avenues is voting. It is our hope that everyone will make their voices heard this election year by ‘powering the vote.’ In Birmingham, League members will be assisting citizens in this process this year by registering voters, providing candidate and election information online, and hosting candidate debates,” continued Tyree-Hyche.



The League’s one-stop election information site, www.vote411.org, is extremely popular. It contains answers to frequently asked questions, such as where do I vote, what are the polling place hours, and how do I get an absentee ballot, as well as candidate information.

Constitutional Reform

The LWV will continue working to bring constitutional reform to Alabama. As you know, the Legislature established the Constitutional Reform Commission in 2011. That Commission met seven times this year and last, and will resume meeting after the Legislative Session of 2012.

So far they have approved amendments to revise the Banking Article (XIII), the Corporation Article (XII) and Distribution of Powers of Government (Article III). These revisions will be offered to the Legislature in February of 2012 and, if approved, will go to the voters as constitutional amendments in November.

At the time of their last meeting, January 18th, the Commission was discussing Article IV, the Legislature. In that Article, there will be a chance to provide some home rule. For example, Section 88 states that "Counties shall provide for the poor." That could be expanded to read "Counties shall provide for the poor as well as the laws necessary for their citizens". On the 18th, the public was invited to speak to the Commission. Representatives from the Alabama County Commissioners Association, Appleseed, ACCR Inc., Alabama ARISE and Commissioner Harris from Lowndes County as well as his Economic Development Director, Gene Crum, spoke in favor of home rule. Several persons from organizations such as Christian Citizen Task Force, Alliance for Citizens Rights, and the Alabama Tea Party spoke against home rule.

ACCR Inc. paid for a court reporter to record the proceedings and as soon as that transcript is available, it will be found at www.constitutionalreform.org

Information about the proceedings of the Commission and minutes of their meetings are available at <http://ali.state.al.us/constitutional-revision.html>

Public Transportation

Nancy Ekberg represents the LWV on the Steering Committee of the Alabama Transit Coalition.

The Steering Committee met with new ALDOT Director, John Cooper and new Alabama Department of Senior Services Commissioner, Neal Morrison to explain to both of them, the need for a coordinated effort to bring a statewide public transit strategy to Alabama. We also met with the folks in Baldwin County that created the very successful BRATS transit system there to see how they did what they did. It turns out that community meetings to promote involvement and build relationships were the reason for their success.

Despite the fact that the State, counties and cities do not have the funding to expand transit, we continue to work on bringing the existing transportation systems in this State together for more cooperation and efficiency.



This year's plans include getting on the agendas of organizations like the League of Municipalities, the Mayors' Associations, the RPCs and MPOs and others to enlist their help in creating a statewide strategy for public transit.

ONE MORE NOTE ON CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

AN IMPORTANT PIECE OF LEGISLATION WAS PASSED LAST LEGISLATIVE SESSION: IT IS A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO ELIMINATE THE UNCONSTITUTIONAL LANGUAGE IN THE EXISTING CONSTITUTION. IT WILL ELIMINATE STATEMENTS ABOUT A POLL TAX AND IT WILL ELIMINATE STATEMENTS THAT SAY BLACK CHILDREN AND WHITE CHILDREN CANNOT ATTEND SCHOOL TOGETHER.

ALTHOUGH THESE WORDS HAVE BEEN RULED UNCONSTITUTIONAL BY THE COURTS, THEY STILL EXIST IN OUR CONSTITUTION. THIS LEGISLATION HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN PART OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION COMMISSION, BUT THE LEGISLATORS GOT A HEAD START ON THE PROCESS AND PASSED THIS ONE IN 2011. IT WILL GO TO VOTERS IN NOVEMBER OF 2012 AND WE NEED YOUR HELP TO SEE THAT IT IS PASSED.

Natural Resources Update

FOREVER WILD

There is a coalition working to support passage of the Constitutional amendment reauthorizing Forever Wild. A statewide fund-raising committee has been created to run the public relations campaign leading up to the constitutional amendment on the November, 2012 ballot to reauthorize Forever Wild at its current funding level. Our role can be to use our various networks to support passage of the amendment, taking our guidance from the steering committee.



EARTH DAY

The Climate Change Task Force of the League of Women Voters of the US (LWVUS) is recommending the following language for inclusion in the LWVUS Leader's Update, encouraging local leagues to be involved in ways appropriate for our area.

Every April, in communities around the globe, people come together to mark the anniversary of the birth of the modern environmental movement -- the first Earth Day, April 22, 1970 -- and to demonstrate their commitment to environmental protection and sustainability. Make plans now for your League to participate in this campaign to advance sustainability, at home and around the world. Standing up for environmental protection is particularly important right now in light of the fierce attacks on the EPA and its efforts to limit greenhouse gas emissions and toxic air pollutants. Find more information and some ideas for your Earth Day celebration [here](#). And for more information about the EPA's important regulatory efforts, visit the [Clean Air Defense section](#) of the Toolkit for Climate Action.

The Birmingham League will be participating in this year's Auntie Litter Earth Day Event on April 22, 2012 at Kelly Ingram Park from 9am – 1pm. We are seeking volunteers to assist with this event. Please contact Joyce Lanning (joyce.lanning@gmail.com) if you are available.

SAVE THE DATES!

March 8, 2012 – Judicial Candidate

Forum, 6:30pm, Location TBD

**March 13, 2012 - Alabama State Primary
Elections**

**March TBD – Sunshine Week Project /
General Membership Meeting**



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QUOTABLE QUOTES

"Nearly all men can stand adversity, but
if you want to test a man's character,
give him power."

— *Abraham Lincoln*

"Real women don't have flushes, they
have power surges."

- *Australian physician and author,
Sandra Cabot*

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