



March, 2008

Board of Directors
League of Women Voters of
Greater Birmingham
205 583-5000
admin@lwwgb.org

- Virginia Randolph, President
- Nancy Ekberg, 1st Vice President
- Cissy Bennett, Secretary
- Sarah McDonald, Treasurer
- Kaydee Erdreich-Breman,
Transit
- Paulette Rowe,
Health
- Beverly Nelson,
Observer Corps Jefferson County
- Leonette Slay,
Environment
- Kathryn Kerchof, *Editor*
The Voter
- Betty Warnock,
Nominating Chair
- Yvonne Brakefield,
Nominating Committee
- Jean Johnson,
Off-Board Technical Director
- Ann Smith,
Off-Board Observer Corps Water
Works
- Karen Threlkeld
Off-Board Voters Service

Let the sun in! – A Note from the President

I happened to switch to a station on the radio with the rantings of irate and unfortunately uninformed individuals who were fostering misperceptions, and sometimes just out right falsehoods. I thought of how different that is from our February meeting on *Initiative*. The give and take and verification of facts make me so proud of the League's approach to study of an issue. While we do not all agree on everything, we have an opportunity to hear other sides to an issue that help shape our own decisions by confirming or changing our mind. Nancy Ekberg and Amanda McGriff were excellent leaders on *Initiative*. We thank them for their research, attention to detail and welcoming the comments of all the members. Our consensus report will be filed with the State league along with those from the other local leagues.

We had a letter to the editor in the *Birmingham News* to celebrate the League of Women Voter's 88th birthday on February 14th. In Alabama Patti Ruffner Jacobs started the Alabama Women's Suffragettes in 1910, and once the right to vote was won, Patti Jacobs became the Secretary for the newly formed national organization, League of Women Voters. It seemed appropriate to share this special birthday after the terrific turn-out to vote in the February 5th Presidential Primary. We are planning another editorial for *Sunshine Week*, March 16th. See the article on how you can participate with our Observer Corps for *Sunshine Week*, and plan to attend the meeting on March 27th.

This month in the *Voter* we are submitting items to you in preparation for the *Annual Member Business Meeting* scheduled for April 24 at 5:30 p.m. at Richard's Bar-b-que on Acton Road (near I-459). We ask that you review the items and be prepared to discuss and make decisions. The items are:

- ByLaws revision proposals
- Program Review with proposals for adoption
- Budget Proposal
- Nominations submitted for new Board members (you may still submit more)

Have a great month and I hope to see you on March 15th and 27th!

Ginny



Stroll in the Park on March 15th

League members who want to welcome spring by strolling through an historic Alabama site should meet at **Tannehill State Park** at 10:00 on Saturday, March 15. League members from Tuscaloosa have also been invited to participate.

Take Exit 100 from I-20/50 W and follow the signs to nearby Tannehill. Entrance fee is \$3 per person, and members can park in the lot across from the entrance to the park. After our walk, we will adjourn to a nearby restaurant for lunch. Some members may want to stay and take a closer look at the museum and craft cabins as well.

Leonette Slay, Chair, Natural Resources



State League has joined Alabama Transit Coalition

It's a first for Alabama. As of last week Alabama now has a unified and coordinated voice for transit throughout the state. Your LWVAL voted to join the partnership at its board meeting on Sunday, March 1st. The partnership is a follow-up to the **Transportation Means Business Conference** held last April in Montgomery. The League was part of the committee that planned that Conference. It was so successful, that attendees wanted to take transportation planning to the next step, and that next step is the new partnership, called the **Alabama Transit Coalition**. The Coalition is working on getting the Legislature to pass Rep. Cam Ward's bill, **HB123**, that will create a statewide Transportation Commission to oversee all forms of transportation including ALDOT and public transportation. The Coalition will be the public voice to that new Transportation Commission.

The next step in the planning will occur April 7th at a follow-up meeting to plan additional strategy. I represent the League in this Coalition and will keep you posted.

