

The League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham



November 2008

The Voter

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League of Women Voters of
Greater Birmingham
205 583-5000
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Have You Paid Your Dues?

**Just a reminder that dues
are past due.**

Please make out your checks
for \$45.00 payable to the
LWVGB
and mail them to:

LWVGB
P.O. Box 530522
Birmingham, AL
35253

Call Nancy at 967-2897 or
Amanda at 326-6651 if you
would like a membership
brochure sent to a friend.

Thanks and we look forward to
working with you this year!



Representative Paul DeMarco has served in the Alabama House of Representatives since his election in a special election that took place on April 26, 2005. Representative DeMarco received his Bachelor of Arts from Auburn University in 1990. He graduated from the University of Alabama School of Law in 1993, and while there served as editor-in-chief of the *Alabama Law Review*. Representative DeMarco is a partner in the law firm of Parsons, Lee and Juliano P.C. He is past president of the Birmingham Bar Foundation and is also an active member of the chambers of commerce for Homewood, Hoover, Mountain Brook, and Vestavia Hills. He will introduce legislation this upcoming session that would propose a county manager form of government for Jefferson county.

Mark your Calendar for the LWVGB Holiday Luncheon

Join us for a special Holiday Luncheon at **11:30 on Saturday, December 6 at The Ronald McDonald House, 1700 4th Ave. So.** Lunch will be a gourmet salad platter from Homewood Gourmet. Our guest speaker will be State Representative Paul DeMarco from Homewood. 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, December 1.**

Reservation for LWVGB Holiday Luncheon

Saturday, December 6th

11:30 AM

Ronald McDonald House

1700 4th Avenue South

Birmingham, AL 35203

(205) 212-7255

Paul DeMarco, State Representative, Guest Speaker

Name(s) _____ Telephone _____

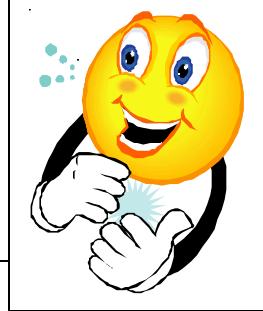
Reservations (\$14.00 per person) _____ Total \$ _____

Make check payable to LWVGB
Mail to P. O. Box 530522, Birmingham, AL 35253
Reservation deadline is Monday, December 1.



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Ginny's Post-Election Musings

As a political news junkie, for me the Election Season is like extra marshmallows in hot chocolate. And yet, it is nice to sit back, sigh and enjoy the fabulous efforts contributed by the members of the League of Women Voters to ensuring and promoting democracy. You, our members, gave the time you could and some squeezed out even more time as we saw that this Election season was having an impact on voter registration that exceeded anything that most of us have seen. We had more requests for voter registration than we could serve but we were able to help others set up voter registration and guide them in achieving this in a non-partisan fashion. Nell Hunter, the Jefferson County Registrar, and Jamie Crockett, the Shelby County Registrar each had more work than their respective staffs could accomplish and the League was asked to help early. Normally Ms Hunter asks for assistance the last two weeks before Election Day. Ms Crockett says they have never really needed more help for the part time employees. This year was different. Ms Hunter called the first of September asking for help. We worked from September 8 through Election Day. Since I live in Shelby County, I worked with Ms. Crockett. On October 20th I arrived in the early morning and went to the post office to pick up the mail. Once bringing the boxes the two block distance back to the Registrar's Office, I proceeded to open the mail, which was mainly registration applications. I ate my yogurt lunch and drank my tea for break while still opening the mail. When I left in the afternoon, I had still not opened all the mail!

At our November meeting the Board discussed the election process to see if there were any problems we may want to address in the future. We will ask for your thoughts too during our discussion at the January 22nd member meeting along with the Off-Site Voting Study. You may retrieve the information for the Off-Site Voting Study on the LWVAL web site www.lwval.org by logging in as a member and going to the Member section. If you need your member log in, call 583.5000 or email us admin@lwvgb.org.

