



November, 2007

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

It's Eclectic This Month! -- A Note from the President

Our October meeting on immigration was superb. Leonette Slay pulled together information, stated it was interactive and proceeded to moderate the session effectively. We learned new information and new ways of looking at the issue with a number of people engaged. Don't miss the November 15th meeting and get involved in the consensus.

Jean Johnson has developed a blog for us at for us to discuss issues of interest. She started us out with Immigration as one category and there are already several comments and questions. If this looks like a useful means of communication we will use it for other projects. Many other leagues across the country have begun to do the same thing. Jean, in all her passion for the League, has also enhanced our blog site with other resources on the immigration issue. There is so much more to the issue than whether we hire someone to cut our grass.

Since a winner was declared from the general election for Mayor of Birmingham we did not have a run-off debate. It appears though that we built some good will with our partners and will be able to work with them again in the future on other activities that enhance citizen education.

Leonette Slay and Nancy Ekberg represented us at the UN Day dinner. Both have indicated that the local organization is impressive and the numerous efforts by the UN are outstanding, although often not in the news.

Some of our local members are involved with the LWVAL on a study of voting issues. The study research was kicked off with a visit to the Secretary of State Beth Chapman. Kathryn Kerchof, Leonette Slay and our State President Mary Lynn Bates trooped to Montgomery along with a couple members from Auburn and had an interesting discussion with the Secretary. I think we began to build a meaningful dialog with the Secretary on voting issues.

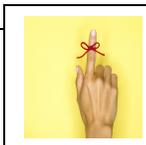
At our November board meeting we re-vamped our policy on Published Materials to take into consideration our Web based items. The revised policy, along with all the other policies may be seen on our web site under the Member information. Also at the Board meeting, discussion was held regarding creating a voter guide for the 2008 election season. Interest was expressed and especially in making a voter guide that includes general voting information including provisional ballots, how to find out where you vote, absentee ballots, restoration of voting rights for ex-felons, etc.

Don't forget to send in your reservation for the December 1 Holiday Luncheon. Our guest speaker, Mark White, President elect of the Alabama Bar Association, will discuss judicial selection. This issue has received wide-spread interest since the last Supreme Court race when more money was spent in Alabama for the Chief Justice position than in any other state.

Ginny

REMINDER

Dues are past due!



If you have not already sent in your \$40.00 dues, please do so ASAP.

Make your checks payable to
LWVGB
and send them to :
Sarah McDonald
3357 Cherokee Road
Birmingham, AL 35223

November, 2007



Mark your Calendar for the LWVGB Holiday Luncheon

Join us for a special Holiday Luncheon at **11:30 on Saturday, December 1 at The Club, Stateroom 1**. Select a vegetarian or chicken pasta dish, indulge in the orange rolls and listen to our guest speaker, **Mark White, president-elect of the Alabama Bar Association**. Mark, a partner with White, Arnold, Andrews and Dowd, P.C., will speak about **Judicial Selection**, a timely topic in the state with the most expensive judicial elections in the country.

This will be an excellent program. Reserve your place by sending a check and the form below to Ginny Randolph. But hurry... **deadline for reservations is Monday, November 26.**

**Reservation for LWVGB Holiday Luncheon
Saturday, December 1st
11:30 a.m.
The Club, Stateroom 1
Mark White, President-Elect
Alabama Bar Association**

Name(s) _____ Telephone _____

Reservations (\$35 per person) _____ Indicate # vegetarians _____ Total: \$ _____

Indicate your choice of menu items: Pasta _____ Vegetarian _____

Make check payable to LWVGB.
Mail to P. O. Box 530522, Birmingham, AL 35253.
Reservation deadline is Monday, November 26th.

The Voter



Did you know...

that people who fear that delegates to a constitutional convention would not know how to write a new one, don't stop to realize that citizens have written the last six Alabama Constitutions? What's more, there are excellent models or guides. Two of them can be found on the ACCR Web under the category **RESOURCES**. One of them is the Proposed 1973 Constitution written by a Commission organized by then Governor Albert Brewer and the second one is the 1983 Constitution written totally by the Alabama legislators. The one written in 1973 under Gov. Brewer was dropped by his successor, Governor George Wallace. The one written in 1983 was legally challenged and the Alabama Supreme Court ruled that it was unconstitutional because it our 1901 Constitution states that only citizen delegates may write a whole new constitution and that legislators can change only article by article. Both documents are at www.constitutionalreform.org

Nancy

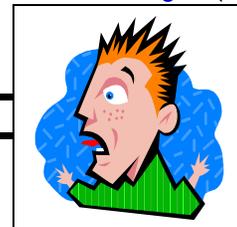
Constitution Convention Coalition Annual Summit

On Saturday, November 17th, the Constitution Convention Coalition will hold its annual summit at Birmingham Southern College (900 Arkadelphia Road · Birmingham, AL 35254) from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. The Coalition is made up of over 30 non-profit organizations including the LWVAL and LWVGB, as well as others from across Alabama, who are dedicated to rewriting the Alabama Constitution. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend and learn about new initiatives underway to move the effort forward, including information and new resources available for informing citizens, and draft Legislation and Legislative issues in the 2008 Legislative Session. The group will begin planning the 2008 goals and discussing topics such as

- Advocacy for 501(c)(3) Organizations
- Constitutional Reform Background Training and Talking Points
- How to Find Your Organization's Niche in the Constitutional Reform Movement
- College and University Idea Sharing
- Lessons Learned in Hosting Constitutional Reform House Parties.