Nancy Ekberg

Nominating Committee Makes Recommendations

The Nomination Committee, headed by Betty Warnock and with Yvonne Brakefield and Cissy Bennett recommend the following officers for the 2008 election:

Secretary	Cissy Bennett
Treasurer	Sarah McDonald
Director	Connie Arnwine
Director	Amanda McGriff
Director	Joyce Lanning

Nomination Committee: Yvonne Brakefield, chair and Jean Johnson

Further nominations are welcomed.



State Council on May 3rd

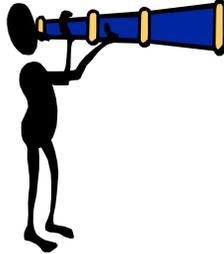
The LWVAL will hold its Council meeting here in Birmingham on Saturday, May 3rd. This one-day meeting will be at Samford University.

The meeting will run from 10:00 am until about 3:30 pm.

League business will be conducted in the morning session. Mark White, President of the Alabama Bar Association, will be the luncheon speaker. Several workshops will be conducted in the afternoon.

Sarah McDonald, Council manager, is requesting help from Birmingham members. Several people will be needed to assist with registration from about 9 to 10:30 am. Additional help will be needed at lunch time. Please contact Sarah at 967-2829 or smcdonald3357@charter.net if you can help.

March, 2008



Observer Corps Invites you to See What They See!

The LWVGB Observer Corps invites all League members to visit a board, council, or commission meeting of your choice with one of our usual observers. If you have never attended a meeting of the Birmingham City Council, the Jefferson County Commission, the Birmingham-Jefferson Transit Authority, the Transit Advisory Board, or the Birmingham Water Works Board, please give one a try, escorted by a seasoned board-watcher or on your own.

Maybe you would be more interested in attending a meeting of the city council or school board of the city in which you live. Great! Who knows? You just might get hooked and want to continue attending on a regular or occasional basis as a representative of the League. The Observer Corps would be glad to give you more information.

Please call Ann Smith at 823-4749 for meeting dates and times, to schedule a visit to a board, or to learn more about the observer program.

Ann Smith
Observer Corps Coordinator



Open Meetings Law and Sunshine on Government

LWVGB will have **Open Meetings** as the topic for our **March 27th** meeting which falls just after the **March 16-22 Sunshine Week**. The LWV is part of a national initiative that calls attention to the threats to “sunshine” or transparency in government information and decisions. The LWV stance is that we have the right to know what our government is doing, and our having access to public records and government meetings is vital to our democracy. We may want to track potential environmental hazards, or to attend a meeting where decisions about land use are being made. The existence of “sunshine laws”, which are also referred to as open meeting laws, afford us access and create government transparency.

These laws are only as good as we, the people, demand that they be. Finding information about how the government is serving the public has always been somewhat difficult. But in the post-9/11 age, these challenges are even greater. In the name of homeland security, “sunshine laws” and the opportunities for citizens to gain access to information have been constricted. As our elected Representatives in Washington work to bring about greater transparency through ethics, lobbying, and other reforms, so must we understand and participate in the upholding these laws. With that in mind we will have a meeting March 27th at 6:30 pm at the Homewood Library. Our speaker will be **Felicia Mason**, executive direction of the Alabama Press Association. The APA was instrumental in getting the Open Meetings Law passed during the 2005 Alabama Legislative Session and received the Jane Katz award from LWVAL for their work. Felicia was in the forefront of that effort.

Make sure to mark your calendars for this important and informative meeting.

Virginia Randolph



March, 2008

Help Make the Constitutional Convention Happen

Thank you to all of you for contacting your legislators and bringing the success we had this week. As you may have heard, the House Constitution and Elections Committee passed **HB 308** that calls for the people to vote on holding a constitutional convention. Now it will go to the House Rules Committee and we can continue that success if we will each contact our legislator on that committee and ask him or her to vote to allow the Bill to come to the floor of the House.

Following, is the list of the House Rules Committee. Please call them and ask them to allow the Bill to come to the floor of the House.

