

The VOTER



League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham

LWVGB Will Co-Host an Alabama Election Issues Forum

By Jean Johnson

Special points of interest:

- * Interfaith Environmental Initiative of Alabama Forum, October 10
- * United Nations Day Celebration, October 11
- * Clean Water Act Celebration, October 18
- * Forum: Election Issues for Alabama Voters, October 28

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Note: This forum is also the LWVGB October Member meeting. LWVGB members, please come and bring guests to participate in this lively and very timely discussion of elections in Alabama.

On Sunday, October 28, 2012, LWVGB will co-host the forum "Critical Thinking: Election Issues for Alabama Voters" with the Unitarian Universalist Church of Birmingham (UUCB). The forum is scheduled for 2 – 4 p.m. at the UUCB located at 4300 Hampton Heights Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.

Topics of discussion and panelists include:

"Statewide Constitutional Amendment Referenda and Election Consequences" presented by Nancy Ekberg - ACCR Birmingham Regional Chair;

LWV Greater Birmingham BoD

"Current State and Federal Election Laws and Impact on Voting Rights" presented by Anne Permaloff, PhD - Political Science and Public Administration Professor Emerita, Auburn University Montgomery; LWVAL BoD and LWV Montgomery BoD

"Are Campaign Contributions Free Speech?" presented by Natalie Davis, PhD - Professor of Political Science and Pre-Law Advisor, Birmingham-Southern College

Each panelist will make a 20 minute presentation, and in the following segment, they will respond to questions. Following the forum, panelists and guests are invited to further discuss election issues over coffee.

The issues of this forum will be timely and of great interest on the eve of the 2012 election. What are the constitutional amendments on the Nov. 6 ballot, and what are the consequences of passing or defeating these referendums? How are recent changes in election laws, including campaign finance laws, changing our democracy and election outcomes? You are invited to share in the public discussion of these issues on October 28.

LWVGB members, please attend this forum with your friends and participate in the conversation. Also, you are encouraged to volunteer your help with a few small but important tasks.

To volunteer or to get further information, call the League at 205 583-5000.



A Win for College Students Voting in New Hampshire

Strafford County Superior Court Judge John Lewis assured out-of-state college students of their right to vote in New Hampshire by ordering the state to issue new voter registration forms before the November elections.

Thanks to a challenge by the League of Women Voters of New Hampshire and four students represented by the New Hampshire Civil Liberties Union, Judge Lewis stated that a requirement in voter registration forms based on a new law would have a "clear, harmful effect" on the voting rights of college students and others.

In the past, students have been allowed to declare New Hampshire as their home state, meaning they have been allowed to vote in New Hampshire elections. This has been law since a federal judge ruled in 1972 that the state could not forbid out-of-state students from voting even if they planned to move away after graduation. The new law, passed this year over Governor John Lynch's veto, required new voters to sign a statement declaring New Hampshire their home. This meant that students became subject to laws that apply to all residents, such as registering a car and getting a state driver's license.

Joan Flood Ashwell, election law specialist for the New Hampshire League, declared:

We are very pleased the judge agreed with our concern that students who come to college in New Hampshire might give up their right to vote because of concerns about registering a car and getting a New Hampshire driver's license even when they knew they would leave after graduation..

For students in other states who would like to vote where they go to school, please consult the Brennan Center for Justice [50 State Student Voting Guide](#).

September 20 Membership Meeting

by Joan Burroughs

The September 20 general membership meeting was both engaging and enlightening. LWVGB members and guests received an update on the work of the Alabama Constitution Revision Commission. Commission members Representative Patricia Todd and Ms. Carolyn McKinstry presented an overview of the commission's work, detailing specifically the kinds of results that the commission might accomplish.