Community leaders from all over the State will be present.

Admission is free and open to the public. Limited travel scholarships are available. Lunch will be provided at no cost. Please contact Brantley Fry, the Coalition Coordinator, at brantley@constitutionalreform.org or (205) 967-2621 for more information and to register.



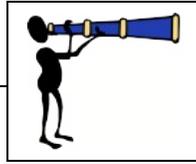
Don't Let Your Voter Stop Coming!

You only have until December to pay your League dues before we will have to stop sending the VOTER to you. Dues are \$40.00 per person. Add \$20.00 more if a member of your household wants to be part of a family membership. Student memberships are \$20.00.

Send your check, made out to **LWVGB** to our Treasurer, Sarah McDonald 3357 Cherokee Road, Mountain Brook, 35223

Only five members have not sent in their dues.....we hope you plan to stay a member of the League!!

November, 2007



Observer Corps Report

Birmingham Water Works Board 2007 Water Summit

The BWWB held a public meeting November 6th for the purpose of allowing water customers to comment and ask questions related to the 2007 drought. Water Board directors and senior staff were present. All those attending who wished to speak were heard. Most speakers, as expected, represented various “green” industry organizations - commercial plant growers, nurseries, landscapers, tree farmers, who feel they have been treated unfairly during this year’s drought. They say that their industry has been hit hard by water restrictions while other businesses were not forced to cut back their water usage.

Beth Stewart, executive director of the Cahaba River Society, called for proactive conservation measures and better use of the water we have, giving several practical examples. She asked that the BWWB do more to promote conservation and to educate customers when there is no drought. Nelson Brooke, the Black Warrior Riverkeeper, spoke of source water protection, pointing out the excessive cost of treating polluted water. He asked that the reporting of water line leaks be made easier. In response to questions from Carol Barton, a nursery owner, General Manager Mac Underwood replied that there is no consideration being given to a ban on new taps (additional water customers). When asked, “What is Stage 5?” his reply was that this has not been defined. The owner of an irrigation company would like for local governments to get involved by encouraging the use of available water-saving devices such as rain sensors, drip irrigation, and pressure reducers. One speaker applauded the use of surcharges “because they worked” to discourage water waste and would like to see them continue.

Mr. Underwood stated that 7 to 10 new water sources are being studied. New sources in the past have been added about every 20-25 years. The last was added in the 1980’s. A study of the possible new sources will be completed in 2008.

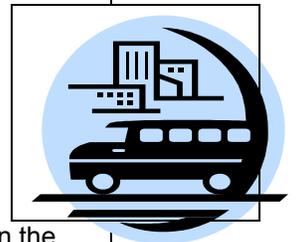
If you have wondered how the surcharges collected will be used, they will fund drought and capacity-related projects.

Ann Smith

Transportation Citizens Committee

The TCC is a federally mandated advisory committee to the Metropolitan Planning Organization. It is made up of up to 50 members representing 5 geographical areas on the basis of population. It is staffed by the Transportation Department of the Regional Planning Commission.

The functions of the TCC include making recommendations on all federally involved transportation issues, which must be approved or disapproved by the TCC and the parallel Transportation Technical Committee (TTC) before action by the MPO. The TCC also may adopt positions and make suggestions and requests – none of which are binding upon the MPO. The Public Involvement Committee of the TCC is responsible for disseminating information and receiving input from the public. This committee plans (with staff) official public involvement meetings on certain issues. (Continued on next page)





Volunteer to be an Interviewer!

Don't you want to know what our local legislative delegation thinks about some of the upcoming issues for the next Alabama Legislative session? We are conducting interviews and would appreciate your participation. We will be able to cover as many of the delegation for which we have volunteers. It is easy and it is fun. The interviews will be conducted in January. The interviews are set and we have all the information you need. There are set questions. Two people go together and you set up the interviews to suit your schedule and the legislator's schedule and location. In the past legislators have welcomed our questions because they have said they are thoughtful and not biased in nature.

Volunteer by emailing us at admin@lwvgb.org or calling 583-5000 and leaving a message. Please be sure to leave your phone number.