As you know, the Senate Judiciary Committee passed **SB 243** that allows the people to vote on a constitutional convention by a vote of 8 to 1. The original information showed that it passed by a vote of 7 to one, but one Senator who was a member of the Committee but was not able to be at the meeting in time to vote, asked to be included in the count. He is Senator Myron Penn.

Following is the Senate Rules Committee which must allow the Bill in the Senate to reach the Senate floor for debate.

Please make as many contacts as you have time to make. We have learned from Legislators that 10 calls from constituents constitutes major interest in the Legislators' view.

Thanks so much...we get closer every day!

Nancy Ekberg

House Rules Committee:

Chair, Rep. Ken Guin, (D), District 14, Carbon Hill Work: (205-924-0061) ken.guin@alhouse.gov
 Vice Chair, Rep. James E. Buskey, (D) District 99, Mobile, Home (251-457-7928)
 Ranking Minority Member, Rep. Ronald G. Johnson, (R) District 33, Sylacauga Home (256-249-9498)
 Rep. Barbara Bigsby Boyd, ((D) District 32, Anniston, Home (256-236-7423)
 Rep. Craig Ford, (D) District 28, Gadsden, Home (256-547-2727)
 Rep. Blaine Galliher, (R) District 30, Gadsden Home (256-442-7517)
 Rep. Todd Greeson, (R) District 24, Ider, Home (256-632-3963)
 Rep. Richard Laird, (D) District 37, Roanoke Home (334-863-2424)
 Rep. Randy Hinshaw (D) District 21, Madison Home (256-539-5441)
 Rep. Jack Page, III, (D), District 29, Gadsden Work: (256-549-8287) reppage@bellsouth.net
 Rep. Arthur Payne, (R) District 44, Trussville Home (205 655-5845)
 Rep. John Robinson, (D) District 23, Scottsboro, Home (256-269-2434)
 Rep. Rod Scott, (D) District 55 Fairfield, Home (205 781-1322)
 Rep. Pebblin Warren (D) District 82, Tuskegee Home (334-727-9127)
 Rep. Cam Ward (R) District 49, Alabaster Home (205-664-1066)

Senate Rules Committee:

Chair, Senator Lowell Barron, (D) District 8, Fyffe, Home (256-638-6430)
 Deputy Chair, Senator Pat Lindsey, (D), District 22, Butler (205-459-2478) senbutler@aol.com
 Senator Roger Bedford, Jr. (D) District 6 Russellville Home (256-332-7709)
 Senator Tom Butler ((D) District 2, Madison Home (256-837-8374)
 Senator Bobby Denton, (D) District 1, Muscle Shoals Home (256-381-7449)
 Senator Vivian Davis Figures, (D) District 33, Mobile Home (251-457-4567)
 Senator Steve French, (R) District 15, Birmingham Home (205 871-3881)
 Senator Parker Griffith, (D) District 7, Huntsville, Home (256-533-0344)
 Senate President Pro Tem, Hinton Mitchem, (D) District 9, Albertville Home 256-498-6600
 Senator Harri Anne Smith, (R) District 29, Slocomb, Home (334-886-3208)
 Senator Rodger Smitherman (D) District 18, Birmingham (205-322-0012) (334-242-7870)
 Senator Jabo Waggoner (R) District 16, Birmingham Home (205-822-7443) jabo.waggoner@alsenate.gov



March, 2008

Proposed LWVGB Budget 2008-2009

The Budget Committee, Kaydee Erdreich-Breman, Sarah McDonald, and Virginia Randolph met and propose the following budget for 2008-2009. As part of the budget a recommendation is being made to raise the dues by \$5.00. At this time the dues are \$40 for a single member with \$26.80 going to National and \$12.00 going to the State leaving the Greater Birmingham league with \$1.20. The committee recommends that the dues be \$45.00 for a single member and \$65.00 for a family membership.