The Alabama Constitution has gone unchanged, with one exception about 20 years ago, since its inception in 1901. With the number of its amendments ranging, in varying reports, from 798 to 856, Alabama has the longest constitution in the world. Although both commissioners, Todd and McKinstry, state that the Commission's work will not produce any substantive change in the Constitution, the Commission has reworked or changed a few

of the Constitution's articles such as excluding obsolete word usage from the language of the document, e.g., telegraph when referring to communications or gold standard in banking, is representative of a part of the Commission's mission.

Ms. McKinstry is a 16th Street Baptist Church bombing survivor and has engaged audiences worldwide with her knowledge and firsthand experiences in Birmingham's civil rights movement as well as the impact of that fateful Sunday, September 15, 1963. A lifelong member of 16th Street Baptist Church, Ms. McKinstry, is a graduate of Fisk University and Samford University's Beeson Divinity School. She is active in several civil and human rights initiatives. Patricia Todd was elected to the Alabama House of Representative, serving District 54, in 2006. Originally from Richmond Kentucky, Ms. Todd is a gradu-

ate of the University of Kentucky and the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She was the first Executive Director of Birmingham Aids Outreach and is currently the Associate Director of AIDS Alabama.

Both Commission members fielded questions regarding their work on the Commission and their expectations for future progress. All present agreed that creating a new and better Constitution needs increased and enhanced attention by more of Alabama citizens.

St. Paul United Methodist Church made this productive and informative meeting possible by allowing the LWVGB use of its facilities. The League is also grateful for the generous assistance of Ms. Pam Harris in preparing for the meeting.

Celebrate 40 Years of the Clean Water Act – October 18

by Joyce Lanning

Alabama Coastal Foundation and Alabama Rivers Alliance are celebrating 40 years of the Clean Water Act with the Birmingham environmental community.

The League of Women Voters of Alabama is a supporter and encourages all of us to join ACF and ARA at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens from 5:30-8:30 on Thursday, October 18. There will be beverages, food from the Fish Market and music provided by the Oxy Morons.

Suggested donations of \$10 or more are welcomed. Look for a RSVP reminder later but mark your calendar now.

Mark Your Calendars!

Reminder:

Sept. is LWV Membership Renewal Month!
Renew online or by mail.

www.lwvgb.org/about/page10/page10.html

Interfaith Environmental Initiative of Alabama
2012 Forum

"Efficiency and Conservation – What Works"

Oct. 10, 2012, 8:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

@ Birmingham Botanical Gardens

See info at www.interfaithenvironmental.org/?page_id=484

or contact Joyce

Lanning joyce.lanning@gmail.com

LWVAL is cosponsor

United Nations Day Celebration

Oct. 11, 6:00 p.m.

@ The Club

1 Robert S. Smith Dr.

Birmingham, AL 35209

"The Arab Spring"

Keynote Speaker: Hon. Joseph Boohaker,

JeffCo. Circuit Judge

Contact Ilse Diazio for reservations, IDiasio@aol.com

IDiasio@aol.com

LWVGB is cosponsor

Critical Thinking Forum & Monthly Membership Meeting

"Election Issues for Alabama Voters"

Sun., Oct. 28, 2012, 2-4 p.m.

@ Unitarian Universalist Church of Birmingham

4300 Hampton Heights Drive

Birmingham, AL 35209

Panelists: Nancy Ekberg, Anne Permaloff,

Natalie Davis

Co-sponsored by UUCB and LWVGB

General Election

Tues., Nov. 6, 2012, 7 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Visit www.vote411.org or www.lwval.org/learn-vote/election2012/.



Photos from [LWVGB Hoover](#) and [Homewood Candidate Forums](#) held on August 7, 2012 in Homewood and on August 21, 2012 in Hoover.



League's Observer Corps to be Revived

by Trish Powell-Crain

With Birmingham's local newspaper ceasing daily printing, the League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham is reviving a long-established League program: the Observer Corps. League Education Director Wanda Godfrey will direct the Corps' activities.

