

May 2010

The Voter

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League of Women Voters of
Greater Birmingham
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TIME FOR VACATION!

As usual, the VOTER will be taking a vacation along with the League until August. Our next issue will be distributed in September-2010. Have a GREAT Summer!

WELCOME to our New Board Members!

Amanda McGriff returns as Treasurer; Joyce Lanning, Leonette Slay, and Ida Tyree-Hyche join the Board of Directors; Angelyn Simmons joins as Secretary; Connie Arnwine serves as Nominating Committee Chair with Yvonne Brakefield as a Nominating Committee Member.



**League of Women Voters
of the United States
National Convention
June 11-15, 2010
Atlanta, Georgia
Marriott Marquis Hotel**

The LWVUS invites all members to join fellow Leaguers from 50 states, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and Hong Kong to celebrate 90 remarkable years of League achievements and chart the course for the next biennium of League programs.

All League members are invited to attend Convention, but Presidents of local, state and ILO Leagues appoint their allotted delegates. Non-voting members can be part of the excitement as the Convention delegate body debates and adopts the 2010-2012 National Program, the LWVUS Budget for the next fiscal year, and amendments to the LWVUS Bylaws. Delegates will also be choosing the LWVUS Board officers, directors and nominating committee for the next biennium.



The famous "choo-choo" at Richards BBQ on 4/29/2010 at the Annual Meeting

**DON'T FORGET
TO VOTE ON
JUNE 11**

State Council Held in Auburn

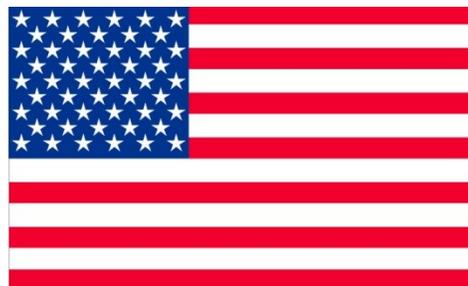
The LWVAL held its biennial Council meeting in Auburn on May 15th. Mary Lynn Bates attended as a member of the state board. Sarah McDonald and Connie Arnwine attended as LWVGB delegates.

In a departure from usual Council business, an emergency study of charter schools was approved. Laura Hill, of the East Alabama League (formerly LWV of Auburn) is the state Education chair and will head the study committee. It was recognized by the state board that legislation enabling charter school is important in garnering Federal Race to the Top funding and Alabama has no such legislation (defeated in this last legislative session). Consequently this study was deemed important so the League could address future discussion and legislation.

Three excellent presentations were part of the day's activities. Mary McGinnis, of Mobile, is a member of a League mentoring group who will coach local Leagues in membership development. She presented a power point discussion of membership issues.

Dr. Renee McEldowney, Assoc. Professor at Auburn University, discussed the key issues in the new federal health care legislation.

Dr. Lynne Patrick, also from Auburn, discussed the pros and cons of charter schools.



*HAPPY
MEMORIAL
DAY!*

May 31



"Open Secret" wins Audience Favorite Award at the Politics on Film Festival in D.C.!!

Melanie Jeffcoat accepted the award with the Founders of the Film Festival.



*WANT A COPY OF THE "OPEN
SECRET" DVD?*

Contact Nancy Ekberg via email:

Nanekberg@aol.com or via telephone:

205-967-2897.

ABSENTEE VOTING RIGHTS FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL

NOTE: The following article is adapted, by permission, from the Apr/May 2010 The Officer, a publication of the Reserve Officer's Association.

In October 2004, Bob Carey, a captain (O6) in the Naval Reserve, received notification that he was being mobilized. It was three weeks before federal, state, and local elections, and he could not get an absentee ballot in time. Because he had not yet mobilized and left the U.S., he was able to take leave, fly back to New York City at his own expense, and cast his ballot in person. In the fall of 2005, Carey was in his demobilization process back in the U.S. Once again, because of the timing of the 2005 New York City mayoral election, Capt. Carey was able to vote only by taking leave from his demobilization site, flying back to New York City, and voting in person. He reflected, "I got to vote, but I had to pay a heck of a poll tax in used leave, airfares, and taxis."

These personal experiences led Carey to work full time on military voting rights. He was appointed director of the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) in July 2009.

According to Carey, the absentee balloting system was developed to send ballots around the corner to a voter the election official likely knew, not half way around the world to widely deployed military personnel in remote locations supporting contingency operations. The jerry-rigging of the system to the military has had limited success. While 91 percent of all civilian absentee ballots in the United States are successfully returned in time to be counted, only 63 percent of military absentee ballots are successfully returned in time. Because of this, more than three-quarters of all military voting failures is because ballots were not successfully returned in time by military voters.



