



October, 2007

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**League of Women Voters of**  
**Greater Birmingham**  
205 583-5000  
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## Teaming Up Works! -- A Note from the President

Wow! That was a success! The 2007 Birmingham Mayoral Candidate Forum convened by the League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham enticed about 250 people to WorkPlay on September 18<sup>th</sup>. Another approximately 70,000 viewers watched from home. Our teaming with Rotaract Club of Birmingham, Catalyst, Birmingham Association of Black Journalists, 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church, WorkPlay and CBS42 was a win for all involved, but most especially for the citizens who had the opportunity for the first time to see all candidates together, and hear answers to their questions. The candidates are to be complimented for adhering to our rules and being conscientious of the time constraints. They did not exceed their limit. The League had a wonderful team of volunteers. I want to first especially thank Linda Verin who used her vast talents to help pull off this great event. Linda was responsible for getting out all of the press releases and helping us work out many of the details for the Forum. Thanks for the variety of work from Mary Lynn Bates, Cissy Bennett, Kathryn Kerchof, Terri Tate, Nancy Ekberg, Jean Johnson, Kimberly Pride, Kaydee Erdreich-Breman, Nancy Sales, Ann Smith, Connie Arnwine, Heather Forson, Amanda McGriff, Joyce Lanning and Yvonne Brakefield. A terrific group!! A couple candidates told me after the Forum that we had the best questions. CBS was ecstatic with the ratings for the event.

The September meeting on September 27<sup>th</sup> at the Cantina was again a success. Three visitors, Tiffany Tate, Erin Bell, and Marilyn Solomon came, and we hope to welcome them to membership. Thanks to Nancy Ekberg, Kathryn Kerchof and Cissy Bennett for putting it all together.

The October Board meeting on October 2 focused on our upcoming Immigration Study (see separate article), and some technology opportunities we have to engage people. Kaydee Erdreich-Breman will contact Jim Carns with the Jefferson County Commission and see if there is a role LWVGB may play as the County moves forward on developing an improved transit system in our area.

## Ginny



Kathryn Kerchof, Cissy Bennett and Jean Johnson volunteered at Birmingham Mayoral Forum held at WorkPlay on September 18<sup>th</sup>.

## REMINDER

Dues are due!



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

Make your check payable to  
**LWVGB**  
and send it to :  
**Sarah McDonald**  
**3357 Cherokee Road**  
**Birmingham, AL 35223**

# The Voter



## United Nations Association Dinner

The LWVGB continues as a sponsor of the UN Day Banquet hosted by the [United Nations Association of the USA](#) Birmingham Chapter. Dot Baker, an advocate for the UN and former Board member of LWVGB, has once again been involved in organizing a special event. This year's event is "The Importance of the United Nations to American Foreign Policy" by Congressman Artur Davis at this 62<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the UN. You may participate by sending your reservations or calling:

UN Day Banquet

Saturday October 20 2007

Cash Bar 6:00 PM

Dinner 7:00 PM

The Club atop Red Mountain, Staterooms 1,2,3

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### Reservations for the United Nations Day Banquet

At the Club October 20<sup>th</sup> 2007

\_\_\_\_\_ Dinner (\$40 each) \_\_\_\_\_ chicken \_\_\_\_\_ vegetarian \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Table of 8 (\$300) \_\_\_\_\_ chicken \_\_\_\_\_ vegetarian \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Donation to Emily Hammood Mem Youth Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please remember the Emily Hammood memorial Youth Fund Your contributions support student memberships and UNA -USA Youth Activities throughout the year.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Organization (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check to: UNA -USA Greater Birmingham Chapter

Mail to: Dorothy G. Baker

2512 Glendmere Place

Birmingham, AL 35216

Please mail your check by October 11, 2007

Admission Tickets will be mailed to you upon the receipt of your reservation

For information call 205.822.0855

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## **Joyce Lanning Reports on trip to U.N. Climate Change Conference:**

[Climate Change: How It Impacts Us All](#) - 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Department of Public Information/ Non-Governmental Organization Conference, United Nations, New York, September [5](#), [6](#), & [7](#), 2007

Picture yourself sitting in the General Assembly Hall of the United Nations. You are one of the 1726 representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations from 62 countries. It was sobering and energizing to be there. I'm still awed that the LWV made it possible for me to experience this international event, and to meet others from all over the world addressing in their own ways this unprecedented climate challenge/opportunity.

Climate change is definitely already impacting us all, and the reality is sobering. We heard from [small island nations](#) threatened by rising oceans and increased storm surges, and [sub-Saharan African nations](#) who contributed the least to the problem and will suffer the most. Just for one small example, consider changing precipitation: think drought in Alabama, and in Uganda, home of my new friend Janet Wambedde, an affliction of drought followed by [flood and greater food and water insecurity](#), especially in the north.

