



October 2009

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**League of Women Voters of**  
**Greater Birmingham**  
205 583-5000  
[admin@lwvqb.org](mailto:admin@lwvqb.org)

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## October Meeting Reminder

Remember to join us at our October 22 meeting at 6:00pm at the Homewood Library. Joyce Lanning will present "*Climate Change: Science, Policy and Possibilities*".

The international community is looking toward the December meeting of the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen as a defining event for the future of the planet's climate. The United States is grappling with its own policies and possibilities for adapting to human-caused changes in planetary ecological systems and working to lessen the impact of our greenhouse gas emissions. The League of Women Voters of the United States has a position urging federal action that reduces global warming pollutants on a national and global scale.

Alabama's elected leadership is on record as objecting to the House-passed ACES legislation which would change the mix of energy we use and cap emissions of carbon dioxide. Can we identify state impacts of climate change, our contribution to the problem and possibilities for a move toward cleaner energy and greener jobs? How can we work together to address climate change for our state, nation, and planet? Bring your questions and comments for the discussion to follow a presentation on some of the climate change issues before us.

## Dues are (over)due!

League dues were payable in September. You can still pay your dues now by sending a check for \$45.00 to LWVGB and mail it to:

LWVGB  
P.O. Box 320847  
Birmingham, AL 35232

...or by paying online  
using Paypal. Check  
<http://www.lwvqb.org>  
for more information.

## More on the Health Care Debate

We had such an interesting meeting in September that we are planning a follow-up meeting on November 5 @ 11:30am at the Homewood Library to continue talking about health care. Please bring your lunch and join us!



Leaguers attend the  
September meeting!



*October League Board Meeting.*

## ENERGY FORUM 2009: Challenges and Possibilities for Alabama

The Interfaith Environmental Initiative of Alabama (IEIA) hosts *Energy Forum 2009* the evening of Tuesday, October 13 with keynote speaker, Stan Meiburg, Acting Director, Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4. Wednesday, October 14 at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens includes a series of panels on a broad range of energy possibilities for Alabama, followed by round-table discussions and planning, with a focus on energy efficiency.

See [www.interfaithenvironmental.org](http://www.interfaithenvironmental.org) for more about IEIA and the Forum. Resources and results from the event will be available on the website in the following weeks.

## United Nations Dinner

The League is once again co-sponsoring the United Nations Association dinner. It will be held on Oct. 15<sup>th</sup> at The Club, beginning at 6 pm. Tickets are \$45.00.

Call Dot Baker at 822-0855 for more information.



*Thanks to Wanda Godfrey and Joan Burroughs for assisting people with Voter Registration information at the Literacy Council's Community meeting at the Boutwell Auditorium on Wednesday October 7.*



## McDonald's Musings

Our September meeting with Dr. Michael Morrissey from UAB School of Public Health was really quite informative and thought-provoking. Originally we thought we could cover several topics within the Health Care debate. Not so. Our entire time was spent learning the history of health care insurance and how it affects the entire topic. There are so many interwoven aspects of health care delivery that we thought we wanted to continue the discussion. We are planning a second meeting on medical outcomes and the thorny topic of rationing. The meeting will again be at the Homewood Library on Thursday, Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 am.

Dues are now due and paying is easier than ever on our website. Contributions to LWVGB and dues can now be paid with PayPal. Soon you will be able to contribute to the Ed Fund also.

On another note, the board authorized the Birmingham to catalog our papers from about 1975 to today. This will give access to scholars for research on the League in Birmingham.



## Water—Let's Use This Precious Resource Wisely!

*By Eleanor Revelle (LWVIL and LWVUS Climate Change Task Force Member)*

Water is an increasingly scarce resource. Many parts of the United States already face serious water shortages and even drought. Population growth and the changing climate are putting additional stresses on water supplies. Even in areas where water seems to be abundant, careful management of this precious resource is essential if we are to ensure a reliable supply for future generations.

Moreover, using water efficiently also saves energy. For most municipalities, the biggest use of electricity is associated with treating and distributing drinking water and then collecting, treating, and disposing of it after it has been used.

Water conservation is clearly an important component of sustainability. How can we, as individual consumers, help?

### Saving Water Indoors

Indoor water usage in a typical single family home in the United States is about 70 gallons per person per day. But fixing leaks, installing water-efficient plumbing fixtures, and changing some everyday habits can reduce water usage significantly to around 45 gallons/person/day.

### Fix those Leaks

- Leaks account for about 13 percent of the water used in a typical home. A slowly dripping faucet or a toilet that keeps "running" can waste thousands of gallons of water a year. To check for leaks, read the water meter before and after a two-hour period in which no water is being used. After the test period, if the meter has a higher reading, there is probably a leak.