(continued from Column 1)

Despite these hurdles, military voters persevere. In the 2008 election, while 71 percent of the national voter population was registered, 77 percent of the military was registered to vote. And while the 54 percent military voter participation rate may look substandard compared to the 63.6 percent national voter participation rate in 2008, when the military rate is adjusted for a military population that has almost twice as many males who are nearly half the average age as the rest of the nation—where men and youth vote at far lower levels than women and older voters—the military voter participation rate actually climbs to 73 percent, again greater than the national average.

Fortunately, the military voter has a growing number of allies and programs to aid him or her. The recently enacted Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act requires states to send out absentee ballots to military voters at least 45 days before the election, and to also send the blank ballot electronically, such as by email or online posting, to allow earlier access to the ballot. Furthermore, the secretary of defense recently elevated the powers of installation voting assistance offices so they will provide registration and absentee ballot application assistance at every change-of-duty station, before and after overseas deployments, and provide the greatest level of personal voting assistance ever offered. This aid will come in addition to the considerable assistance provided by the services, Unit Voting Assistance Officers and the FVAP website (www.fvap.gov) which together have raised military voter registration above the national average.



ABSENTEE VOTING RIGHTS FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL - continued from Page 3 -

Finally, FVAP is developing a suite of electronic tools that will allow the military voter to complete his or her registration and absentee ballot application, receive a blank ballot, and vote for candidates, all online. After voters complete that process, they print the ballot, sign it, and send it back by postal mail like a regular absentee ballot. Receiving these ballots electronically will save weeks of postal delivery time, and using online systems allows the voter to complete the process without needing a master's degree in election administration.

Military voters must send in their Federal Post Card Applications (FPCA) as soon as possible in 2010, but no later than July 15. If voters have not received their absentee ballot by Oct. 2, they may use the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot, a back-up ballot that can be downloaded at www.fvap.gov, which all election officials must accept if the voter has already submitted an FPCA at least 30 days before the election.

ELECTION PRIMARIES ARE COMING SOON!

June 1, 2010

Are you registered to vote? Voter registration is closed for the ten (10) days before an election.

Absentee ballot applications must be turned in no later than the fifth calendar day before the election.

An absentee ballot returned by mail must be postmarked no later than the day prior to the election and received by the Absentee Election Manager no later than noon on election day. If hand-delivered, the ballot must be in the office of the Absentee Election Manager by the close of business (but no later than 5 p.m.) on the day prior to the election.

Check out the Alabama Secretary of State Elections website for more information - <http://www.sos.alabama.gov/elections/Default.aspx>.

TRANSPORTATION OF THE PUBLIC

Recap of the 2nd Annual Meeting of the Alabama Transit Coalition

The Alabama Transit Coalition met on Tuesday, April 27th at United Way of Central Alabama in Birmingham for their 2nd Annual Meeting since being formed two years ago. The League of Women Voters of Alabama are members of the Coalition and Nancy Ekberg represents the League as the Civic Group in the Steering Committee. League member Ruth Wright of our Birmingham League also attended the Annual Meeting.

The meeting began with a recap of 2009 activities.

The attendees at the Annual Meeting broke into five breakout groups to discuss goals and plans for the upcoming year. The groups included Access, Capacity, Coordination, Legislative Advocacy and Finance.

Goals include completion of a database spreadsheet that lists all ride providers in the state at this time, including those that provide rides for handicapped, senior citizens, fixed systems, on-demand providers, and private providers. The list will include contact information, locations served, times that rides are available, fees and restrictions. The spreadsheet will be posted on all websites that riders can access. Ultimately, the information will be made available to the call centers throughout the state so that those without internet capability can use their telephone to find out where rides are available.

ATC members agreed to also meet with legislators who are favorable toward public transportation to get supportive legislation for 2011. They agreed to interview all candidates for governor to see how they stand on the issue of public transportation and make that information available to the public. They also plan to educate the public about the need and benefits of public transportation in Alabama.

May 2010

LWVGB Calendar

Month	Day	Time	Event
June	11-15		<i>League of Women Voters of the United States Annual Meeting, Marriott Marquis, Atlanta GA</i>

QUOTABLE QUOTES

I would rather trust a woman's instinct than a man's reason.
~Stanley Baldwin

Women belong in the house... and the Senate.
~Author Unknown

No one is free when others are oppressed.
~Author Unknown

Conformity is the jailer of freedom and the enemy of growth.
~John F. Kennedy

Enjoy the Summer!
LWVGB programs will resume in the Fall.



WELCOME to our new members!

Lynneice Washington, Birmingham

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