Why was the meeting energizing? The presentations made it clear it is time **now** to act on what we know. The research points to human use of fossil fuels as the primary cause of global warming and its effects. The risks of waiting for more signs and symptoms are too great. Further study is always important, and the work of the UN [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) will continue, but addressing the causes and consequences of global warming has already started. It will take efforts from us all, and the meeting was evidence that there are many active and dedicated groups and individuals, including many strong advocates from various communities of faith. Our role, we learned, is not only to develop our own personal and organizational responses to mitigating and adapting to the impacts [[see the EPA website](#)], but also to provide grass roots information to our governments. The conference adopted a [declaration on climate change threats](#) and a process for proposing NGO solutions to address them.

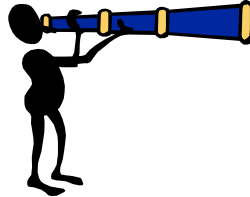
The focus is now on the [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change meeting in Bali, Indonesia in December](#). We can work to help see that the will is strong there to adopt mandatory, enforceable, global reductions in CO2 emissions and other greenhouse gas pollutants to follow up the Kyoto Treaty, which must be replaced by 2012. President Bush has acknowledged the need to address global warming. However, unlike most nations, at the end of September at [his own meeting of major emitters](#), he was still pushing for voluntary goals rather than mandatory limits for greenhouse gases as in the [European Union](#). Also, new technology for clean energy is crucial. Economists at the meeting stressed the importance of a price on carbon emissions to stimulate the required investments and the urgency of clean energy technology transfer for quickly-developing China and India so they don't compound our mistakes.

In November, 2006, the LWVUS, with 21 other organizations, endorsed the document [It's Time to Stop Global Warming - Citizens' Climate Policy: A Statement of Principles](#). You can take pride in the adoption of this position and in the League's support of the United Nations from its inception to the present. At the NGO conference, the League was represented by 35 members from 11 states and the District of Columbia, ably led by Doris Schapira, LWVUS UN Observer. I think that all of us felt the sense of urgency and opportunity – which is reinforced for me in the [October 2007 National Voter](#). The time is now. There are cost-effective solutions. Let's do it.

**Joyce Lanning**

# The Voter

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## Observer Corps Report

### **BIRMINGHAM-JEFFERSON COUNTY TRANSIT AUTHORITY MEETING HELD ON 9/26/07**

1. Results of a board evaluation of Executive Director David Hill indicated that his overall performance is considered to be "good to very good". Hill has been Executive Director for three and a half years.
2. A progress report was presented on a plan to ask corporations to donate \$60,000 for buses. The Lewis public relations firm reported that a video is finished and solicitation can begin.
3. There was prolonged discussion of the fact that, since the board's nominating committee did not meet in time, the required election of officers at the September meeting was not possible. It was decided, with legal advice, and over the objection of Mr. Lassiter based on the legislative requirement that it be done in September, to postpone the election to the October meeting. There is an additional problem, in that the terms of Guin Robertson, board chairman, and Ronald Lyas, vice-chairman, have expired and they are serving until replaced by the Birmingham City Council.

Reported by Ruth Wright, Transit Observer

### **OPEN CITY BOARD POSITIONS**

The following information concerning openings on Birmingham boards was obtained from the office of Councilor Valerie Abbott on October 5, 2007.

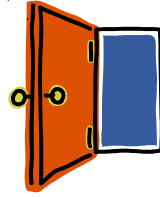
The Birmingham Planning Commission has at least one opening and possibly two more, dependent upon when some of the appointments expire. It meets once a month at City Hall. Each member of the Planning Commission is assigned to either the Zoning Board or the Subdivision Board, both of which meet twice a month, also at City Hall. So, an appointment to the Birmingham Planning Commission is a three meetings a month commitment. The Zoning Board handles requests for re-zoning, and the Subdivision Board handles issues with divisions of parcels of land.

There is also an opening on the Zoning Board of Adjustments, which meets twice a month at City Hall. This board hears cases of people asking for variances in the zoning laws.

There is another opening on the Regional Planning Commission. They meet at the old Young and Vann Building on the corner of 18<sup>th</sup> Street and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North. The number of meetings required depends on the committee assignment and can be anywhere from once a month to once a quarter.

To apply for any of these open positions, send a letter and resume to Councilor Valerie Abbott, Birmingham City Hall, 710 North 20<sup>th</sup> Street, Birmingham, AL 35203, or e-mail a letter and resume to [vabbott@ci.birmingham.al.us](mailto:vabbott@ci.birmingham.al.us). Applicants must be residents of the city of Birmingham.