Proposed 2008-2009 LWVGB Budget

INCOME	2007-2008	YTD	2008-2009
General Contributions			
Member	\$0.00	\$360.00	\$400.00
Non-Member	\$0.00	\$18.90	\$0.00
Member in-Kind	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Non-Member in-Kind	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Ed Fund Contributions			
Member	\$800.00	\$830.00	\$800.00
Non-member	\$3,000.00	\$30.00	\$0.00
Interest Income	\$500.00	\$189.53	\$400.00
Membership Dues	\$2,640.00	\$2,314.00	\$3,605.00
Miscellaneous Income			
Sale of Merchandise	\$0.00	\$20.00	\$0.00
Holiday Luncheon	\$325.00	\$420.00	\$450.00
Ed Fund Reimbursements	\$140.00	\$0.00	\$97.50
From Reserves	\$2,285.00	\$0.00	\$1,911.90
TOTAL INCOME	\$9,690.00	\$4,182.43	\$7,664.40
EXPENSES			
Advocacy	\$15.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Citizen Education			
Fingertips	\$150.00	\$100.44	\$150.00
Speakers Bureau	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Voter Service			
Voter Guide			
Candidate Forum	\$2,675.00	\$754.97	\$800.00
Voter Registration	\$20.00	\$0.00	\$20.00
Program			
Resource Committees	\$25.00	\$0.00	\$50.00
Reaching consensus	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$10.00
Observers Corps	\$10.00	\$0.00	\$10.00

The Voter

March 2008

Three Bylaws Changes Proposed

New wording is underlines. Wording to be removed is in parentheses.

Article IV Board of Directors

Sec. 3. Vacancies

Vacancies other than the presidency may be filled by vote of the remaining members of the Board of Directors. Three consecutive absences from Board meetings or more than five absences over twelve months from Board meetings of any member without valid reason shall be deemed a resignation. A record of these unexcused absences shall be recorded in the minutes of the Board.

Rationale: An official record is needed in the case of this type of resignation.

Article V. Officers

Sec. 5. Treasurer

The treasurer shall collect and receive all monies due. The treasurer shall be custodian of these monies, shall deposit them in a bank designated by the Board of Directors and shall disburse the same only upon order of the Board. The treasurer shall present statements to the board at its regular meetings and an annual report at the annual business meeting.

- a. The treasurer may appoint a member to serve as assistant, with Board approval.
- b. An audit of the treasurer's books shall be made by a qualified person following the closing of the Treasurer's term (year's account.) A report of this audit shall be made to the presiding Board no later than the September Board meeting of that year.

Article VI. Financial Administration

Sec. 2. Dues

Dues are payable at the time of joining. Dues for renewing members are due and payable by (September 15) Oct. 1st of each fiscal year thereafter. Any member who fails to pay dues by January 15 each year shall be dropped from the membership rolls. New members who join between (January 1) Oct. 1 and March 31 shall pay (half of the) full annual dues; new members who join between April 1 and (June 30) Sept. 30 shall pay one fourth of the annual dues.

Rationale: These dates make a clear distinction of the two halves of the fiscal year.

Welcome to two new members

We would like to welcome two members this month-- **P.J. Magik** of Jasper and **Loretta Brown** of Birmingham. We look forward to welcoming you at the membership meeting on March 27th.



LWVGB Program Review



This year the membership was asked to contribute to the program review in an on-line dialogue accessible through the LWVGB web site but password protected. The positions have been reviewed and there are no recommendations for deletion or addition but to continue the Program as it currently exists.

The priority items recommended are

- Jefferson County Government
- Urban Government
- Transportation

LWVGB Upcoming Events

March	15	10:00	Tannehill Walk	Tannehill State Park
March	17-21		Sunshine week	
March	27	7:00 – 8:30	Member Meeting	Homewood Library 116
April	1	6:00 – 7:30	Board Meeting	Samford Burns Chapman Hall
April	24	5:30 – 7:30	Member Business Meeting	Richards B-Que Off Acton
May	3	9:00 – 3:30	LWVAL Council	Samford Beeson Hall
May	6	6:00 – 7:30	Board Meeting	Samford Burns Chapman Hall
May	22	7:00 – 8:30	Member Meeting	Homewood Library 116
June	13-17		LWV Convention	Portland, OR