



January 2010

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HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

The League hopes everyone had a safe and happy holiday season! We also look forward to prosperous and active year in 2010!

JANUARY MEETING: THE HIGHWAYS AROUND US

The LWVGB meeting this month will bring us up to date on major highway construction in our area. Guest speakers will tell us about the plans for Highway 280 and the Northern Beltway.

Join us on Wednesday, January 27 from 11:30 until 1:00 at Alabama Power's Electra Room (Alabama Power is located at 600 North 18th Street). Parking is available on 6th Avenue or on 18th Street. Come early and buy lunch at the Alabama Power cafeteria.

Temple Tutwiler, Co-Chair of a three city grassroots organization that funded a study done by the highway engineering & design firm, Gladding-Jackson, will present that plan and bring us up to date on a new plan funded by ALDOT and planned by FIGG Engineering & Design that creates an elevated highway for 280. In addition, representatives from the Birmingham Business Alliance (BBA) will describe the plans and progress of the Northern Beltway.

Come to learn about these major arteries and let your voices be heard.



*Photos from
the 2009
League
Holiday
Luncheon*



Dr. Scott Snyder speaks at the November League Meeting.



WELCOME!!

We welcome our newest League members including:

Marcella and Dale Little of Birmingham

Dr. Donald and Diane Marks of Hoover

Open Government Directive Survey Report

A survey was conducted by AmericaSpeaks, the League of Women Voters, National Coalition on Dialogue and Deliberation, OMB Watch and OpentheGovernment.org, to assess the public experience of participating in the Openness in Government Directive (OGD) process. This report shares a topline review of those results. Generally, there was appreciation among respondents for the White House's leadership and innovation in launching this process. There was also considerable feedback offered to help improve the process for future use, in the hopes that initiatives such as this, done well, can advance good ideas and open government more fully to the public.

You can access the full report by clicking <http://www.lwv.org/Content/ContentGroups/Projects/OpennessinGovernment/ToplineFindingsofOGDFeedbackandInvolvementSurveytoWH.pdf> .

McDonald's Musings

I was listening to an interview with some congressperson the other day and she made the statement that she was elected to do what her constituents wanted, not what she thought best. Really?? I disagree with that thinking.

When we elect people to public office, they are privy to much information on given subjects which we are not. At the federal level there are complex aspects to legislation we do not see and, in many cases, would not have time, ability or inclination to study. (I realize that some of that information comes from special interests.)

But I make my choices at the ballot box based on who I think will thoughtfully study the issues and then make good decisions. The political party of the candidates also plays a role. I then expect them to do what they think is right and not what is popular, as decided by polls. (I have never been polled about politics.) Perhaps I'm bitter at not having been consulted. It is pretty obvious that short term elected officials (House of Representatives) have about ten minutes after they are elected to do what they think is best and then they are running again for the next term. There has to be a better way.

On another subject, we say farewell to Carol Saint Lewis, who has resigned from the board because of other responsibilities. We wish her well.

TRANSIT IN 2010

From Ruth Wright, long-time Transportation Chair for LWVGB

The New Year brings with it a number of transportation issues of interest to the League.

In the Legislature, there is continuing failure of that body to provide dedicated funding for public transit. A bill to create a new regional board has been passed, but cannot take effect until dedicated funding is provided.

This could be in the form of, for example, increased sales tax on car purchases, a dedicated portion of the occupational tax, an increased license tax or some combination of these and other options.

Additionally, Alabama is one of only four states that do not fund public transportation. (The others are Alaska, Hawaii and Utah.) The League (along with Alabama Arise and others) must continue to press for an amendment to Constitutional Amendment 93/354 in order to allow state funding for public transit.

League members are urged to contact their legislators on these issues. Also, letters to the editor from individuals will help spread the word.

TRANSIT IN 2010 INCLUDES BIG PLANS FOR HIGHWAY 280.

There are big plans for Highway 280: eight hundred million dollars worth, in fact. The FIGG organization (a highway engineering and planning group) has modified its original plan for Highway 280, to include an elevated toll road, to be a combination of elevated and depressed structures, with free lanes on the side. This plan is supported by ALDOT, the Road Builders and apparently, the Governor. It is opposed by many property and business owners whose lives and businesses will be disrupted by the massive construction; many who oppose the egregious assault on the environment as well as county taxpayers who see such a project to be simply unaffordable by their state.

It is interesting that ALDOT has not considered simpler measures such as HOV (High Occupancy Vehicle) lanes, parallel feeder lanes or a non structural solution offered by a *Birmingham News* reader who suggests converting 280 during rush hours, to an equivalent of an interstate highway with no red lights and access limited to existing ramps and cloverleaves.

Better yet, would be fuel-saving bus rapid transit, that is now prevented by Constitutional Amendment 93/354 that restricts state funding to roads and bridges.

Public hearings are promised. Be sure to attend and express your views. Stay tuned.

Sarah and Dr. Scott Snyder at the November Meeting.



BIRMINGHAM MAYORAL ELECTION RUNOFF

Registered voters in the city of Birmingham will elect the city's next mayor on Tuesday, January 19.

If you live in Birmingham, remember to exercise your right to vote on that day!

THANKS to everyone who attended the League's Holiday Luncheon at The Club on December 12!

LWVGB Calendar

Month	Day	Time	Event
January	27	11:30am	Monthly Membership Meeting, The Electra Room, Alabama Power
February	2	11:30am	Board Meeting, Community Foundation Building
February	25	6:00pm	Monthly Membership Meeting, Homewood Library

QUOTABLE QUOTES

You can never get all the facts from just one newspaper, and unless you have all the facts, you cannot make proper judgments about what is going on. - *Harry S Truman, Mr. Citizen, 1960*

Those who are too smart to engage in politics are punished by being governed by those who are dumber. - *Plato*

League of Women Voters celebrates its 90th Anniversary

The League was created in 1920—just six months before women won the right to vote! Help us celebrate the League's 90th Anniversary by volunteering to help the local League.



League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham
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