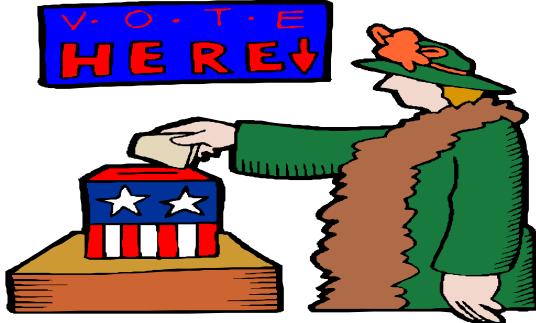
Our November membership meeting will feature our Observer Corps and will provide insight into some of the activities in local governing. Some of the behind the scene impact of the League shows up here. See the article in this newsletter.

Set December 6th on your calendar as our League Holiday Luncheon. We will be at the new Ronald McDonald House and Representative Paul DeMarco will be talking with us about the County Manager bill that is being prepared for the next legislative session.

I want to thank each of you for your rewarding assistance during the Election Season (remember we started last January with the Presidential Primary!!) and for getting your family and friends out to vote. My mother, a former local League President in Arizona, always said it takes everyone's vote to make democracy work. And if you still want to volunteer we have some more activities coming up – see article on activities for members, "Calling All Volunteers".

Ginny

The Voter



VOTERS' SERVICE LENDS A HAND

The Birmingham League did its part to promote voting in this year's elections by providing assistance to voter registration drives and by assisting in the county registrars offices in Shelby and Jefferson counties. We've provided assistance at over a dozen voter registration drives in for the 2008 General Election and staffed many shifts at the registrar's offices for two months. Our volunteers were seen in clips on television as they worked at the Jefferson County Registrar's Office and were featured in news articles in several newspapers. Additionally the Voters' Service submitted letters to the editor that were printed. Public Service Announcements from the LWVGB were played on television and radio. By all accounts, our contribution helped smooth the process and set records in voter registration with over 3 million registered voters in Alabama, an increase of 15% over 2004, and a record turnout on November 4 of about 80%.

Many, many thanks to all the volunteers who contributed their valuable time and energy to this important cause. These achievements would not be possible without your assistance! All volunteers will be recognized in next month's newsletter.

Karen A. Threlkeld – Voters' Service



LWVAL Education Fund

Thank you to all of you who sent in donations to the **LWVAL Education Fund** and specified the LWVGB. This way we have access to your generous donation for our citizen outreach and education. We will be using some of this for updating ***Alabama Government at Your Fingertips***, the listing of elected governmental members who are responsible to us. The LWVAL Education Fund is a 501c3 separate organization and tax deductible donations may be used for non-partisan and non-advocacy activities. In the past we have used the fund to support our efforts at holding forums and publishing voter guides and ***Fingertips***.

If you wish to donate, send a check payable to LWVAL Education Fund and mail to LWVGB, 3357 Cherokee Road Mountain Brook, AL 35223.

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November, 2008



Observer Corps Subject of November Meeting

The Observer Corps has been getting together twice a year to share information about the various boards and commissions that are monitored by the group. These meetings have been most interesting. Members are able to discuss much that newspapers do not cover. The observers have insight gained from years of actually watching and listening as officials conduct the business of the people.

One of Observer Corps' objectives for this year has been to find ways to, at least, share this information with all LWVGB members. Until now, this has been only partially achieved through brief articles in the *Voter* and reports at monthly meetings.

On November 20th you will have the opportunity to hear the latest from those who regularly attend meetings of the city, county, water, personnel, and transit-related boards. For instance, you'll hear more about:

- The county's financial problems
- Changes that may occur with a new county commissioner
- The mayor's latest plans for the city
- Reorganization of the Personnel Board
- A new director for the BJCTA
- The Mobility Matters Project for I-65/US 31
- New board members, bonds and a rate increase at the BWWB

New League members are especially invited to come and learn more the observer program.

Ann Smith

Lanning Selected to Task Force on the Environment

Joyce Lanning, our Director overseeing our environmental portfolio has been selected for the national LWVUS Climate Change Task Force. You may want to check out some of the articles that the task force has been working on, including ***Things You Can Do For Free (Or Almost Free) To Cut Your Use Of Gasoline, Diesel Fuel, Heating Oil, Propane And Electricity.*** [Click here](#) to see these articles and the advocacy work representing the League. The ideas for saving on gasoline and heating bills seem especially appropriate as we move into the cool time of the year.



