



The VOTER

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

JANUARY MEMBER MEETING

Join the League at its first meeting of 2011. We will meet on Tuesday, January 25 at 6:30pm at the Homewood Library. Michael Churchman, Executive Director, Alabama Environmental Council, will speak on "Sustainable Cities Will Flourish - Birmingham Could Be One".



Read more on Page 2!

LWV CORE VALUES:

- We are a nonpartisan political membership organization.
- We believe that grassroots initiatives and consensus building are the strengths of our organization.
- We believe that our organization models the principles of good governance.
- We consider well before taking action and prepare well before beginning to act.
- We believe that citizenship requires knowledge, as well as the ability and will to act.
- We believe that the responsibility of good government rests on the shoulders of its citizens.
- We believe that the rights of citizens at home and abroad are interdependent.





**Michael Churchman, Executive Director, Alabama Environmental Council – “Sustainable Cities Will Flourish – Birmingham Could Be One”
Tuesday, January 25, 6:30 --- Homewood Library**

A sustainable community requires interconnected services, starting with the most basic human needs for breathing, eating and drinking, eliminating, and obtaining adequate shelter and some mobility. When we use resources faster than nature can generate new ones and create waste faster than nature can absorb it, an underappreciated ecological bankruptcy is the result.

That’s spending the future’s resources on today’s needs, leaving our children and grandchildren without their full share. How do we support a growing economy while reducing the social and economic costs of real growth?

As human pressure on resources escalates, cities, states and countries with the least carbon-intensive, most resource-efficient economies will flourish, while others based on formerly cheap, plentiful resources will be vulnerable and lose out. So it’s in the interest of any city, state or country that wishes to continue to be competitive and provide for the well-being of its population to act first and act boldly to find the most efficient ways of providing services.

Michael Churchman will highlight some of the ways energy and water are interconnected and efforts being made to use them more efficiently, as well as advances in community recycling.

Come and share ideas about what’s already moving or could move in the direction of sustainability in our area and how we can be part of that process.

ABOUT OUR SPEAKER:

Michael J. Churchman has led the Alabama Environmental Council (AEC) since August of 2007, having formerly been District Director for several Boy Scout Councils, most recently in Alabama. Under his leadership AEC has more than doubled the tons of materials recycled at its 2nd Avenue North facility and plans to ‘recycle’ the facility itself by replacing the old building on the site with retrofitted shipping containers.

A partnership involving the Jefferson County Department of Health, the Alabama Environmental Council, UAB and the city of Birmingham has been awarded a \$276,368 grant from the Alabama Department of Environmental Management to expand curbside and drop-off recycling programs in Jefferson County.

In addition to recycling, air, energy and water are missions for AEC, the oldest non-profit environmental advocacy association in Alabama. With Alabama Rivers Alliance, AEC received a grant from the World Wildlife Fund to share information about the energy-water connection, as well as one to AEC to help citizens build rain barrels.

Michael serves on the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama Task Force for the Stewardship of Creation and is a founding member of the Interfaith Environmental Initiative of Alabama. He and his wife, Suzane, have two children in the Homewood school system.



The President's Corner

"Each one bring one": as we all begin a new calendar year, I ask that you resolve to bring one new member into the League this year. We contribute our per member payments (PMP) to the LWVUS each January. Wouldn't it send a powerful message if the LWVGB doubled our membership in 2011? And look at the additional monitoring/educating/partnering we could accomplish with more members.

As you will see from other articles in this Voter, we have a provocative lineup of topics and speakers over the next three months, thanks to hardworking members of your board. Feel free to ask potential members to these meetings and be sure to include the dates of these LWV dialogues in your planning calendars.

The Voter continues to be our primary method to communicate with our members and the public. As you travel or do research for either business or pleasure, consider that your experiences might lend themselves to a Voter article. For example, if you have a positive experience using mass transit in a metro area comparable to Greater Birmingham, you might note how the system is funded, what areas are served, what future plans are underway and share this information with us. If you are fortunate to travel outside the country, you might ask about voting procedures, turnout, trends in the areas you are visiting or any of a number of issues with which the LWV is involved. The LWV has positions on many issues that are part of our daily experiences.

I am pleased to act as President of the LWVGB for the next four months. Sarah and I have had several transition meetings, and she continues to be available to offer advice and insights to the board and me. I encourage our members to offer suggestions and ideas to enhance our program and impact within the community.

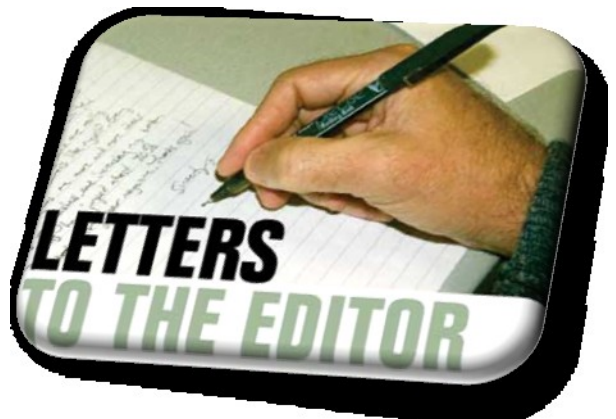
Leonette

Letters to the League

A Letter from King Henry Brown, a longtime member:

Members,

*Your work continues to be "alive" inspiring. Let your
Holiday Season be one of joy and thankfulness.*



A Visit to Glen Iris Elementary during American Education Week

I accepted Birmingham Superintendent of Education Witherspoon's invitation to visit a Birmingham city school during American Education Week November 15-19. He invited parents, grandparents, and interested citizens to visit any school between 9:00 until 2:30 on Wednesday, November 17.