Corps members serve as the eyes and ears of the League by attending government meetings and reporting on what they observe. Birmingham is not only the seat of county government, but also has multiple city governments which

have multiple bodies that meet regularly to decide on policies and issues of great importance to the League and to our greater Birmingham community. These decisions impact our citizens and our quality of life.

The League of Women Voters has been an active champion of openness in government throughout its history. For more about the Observer Corps, see [Observing Your Government in Action](#) at the League of Women Voters of the United States' web site.

We need your help to make this successful! We need members who are willing to attend meetings and briefly report on the meeting. The reports will be made available to the public. These reports will be nonpartisan and will stick to the facts of the meeting. Stay tuned for your opportunity to keep our community informed!

For more information, contact LWVGB at 205-583-5000.

LWVGB is Very Social – Let’s Connect!

By Jean Johnson

The communications world is rapidly changing, and LWVGB is changing with it. We are now present on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, LinkedIn, and local favorite Birmingham365.org - and more coming!

With your help, the League’s voice will be magnified exponentially by means of these social media tools. Like and comment on a LWVGB Facebook article and your FB friends just might read and pass on to their friends. Follow LWVGB tweets, re-tweet and encourage others to re-tweet. Share a LWVGB Flickr photo album or YouTube video. Add us to your LinkedIn groups. You see where this is going, right? Social media is a pow-

erful megaphone for spreading League news and alerts. And it is essential for catching the attention of a younger generation.

The League has been a grassroots organization since its beginning 92 years ago, so “spreading the word” and getting things done through networking is nothing new to us. The rest of the world has finally caught up with the League’s way of doing business! Social media does make those communications lightening fast and has the potential to spread our message to a much larger audience.

If you’re not familiar with social media tools and would like learn how to connect, we’ll

post some “how to’s” and tips soon at www.lwvqb.org.

To join our social network, simply go to the LWVGB website at www.lwvqb.org and click any of the social media buttons in the sidebar. Let’s connect! We’re depending on you to spread the word – 21st century-style!

By the way, you don’t have to be online to get League news. We’re spreading the League word by phone, too. Want to find out about League alerts or an upcoming event? Just call LWVGB at 205.583.5000 to hear a recorded message.)



Vote411.org – Your Go-To Source for 2012 Election Information

By Jean Johnson

Did you know that you can get a voter registration form, apply for an absentee ballot, confirm your registration status, find your polling place, and view the LWVVAL’s online Alabama Voter Guide all in one place? This is just some of the registration, voting and election information you’ll find at Vote411.org. If you have a question about registration, voting, the candidates or initiatives on your ballot, or any other election issue, you will probably find the answer at this national website sponsored by the League of Women Voters Education Fund.

The voter guide features the Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice race and the

race for President of the Alabama Public Service Commission. Both Judge Roy Moore and Judge Bob Vance posted their biographical and contact information and answered seven questions posed to them. We hope that their answers will help you make an informed decision about who is best qualified to be Alabama’s Chief Justice and head of the state’s Unified Court System. At this writing, only one of the two PSC presidential candidates has answered the League’s questions, but both Lucy Baxley and Twinkle Andress Cavanaugh are expected to participate.

Another special feature of the Alabama Voter Guide on

Vote411.org is its unbiased analysis of ten proposed constitutional amendments on Nov. 6th ballots statewide. (An 11th proposed amendment applying only to Lawrence Co. is not included.) Readers can view each proposed amendment as it will be listed on the ballot. The consequences if the referendum passes or if it fails are also presented. Each analysis is written by a League leader who is very well informed about that particular amendment issue.

If you have questions about registration, voting, candidates, ballot initiatives or any other election matter, be sure to visit Vote411.org.

“These voter suppression measures are costly, unnecessary and undemocratic. If the states are unable or unwilling to protect the rights of every eligible citizen to vote, the federal government must step in to ensure these rights are protected.”

~ Elisabeth MacNamara
LWV

Change is Fine, Now's the Time — Vote YES on Amendments 4, 9, 10

By Nancy Ekberg

We will find 11 state-wide Constitutional Amendments on our ballots in November. The 3 mentioned here are those established to reform our 1901 Constitution.