Reported by Amanda McGriff, Birmingham City Council Observer



## The Russians came... to study accountable government

Eight Russian delegates representing the Open World Project recently came to Birmingham to study how our local, state and federal governments are held accountable to citizens. Several of the delegates were administrators with their municipal or county government equivalent. On behalf of the LWVGB and with LWVAL consultation, Jean Johnson addressed the visitors on September 17 at the Hoover Library on the issue of government accountability. This is an issue that has been important to League since its beginning. The League recommended that concerned citizens observe government meetings and ask questions of and communicate with government officials and representatives. These simple actions are powerful in a democracy, particularly if the elected official or representative is unaccustomed to citizen interaction. The new Alabama Open Meetings Law, for which the League strongly advocated, was credited for making government actions more transparent and therefore the responsible officials and representative more accountable.

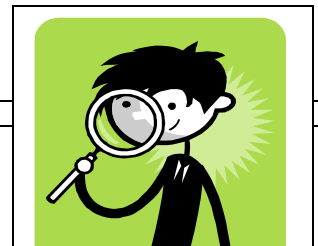
Since the 2007/2008 election cycle is underway in Russia, the delegates were also interested in election administration, voting procedures, and campaign activities. The delegates learned about LWVGB's Birmingham Mayoral Forum to be held the next day and the upcoming election. They were particularly interested in our process of absentee voting. According to one delegate, there is concern in Russia that the elderly are very vulnerable to election fraud. The delegates were informed about provisions of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) (e.g., state unified voter list, provisional voting, disability and English as Second Language access) that attempt to make our election system more trustworthy and accessible. The delegates were concerned about the undue influence of money in any election system. This led to discussion of the League's advocacy for campaign finance and lobbying reform. The Russians held that the Alabama Secretary of State, elected in partisan election, could be biased in carrying out her/his duties as chief election officer.

Some delegates raised the possibility of League partisanship. They wanted to know about the source of League funding and whether a large contributor might hold sway over the League's program. They were assured that study, deliberation and debate are most powerful in our organization and that the League has no agenda except good government. This was a difficult concept.

All agreed that civil liberties are in jeopardy in the post-9/11 era and that citizens should be very diligent in advocating for their protection.

This was an informative exchange for both the Russian delegates and the League representative, and perhaps now it is a tradition. Then-LWVGB President Yvonne Brakefield addressed last year's Open World delegates. This led the Open World Program and the hosting Birmingham Friendship Force to issue an invitation to the Birmingham League again in 2007. LWVGB looks forward to hopefully participating in this program again in the future.

**Jean Johnson**



## LWVUS Immigration Study to Begin

Our first meeting to discuss the issues involved with the thorny issue of Immigration will be held at the Homewood Library on Thursday, October 25 at 6:30 pm and run until 8:30 pm. This is an important study and a weighty one. There is a plethora of background material available at the LWVUS website at [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org). Members are strongly encouraged to download as many of these articles as they can before the meeting.

For those members who do not have Internet access, please call **Sarah McDonald at 967-2829** for hard copies of the study materials.

A second meeting in November will be used to answer the consensus questions so important to developing a position on this issue.



# The Voter

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To learn more about constitutional reform link to:  
<http://www.constitutionalreform.org/>

## ***DID YOU KNOW?***

### **Constitutional Reform Talking Point:**

People in Alabama are fearful that delegates elected to write a new constitution would be controlled by special interests.

If someone says they fear that special interests will dominate a constitution convention, ask them if they think that special interests currently dominate the legislature. Then let them know that there are strong protections in the legislation to write a new constitution that will be offered in the 2008 Legislative Session, such as residency requirements for delegates, campaign contribution restrictions that limit donations including in-kind ones to \$100 and no "after election" contributions. Also, lobbyists are prohibited from giving anything to delegates. This is much stronger than what they can do in the Legislature today (up to \$250.00 per politician per day without having to report one penny of it).

**Nancy**

## **Membership News**

Welcome back to former member Jeanne Hutchinson of Mountain Brook!

Old and new members gathered at the Cantina on September 28<sup>th</sup>.



Nancy Ekberg,  
Erin Bell,  
Tiffney Tate  
and Virginia  
Randolph were  
in attendance  
at LWVGB  
September  
Membership  
Meeting.

October, 2007

## League Members Have Fun at Cantina



Leonette Slay, Yvonne Brakefield and Mary Lynn Bates



Mary Lynn Bates, Jessie Bates, Linda Verin and Katie Erdreich-Bremen



## LWVGB Upcoming Events

Month	Day	Time	Event
October	20	6:00	United Nations Day Banquet – The Club
October	25	6:30 -8:30	Member Meeting – Immigration Study – Homewood Library 101
November	6	6:00 -7:30	Board Meeting at Samford Univ, Chapman Burns Hall
November	15	6:30 – 8:30	Member Meeting – Immigration Study – Homewood Library 101
December	1	12:00 – 2:00	Holiday Luncheon – The Club

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