I randomly chose Glen Iris Elementary on 11th Street South. Well, not so randomly, since Birmingham city schools only have numbers listed in the telephone book, not street addresses. (Without any connection to a Birmingham school through children or grandchildren, I wanted to see if I could select a school without benefit of a computer or GPS.) Glen Iris has a separate listing in the white pages with a street address.

After arriving at the school, I saw students posted in the entry to ask guests to sign in and escort them to the area they wished to visit. I told my escort that I wanted to visit a third grade class, and she decided I would go to Mrs. Russell's class. During the walk to her class, I asked how student escorts made up the material they were missing during class time. The student told me that the teacher would teach the material over again and that escorts were especially selected for this duty.

Mrs. Tiffany Russell and her teaching assistant Ms. Duff welcomed me and encouraged me to wander around the class during both the math and science lessons that I observed. They seemed to be excited that someone had come to their class and Mrs. Russell asked me to come back any time, providing me with her contact information. Mrs. Russell has her BS and master's from UAB and Ms. Duff will graduate from UAB in December.

Both the classes that I observed were part of the AL math and science technical initiative (AMSTI), using materials developed and provided by UAB. The class was all girls. Glen Iris has six classes of third graders--two all girl, two all boy, and two mixed gender. Parents can opt out of single-gender classes for their children. Ms. Russell's classroom had posters on "the writing process" along the top of the walls (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, evaluating, and publishing). It also had current and former "words of the day" posted. The word for Nov 17 was "fabricate" and students had to use it in a sentence and find a synonym for it. Earlier words included "plethora" and "expeditiously", which impressed me as formidable words for third graders to learn. Other posted information included "Rules for Bullyproofing Our Class" and "Rules for Positive Behavior".

The science class involved learning properties of chemicals. The UAB-supplied materials included a small plastic pail for each small group of students, In the pail were small vials of white substances and a cardboard plate for the students to pour out a small amount of each substance under the direction of the teacher. While the substances were harmless (cornstarch, sugar, baby powder), all the girls wore safety glasses and learned to smell by waving their hands over the substance toward their noses, rather than leaning over the substance. The class was engaged and helped Mrs Russell develop a list of characteristics of each mystery substance.

Both Mrs Russell and Mrs Duff explained that the students were "babied" in the first and second grades and were flummoxed when they had to use their minds to develop answers in third grade. Overall, their students are better at words and grammar than math. Mrs. Russell had put up colorful sheer curtains over the window, and she has her

LWVGB CALENDAR

January 25, 2010, 6:30pm. Monthly Membership Meeting at the Homewood Library. Topic: Sustainable Cities Will Flourish – Birmingham Could Be One.

February 25, 2010, 11:30am. Monthly Membership Meeting at Alabama Power (Electra Room), Topic: Mass Transit.

March 15, 2010, 6:30pm. Monthly Membership Meeting at the Homewood Library. Topic: Sunshine Week Review.



degrees posted behind her desk so that the girls can see the result of her years of work. She hopes to begin working on her doctorate soon. (Ms. Duff indicated that Mrs. Russell's students had the highest test scores within Glen Iris.)

When asked "what do you want from the community?", Mrs Russell replied that she wanted more involvement. She encouraged interested citizens to come by any time to observe or volunteer as an aide, or in

mentoring or reading assistance. Glen Iris is atypical in some ways from other Birmingham city schools. It is often chosen for pilot projects or is in the first cohort to get new programs, such as AMSTI. It also benefits from being in UAB's backyard.

Overall, I left with a very positive impression from this brief visit and plan to take Mrs. Russell up on her invitation to return.

Leonette



A Legend in the field of Registrars and loyal friend of the LWVGB Retires

Nell Hunter, who served 40 years as chairman of the Registrars office in Jefferson County, retired in December. Nell told our County Commission Board Observer that she was grateful to the League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham for volunteering to help her with voter registration and record updating over the years. She called the League members the most helpful volunteers that she had ever known.

Hunter served under 12 Alabama gubernatorial administrations, nine U.S. presidents and nearly three dozen county commissioners. She was credited with creating the modern day Registrars Office and the first registrar in the state to use a computerized voting list. She has been the only chair of the Registrars Office and the County will find it difficult to replace her.

The citizen expressing his right to vote was paramount to Nell Hunter. When the League had projects to increase the number of citizens who were registered, she helped with materials and advice. She oversaw the State's first electronic database which later meshed with the Statewide database that exists today. At the time the State needed to launch a statewide database the Secretary of the State wanted the Jefferson County database as Nell and her staff had worked out all the bugs.

Nell expressed a wish to stay involved in voter issues and will be invited to join our League. We look forward to welcoming her to our membership and out meetings and wish her the best of luck in her retirement.

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

You have the freedom to
choose your actions, you don't
have the freedom to choose
the consequences of your
actions.

~ Anonymous

Democracy is a government
where you can say what you
think even if you don't think.

~Author Unknown

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