

March 2013 Edition



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
www.lwv.org

# The VOTER



League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham  
<http://www.lwvgb.org>

## February 28 Meeting – An Overview of Greater Birmingham Area School Systems

*By Trish Powell Crain*

### Special points of interest:

- \* February 27—Alabama v Holder Voting Rights Hearing, US Supreme Court
- \* February 28—Membership Meeting at Samford, 6pm
- \* April 26-28—LWVAL Convention, Tuscaloosa
- \* May 9—Annual Meeting, Niki's West, 6pm

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What is the current status of public school systems in the Birmingham metro area - in both Jefferson and Shelby Counties? How should we go about improving them? Is increased flexibility and reduced regulation the answer? What are the most important factors in improving our public education systems? On February 28, 2013, the League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham will host a program at the Homewood Public Library that should shed some light on these issues. Dr. Joe T. Adams, Research Coordinator of the Public Affairs Research Council of AL (PARCA),

will present "An Overview of School Systems in the Greater Birmingham Area." The program will begin at 6:00 p.m. in the library's Round Auditorium on the upper level.

Education in Alabama is a complex public issue, and, judging by the current activity at the Statehouse in Montgomery, it is on the minds of lawmakers and the public alike. LWVGB President Cyrondys Jackson Springer stated, "The League of Women Voters supports effective public education in the various school districts of Greater Birmingham, and that calls for adequate funding, ex-

tension of public education prior to the first grade, encourage public involvement and public schools accreditation. Springer continued, "These educational opportunities better prepare our children for the future. The League is pleased that Dr. Joe Adams will share PARCA's extensive public schools study with our members, as well as the public. The League of Women Voters of Alabama is tracking key legislative initiatives on the LWVAL.org web site.

Please join us for this wonderful opportunity. The event is free of charge.

## Happy 93rd Birthday, League!

*By Cyrondys Jackson Springer*

The League of Women Voters is elated today to celebrate our 93<sup>rd</sup> anniversary. Since our founding in 1920, the League has worked tirelessly to protect and uphold the constitutional right to vote, a right that composes the very foundation of our

democracy.

However, while we celebrate our successes, we are concerned by stark challenges to our democracy. In the upcoming Supreme Court case *Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder*,

the constitutionality of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965 will be reviewed. The VRA is landmark legislation that ensures every American citizen, regardless of race, has an equal right to vote. Should the Court rule

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Happy Birthday League (continued from page 1)

**Mark your calendars for our 2013 Annual Meeting!**

**Date: May 9th, 2013 at 6pm**

**Location: Niki's West, 233 Finley Ave W, Birmingham, AL 35204**

**(205) 252-5751**

Recommendations for 2013-14 Program (studies or items for emphasis) or Budget or recommended changes in Bylaws must be submitted in writing no later than 3/25/2013 to Cyron dys Springer, P. O. Box 530522, Mountain Brook, AL 35253 or by email to [admin@lwvqb.org](mailto:admin@lwvqb.org).

See business meeting plans and documents at [www.lwvqb.org/members/](http://www.lwvqb.org/members/)

against the VRA, which prevents states from passing discriminatory voting rules, the right to vote for millions of Americans would be at risk.

"The thought that the Supreme Court might soon overturn the Voting Rights Act and limit voting rights should send a chill down the spine of every American," said League president Cyron dys Jackson Springer. "The League believes we should be expanding voting rights, not curtailing them, and working to make elections free, fair and accessible to all eligible citizens."

The League has been committed to protecting voter rights since 1920, and we're not stopping now. The upcoming Su-

preme Court review of the Voting Rights Act shows that even 93 years after our founding, the League's work is needed more than ever.

The League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham is one of nearly 800 Leagues in all 50 states that works to protect voters' rights. Since 1920, the League has worked to educate and inform voters. "We respect all points of view, and never support or oppose candidates for office, or political parties," continued Cyron dys Jackson Springer. "This is what sets us apart from so many organizations, and it is why we welcome new volunteers to take part in our work here in Greater Birmingham."

Membership in the League is open to men and women of all ages. For more information about the League, visit [www.lwvqb.org](http://www.lwvqb.org). The League's next event will be held February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at 6pm at the Homewood Public Library.