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October Meeting—League Moves into Digital Age

Jean Johnson discussed the electronic tools available for the League members at our October Member meeting. Several members brought their own laptop computers and were following along with her visual presentation to the rest of us. The tools for accessing the business of the Alabama Legislature, reviewing bills and seeing their status were fascinating. She also demonstrated how we can track and respond to bills in the U.S. Congress. As part of the discussion of the League's Dialogue page, we suggested the possibility of setting up a Facebook page. Jean took care of that immediately after the meeting. So if some of you are interested in joining discussion on our [Facebook page \(www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=32227693013\)](http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=32227693013), join us! We are moving further into the digital age. It provides us with tools that allow us to reach more individuals with the League's process of studying issues and voter information. League Internet tools and some useful links for all informed citizens are available from [this website \(www.lwvgb.org/LWV_Online_Resources/\)](http://www.lwvgb.org/LWV_Online_Resources/).



Calling All Volunteers!

We have several activities but two are especially in need of volunteers. The first is the updating of **Alabama Government at Your Fingertips** that Yvonne Brakefield will be coordinating. Since the recent election has changed some of the officials, the brochure needs updating. Consider volunteering to do some work with Yvonne, much of which may be completed from home. To volunteer, call 583.5000 or email admin@lwvgb.org and put **Fingertips** in the subject line.

We will be interviewing our Local Legislative delegation in January. We need volunteers to assist with this. Two people work together to do the interviews. The questions are set so there is basically a "script" to follow. This can be interesting and it allows the League to make connections with our delegation. We would like to get the questions and information to the interviewers by January 2 so if you have time during the first 3 weeks of the new year, let us know. You and your co-interviewer set up the meeting convenient for you and the Legislator. To volunteer call 583.5000 or email admin@lwvgb.org and put **legislative interviews** in the subject line.



Thirty Three Million Friends of United Nations Population Fund

The United Nations Association of U.S.A., Greater Birmingham Chapter along with several co-sponsors, including LWVGB, was privileged to have as its guest speaker Jane Roberts of Redlands, California at the October 24th UN Day Banquet. The 2008 UN Day was a celebration of the 63rd anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. Additionally a number of local high school and college students were recognized for their important work in international assistance. Their accomplishments were inspiring.

Ilse Diasio, UNA-USA Greater Birmingham Chapter President heard Jane Roberts speak at the 2008 UNA-USA Convention in Washington, D.C. about how she and Lois Abraham worked together to form *34 Million Friends of UNFPA*. Ilse encouraged the local UNA chapter to bring Jane to Birmingham for this year's UN Day.

After teaching French at the University of Redlands, coaching tennis and raising two children Jane Roberts joined the Hewlett Packard Foundation's PLANET Campaign that urges Americans to support international family planning. In 2003, the U.S. government cut the congressionally approved \$35 Million funding to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Jane and Lois co-founded the *34 Million Friends of the United Nations Population Fund*. The fund encouraged women in America to contribute \$1.00 or more to the Fund to try to make up for the funding UNFPA was not receiving from our country. The United States, is the only country out of 192, that is withholding funds for political reasons. Through 2008 the total not given by the current U.S. Administration is \$225 Million. Currently the amount raised through the leadership efforts of Roberts and Abraham is #3872,034 plus the amount raised in Birmingham.

The UNFPA does not, and never has, supported coercive or involuntary sterilization. It does support family planning and reproductive health care in 154 countries around the world. The Agency's works has effectively reduced the spread of HIV/AIDS, decreased the incidence of maternal and infant mortality and obstetric fistula, lowered the number of early or forced marriages and genital mutilations of girls and young women, protected women and girls from rape and violence and increased the economic status of families in countries where it operates.

In 2000 the U.S. pledged to do our part to reduce poverty, gender inequality, maternal mortality and disease at the U.N. Millennium Summit where 8 Millennium Development Goals to be achieved by 2015 were approved. Withholding UNFPA funds represents a huge obstacle to these goals that effect women and children.

Anyone wishing to contribute to this cause may send a check for \$1.00 or more, payable to Americans for UNFPA and mail to 34 Million Friends of UNFPA, P.O. Box 681, Toms River, NJ 008754-9922. www.34millionfriends.org www.unfpa.org

Dot Baker



LWVGB Upcoming Events

Month	Day	Time	Event	Location
November	20	6:30 p.m.	Member Meeting: LWVGB Observer Corps	Homewood Library Room 110
December	6	11:30 a.m.	Member Holiday Luncheon See this <i>Voter</i> for reservation form.	Ronald McDonald House

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