Amendment 4 will eliminate the racist unconstitutional language from the Constitution that forbids children from different races to attend school together.

Article 9 updates and mod-

ernizes the Corporations Article, notably removing language referring to telegraph usage and other corporations that no longer exist.

Article 10 updates and modernizes the Banking Article, notably removing the gold and silver standards from Alabama banking as has been the case in this country for several years.

There are 17 other local

amendments applying to only one county. They can be found at

www.constitutionalreform.org.

With the exception of revisions to the Judicial Article, this is the first chance we have been able to bring major reforms to the Constitution since 1901. Make Your Voice Heard!

Vote YES on Amendment 1 on November 6 for Forever Wild

By Joyce Lanning

The League of Women Voters of Alabama is part of a broad-based and bipartisan coalition of businesses, conservation organizations, hunting and fishing groups, and Alabamians who support constitutional Amendment 1 on the November 6 ballot to continue to protect Alabama's beaches, rivers, fish and wildlife habitat and other outdoor recreation areas through Alabama's Forever Wild program — with no tax dollars

Spread the word - Donate what you can - Watch the short [video](#).

Alabamians for Forever Wild needs all of us — tell your friends to vote yes and donate what you can to help spread the word at <http://www.alabamiansforforeverwild.org/> then click on Donate Now. Also check out the short [video](#), and the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources [Forever Wild site](#). Nonpartisan informa-

tion about the statewide amendments is available at VOTE411.org.

Forever Wild has done a lot, and there's much more to do.

The Alabama Forever Wild Land Trust is a state conservation land acquisition program established by constitutional amendment in 1992 with 83% voter support. For the last twenty years it has been funded by a distribution of up to 10 percent of trust income earned from the Alabama Trust Fund (ATF) not to exceed \$15 million per year. 2010 funding was \$10 million.

Since it was authorized, Forever Wild has acquired 91 tracts of land totaling 227,000 acres spread throughout the state. This is approximately 1/2 of one percent of the land base in Alabama. The lands are open to the public for outdoor recreation activities such as fishing, wildlife viewing, camping, and

hunting and hiking, biking and water based activities. With the addition of these acres, Alabama still has the lowest percentage of public lands among southeastern states.

Conservation lands have a direct economic and environmental impact on the state. Hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing and other outdoor recreation activities in Alabama provide a \$2.2 billion impact annually. These are significant activities on Forever Wild lands that yield economic benefits to local communities and the state. Conservation lands also protect water quality in our rivers and streams thus impacting the quality of life in Alabama.

Alabamians need more Forever Wild lands. Help pass Amendment 1.

There are two issues in Michigan, and other states, that are confusing voters and discouraging them from registering or going to the polls.

"The first issue is that people are being told that you need an ID to vote, this is untrue. You can sign an affidavit saying, 'This is who I am and I am able to vote'. The second thing is citizenship. Voters do not have to check off on the ballot their citizenship. They will still be able to receive a ballot."

*-Elisabeth MacNamara,
LWV*



League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham

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League of Women Voters Mission Statement

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Making Democracy Work!

League of Women Voters Education Fund Mission Statement

The League of Women Voters Education Fund works to encourage the active and informed participation of citizens in government and to increase understanding of major public policy issues.

Don't forget to vote!

The General Election is on November 6. Voter registration deadline is October 26, 2012 (10 days prior to the Election). Absentee ballot applications are due by November 1.



United Nations Day Celebration

Date: October 11, 2012

Time: 6:00 pm

Location: The Club, 1 Robert S. Smith Dr, Birmingham AL 35209

Keynote Speaker:

Hon. Joseph Boohaker,
Jefferson County Circuit Judge
"The Arab Spring"

Distinguished educator awards and student leadership awards
will be presented.

For more information, contact Ilse Diasio at IDiasio@aol.com

LWVGB is a sponsor

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