Observer Corps News Continued... Transportation Citizens Committee

Ouida Fritschi presently chairs the Transportation Citizens Committee. Doris Powell is vice chair. Meetings are normally held on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at noon at the Central Station on Morris Avenue. December's will be the 3rd Tuesday.

League members Ruth Wright, Kaydee Erdreich-Breman, and Carolyn Wynn observe meetings of the TCC.

Immigration Study Well Attended



Leonette Slay and Ginny Randolph



LWVGB Members were asked who had participated in a study before.

LWVGB met at Homewood Library on October 25th for the first of two meetings on Immigration. The next meeting will be held Thursday, November 15th at 6:30.

The Voter

November, 2007

Voting Issues Study

LWVAL has begun a new study on voting issues approved at the last Council meeting. The issues that will be researched include absentee balloting, off-site voting and early voting. To begin the process, the study team lead by Sandy Robinson of Auburn met with Secretary of State Beth Chapman. LWVAL President Mary Lynn Bates also attended to begin dialogue on voting issues in general. Secretary Chapman was aware of the League's role with the Local League's contribution to registration, citizen education and assistance for the Registrar. Committee members who attended were Kathryn Kerchof, Leonette Slay, and Virginia Randolph all from Birmingham. Additionally from Auburn was Ruth Gynther. Secretary Chapman was generous in giving us 90 minutes of her time and included her legal advisor Jean Brown and information systems advisor Adam Thompson.

The study committee will be reviewing Alabama Voting History, especially absentee voting, what other states are doing (for example Oregon has a vote by mail for everyone who wishes), other options for early or off-site voting etc. We felt that the issues for the Armed Services and other citizens residing overseas should be considered with these.

Secretary of State Chapman was pleased that Alabama is the first in the nation along with two other states (Ohio and Minnesota) in addressing overseas voting issues through the Overseas Voting Foundation. This organization (OVF) has an Internet site that allows for citizens with the military, military family, missionaries and others who are working overseas to register and apply for absentee ballots. After registering citizens may go on line and check registration status. A help desk with FAQ is available. Currently the absentee ballot requested is completed, downloaded and mailed to the Registrar but eventually there may be a route to vote from overseas via the Internet. For Alabama that would require legislative action and maybe eventually there will be legislation that allows Alabama citizens to vote online. Chapman indicated that she thought any Internet voting would be for military and overseas voters only. OVF and the Pew Foundation are working to ensure that members of the military have easier access to registering to vote and casting their ballots (absentee) in elections. The OVF system allows for downloading an absentee ballot for federal elections. The ballot is called a "post card" ballot. It must be mailed in.

Secretary Chapman indicated that currently Alabama has over 91,000 overseas citizens. Absentee ballots, no matter the source, are often not submitted correctly. An advantage that Secretary Chapman noted for the OVF ballots is that the electronic voting has alerts when not all information is correctly noted.

Other issues were discussed with Secretary Chapman and included absentee voting issues, especially the number of ballots classified as invalid due to the process for signature and notary. Also discussed were vote brokers, publicity for the OVF system, voter identification, improvement in voting numbers especially by the young and poll worker hours.



Alabama Secretary of State Beth Chapman Met with Sandy Robinson and Mary Lynn Bates in her office in Montgomery.

The Voter

November, 2007

Member Profile – Adam Snyder

Adam and Erin Snyder are the newest members to the League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham. Adam is a native of Birmingham. He attended John Carroll High School where he and Erin met. After graduating from the University of South Carolina with a degree in journalism, Adam came back to Birmingham. Erin is a doctor of Internal Medicine at UAB. They live in Forest Park. Adam has been actively involved in Birmingham since he was 19 years old. He is currently the Executive Director for Conservation Alabama (<http://www.conservationAlabama.org/>) whose mission he described as “making sound environmental policy a political reality.” He is looking to “build traction” in Alabama legislature this session with two environmental bills. One bill is the Quarry Bill which will give local government the authority to approve a quarry. Presently this authority falls to ADEM. The bill would put the authority in the “right place”. The second bill that Conservation Alabama is lobbying to get passed is the Energy Star Tax Holiday. This will be a weekend in October in which all consumers and contractors would get a tax holiday if they purchase an energy star appliance. Adam’s mantra is three pronged: Develop Sound Policy; Message It; Implement It! The League is thrilled to have Adam and Erin join our ranks and we look forward to having them on board helping us make Birmingham a more vibrant democracy.



Adam Snyder, Executive Director of Conservation Alabama



LWVGB Upcoming Events

Month	Day	Time	Event
December	1	11:30	Holiday Luncheon, The Club, Stateroom 1
January	8	6:00 – 7:30	Board Meeting at Samford Univ, Chapman Burns Hall
January	31	7:00 – 8:30	Member Meeting –Initiative and Referendum – Homewood Library 101

LWVGB
P.O. Box 530522
Mountain Brook, AL 35253