### Buy Water-Saving Fixtures, Appliances

- Toilets are typically the greatest water user in the house, accounting for more than one-quarter of the total used in a home each day. Replacing an older 3.5-gallons-per-flush (gpf) toilet with a 1.6-gpf, low-flush model will save at least 10 gallons of water/per person/day. New lower-flow dual-flush toilets will cut usage even further. By reducing water bills, newer toilets pay for themselves in just a few years.\*
- Replacing older showerheads with low-flow fixtures and installing low-flow aerators in existing faucets are both low-cost ways to save water. And by cutting the demand for hot water, this step will result in energy savings as well.
- Water-efficient dishwashers and clothes washers also help save water—and energy.

*(continued on next page)*

## HOLIDAY LUNCHEON

Please note that there is a change of date for our December Holiday Luncheon. It will be Saturday December 12 at 11:30 a.m. at The Club.

Carol Nunnelley will be talking about the Fourth Estate. Recent announcements of closure by some newspapers and the rise of internet access to news make this a timely subject.

Save the date!



*Your League Board hard at work at the October Board Meeting!*

**NOW  
READ  
THIS!**



## facebook

LWVGB will begin having updates on Facebook on a regular basis. If you want to receive the information, log on to <http://www.facebook.com> and create your own page by using the Sign Up form. You should set your profile as "private" so only "friends" can see you.

Once you have a Facebook account setup, go to the bottom of your homepage and click on the icon for groups (two head silhouettes) and search for League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham. Join our group here.

In addition to regular updates, Facebook allows for interaction with other members of our Facebook group, which includes League members from across the State. When announcements are made, your page featuring those announcements will help spread the word to others who may want to join. It is an exciting way to network with other individuals.

## ("Water" – continued)

### Turn Off the Tap

- A few small changes in everyday habits can result in significant water savings. Turn off the tap while brushing teeth and save well over 1000 gallons/person/year. Take a five-minute shower (12.5 gallons of water with a new showerhead) instead of a bath and save 20-30 gallons each time.

### Conserving Water Outside

In urbanized areas, roads, rooftops and parking lots cover much of the landscape and prevent rainwater from soaking into the ground and replenishing groundwater. Rainwater runoff flows instead into the storm sewer system, picking up pesticides, fertilizers, oil and other pollutants as it makes its way to local rivers, lakes and bays.

An additional problem confronts older municipalities with combined sewer systems. In these systems, stormwater and sanitary wastes are collected in the same pipe and then treated together before being discharged. During periods of heavy rainfall or snowmelt, the volume of water can exceed the capacity of the system, and the excess wastewater is discharged directly into nearby waterways.

### Green Infrastructure

A new approach to stormwater management uses natural systems to absorb and filter rainwater and make use of it where it falls. It treats rainwater as an asset rather than a waste product.

- Using permeable paving for driveways and parking areas allows rainwater to seep into the ground, thus recharging groundwater and reducing stormwater runoff.
- Rainwater can be "harvested"—collected as it runs off the roof and stored in rain barrels or a cistern for future landscape irrigation. Benefits include lower water bills, less waste of precious drinking water, reduced demand on the municipal water system and increased groundwater recharge.
- Replacing lawn areas with natural landscaping will save water and energy as well as benefit the natural environment. Lawn maintenance is water intensive—some 30 percent of our water is used to irrigate lawns—and lawnmowers cause five percent of the nation's air pollution. Native plants, on the other hand, help reduce runoff and minimize the need for watering. They do not need fertilizers, herbicides or pesticides. And they provide food and shelter for birds, butterflies and beneficial insects.

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\* The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has launched a new program, WaterSense ([www.epa.gov/watersense/](http://www.epa.gov/watersense/)), to help consumers identify products and programs that meet tough water-efficiency and performance criteria. High-efficiency toilets are the first product to display the new WaterSense label, signaling that the fixture has been independently certified by a third party to confirm that it meets the EPA criteria.



## LWVGB Calendar

Month	Day	Time	Event
October	22	6:00pm	<i>General Membership Meeting, Location: Homewood Library</i>
November	3	11:30am	<i>League Board Meeting, Location: Community Foundation Building</i>
November	5	11:30am	<i>Special General Membership Meeting (Healthcare), Location: Homewood Library</i>

### Quotable Quotes:

Politicians are like diapers. They both need changing regularly and for the same reason.  
- Author Unknown

Half of the American people never read a newspaper. Half never voted for President. One hopes it is the same half.  
- Gore Vidal



### Check out our NEW website!

Have you seen the League's new website?? A brand new design should make it easier for you to locate information on the site...and it looks GREAT!! Thanks to Jean Johnson for refreshing our website with an innovative and clean look! Check it out at <http://www.lwvgb.org>.