*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. Membership in the League is open to men and women of all ages. With 93 years of experience and 800 local and state affiliates, the League is one of America's most trusted grassroots organizations. Follow us on [Facebook](#) & [Twitter](#).*

## Rally to Protect the Voting Rights Act

**By LWVUS**

On Wednesday, February 27, the Supreme Court will review *Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder*, a case that questions the constitutionality of Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965, the landmark legislation that outlawed discriminatory voting practices. This is a critically important case, and to show our support for the VRA, we'll be joining with our partner organizations to rally in front of the Supreme Court on the day of the

arguments.

The League firmly believes the Supreme Court must uphold Section 5 or it would erase 50 years of progress for minority voters, and signed onto an amicus brief to signify our support and asking the Supreme Court to uphold the lower court's ruling. When the Voting Rights Act was last reauthorized in 2006 with overwhelming bipartisan support, Congress declared that without its protections, "racial and

language minority citizens will be deprived of the opportunity to exercise their right to vote."

In addition to our amicus brief, the League of Women Voters of South Carolina has also submitted an amicus brief, joining onto a state brief that addresses how Section 5 helped implement and clear a Voter ID law in South Carolina.

(Continued on page 3)

## CASE (continued from Page 2)

In conjunction with many of our national partners, the League is participating in a rally at the Supreme Court on February 27, starting with a press briefing at 8:30 am and the rally running from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm.

If you're in the DC area, please join us for

all or part of the rally!



# PROTECT THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

**"The thought that the Supreme Court might overrule Congress and take away voting rights should send a chill down the spine of every American," said Elisabeth MacNamara, national President of the League of Women Voters. Without Section 5, warns MacNamara, "we can expect to see states consider a range of restrictions on voting...unparalleled since the days of Jim Crow."**

## LWV Voices Disappointment on Voting Commission

By Renee Davidson, LWVUS

During his State of the Union address, President Obama announced his solution to the nation's flawed voting systems: the formation of a nonpartisan voting commission. The League of Women Voters, which has worked to protect voting rights for over 90 years, was disappointed by what we heard. We believe that the President's plan to tackle problems at the polls lacks the immediate action needed to ensure that every American citizen can exercise the right to vote. "The President is essentially kicking the can down the road," LWVUS Presi-

dent Elisabeth MacNamara told Huffington Post Live. "A commission is simply delaying our opportunity to take advantage of the public demand for action. We want to see action now."

"We were hoping for bold action, not lip service," MacNamara told NPR. "Long lines occur every four years. There is no real mystery as to why this happens," she said. Indeed, the reasons for problems at the polls are well-known and well-documented. MacNamara told MSNBC's Chris Jansing, "We need a less antiquated voter regis-

tration system, more equitable polling place allocation, and we need early voting."

The League believes that the President could have announced real solutions like those delineated in legislation already introduced on Capitol Hill, including requiring early voting, setting limits on waiting times, providing for portable voter registration and establishing secure online voter registration.

## PROTECTING AND ENGAGING VOTERS

The League has been fighting for equal access to the polls for more than 90 years. Nationwide, we register voters, provide nonpartisan election information, including written statements directly from the candidates and live debates, and fight for elections systems that are free, fair and accessible. Today, we face significant challenges to our representative system of government and voting rights. Our work ensures that all eligible voters, particularly underrepresented populations, can exercise their right to vote.



## League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham

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*Making Democracy Work!*

### League of Women Voters 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.

### League of Women Voters Education Fund Mission Statement

The League of Women Voters Education Fund works to encourage the active and informed participation of citizens in government and to increase understanding of major public policy issues.



## LWVAL Convention

**April 26 - 28, 2013**

**WHO?:** Local League Delegates and Guests, LWVAL State Board and Off-Board Members

**WHAT?** The 2013 League of Women Voters of Alabama State Convention

**WHERE?** Hotel Capstone, on the campus of the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa

#### **WHEN?**

- Friday, April 26th—  
Pre-convention So-

cial Media Workshop

- Saturday, April 27th -  
Convention
- Sunday, April 28th -  
Convention

#### **WHY?**

- Conduct the business of the 2013 LWVAL Convention
- Attend informative workshops and hear important speakers
- Visit with fellow Leaguers

More information available at <http://lwval.org/convention2013/>.

**NOTE: SPECIAL CONVENTION RATE OF \$95/NIGHT WILL BE AVAILABLE THURSDAY, FRIDAY, AND NIGHT AT THE CAPSTONE INN (PREVIOUSLY KNOWN AS SHERATON AND AS THEN AS THE FOUR POINTS HOTEL).**

## Board of Directors, 2013

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