



September 2009

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Greater Birmingham
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September Meeting Reminder

Remember to join us at our September 24 meeting at 11:30am at the Homewood Library. We'll be discussing Health Care Reform with Dr. Michael Morrisey of UAB who is professor of health economics and health insurance.

Please bring a bag lunch and join us for this interesting and informative presentation!

Birmingham Elections Forum

Prior to the August 25 Birmingham City Council and Board of Education elections the LWVGB partnered with the NAACP to host a series of 3 forums at the Linn Henley Library. The first evening on August 11 featured all 27 candidates for City Council Districts 1-5. Dr. Natalie Davis of Birmingham Southern College served as moderator on the first night, and some of the local television stations featured the forum in the 10:00 p.m. evening news. The second evening, August 12, featured 23 of the 25 candidates (2 invited did not attend) for the Birmingham Board of Education in all 9 districts. The last evening, August 13, featured 17 of the 19 City Council Districts 6-9 candidates (2 invited did not attend).

A very lively discussion that went into overtime engaged the audience. Approximately 500 people attended over the three evenings. Citizens had an opportunity to hear from the candidates and ask questions. Many ideas were shared and the citizens were encouraged to remain engaged with the winners of the elections.

This event was so successful that the LWVAL will participate as moderator for forums scheduled for September 21-24 for the run-off elections. Sarah McDonald will be the moderator for one of the sessions. Stay tuned for more information.

Dues are due!

September is the beginning of school and the League's calendar year. That means dues are due. Please send a check for \$45.00 to LWVGB and mail it to:

LWVGB
P.O. Box 320847
Birmingham, AL 35232

Online dues payment is available on our website –
<http://www.lwvgb.org!>





Actors practicing for the Constitutional Reenactment.

ALABAMA CONSTITUTIONAL RE-ENACTMENT

Your League is a co-sponsor of a re-enactment film about the delegates who wrote Alabama's last Constitution.

"If we would have white supremacy, we must establish it by law – not force or fraud," said John B. Knox, President of the 1901 Constitutional Convention as he advised the 155 delegates on their role as writers of Alabama's sixth constitution. These words and many as egregious, taken directly from the transcript of the Convention's proceedings, are part of a re-enactment that will become a film and DVD showing the origins and intent of our current Constitution. The half hour drama is being directed by Melanie Jeffcoat and includes several actors donating their time. First costumed filming will be held September 19 and 20, allowing the film to be available by the end of this year for distribution to all legislators, schools and organizations that wish to view it.

Joining in sponsoring the effort are Alabama Citizens for Constitutional Reform (ACCR), the League of Women Voters of Alabama, American Association of University Women - Alabama Chapter, and Greater Birmingham Ministries.

It is interesting to note that Ms. Frances Griffin addressed the men of the Convention to ask that woman's suffrage be addressed in the document, but the men denied her wish. As we know, the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution was ratified on August 18, 1920, almost 20 years after Ms. Griffin's request.

Contact Nancy Ekberg if you would like more information about this effort: nanekberg@aol.com or 205 967-2897.

ENERGY FORUM 2009

On October 13 & 14, the Interfaith Environmental Initiative of Alabama (IEIA) will host an Energy Forum at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. Registration is \$50 and can be completed online at www.bbgardens.org. Send questions and comments to ieiaenergyforum@gmail.com.

For more information about IEIA, see www.interfaithenvironmental.org.

McDonald's Musings

The Birmingham League is entering the 21st century in several ways. We have a page on Facebook! So feel free to send friends to the website to see what we're all about. Also in a few weeks we will be offering an online method to pay dues and make contributions. Stay tuned for the League website and your email for more information.

We hope that many of you will attend our first meeting of the year at 11:30 am at the Homewood library on Thursday, Sept 24th. It's a BYOB (bring your own brown bag) event featuring Dr. Michael Morrissey of UAB's School of Public Health. Dr. Morrissey will help us understand all the terms being bandied about in the Health Care Reform debate. LWVUS has a long-standing position on Health Care Reform. Go to www.lwv.org to read all about it.

The League is once again co-sponsoring the United Nations Association dinner. It will be held on Oct. 15th at The Club, beginning at 6 pm. Tickets are \$45.00. Call Dot Baker at 822-0855 for more information.

At-Risk Americans: The Uninsured and Underinsured

By Janis McMillen

Data from multiple sources agree that in 2007, 47 million Americans (15.6 percent of the total U.S. population) lacked any kind of health insurance coverage. When these numbers are adjusted for age (excluding those 65 years and older), the uninsured percentage of the population rises to 17.9 percent. Moreover, it is estimated that 25 million adults under age 65 were underinsured during 2007, despite having insurance all year. In total, 42 percent of *all* adults (86.7 million) were either uninsured or underinsured during 2007.

Putting a face on persons who were uninsured or underinsured during 2007 and 2008¹

- **Age:** One of three people under age 65 were uninsured for some or all of 2007 and 2008; of the total uninsured population, 60.1 million were adults (between 19 and 64 years of age)
- **Duration:** Among the underinsured/uninsured, 74.5 percent were uninsured for nine or more months and one-quarter were uninsured the entire 24 months
- **Employment status:** 80 percent of individuals who were uninsured were in working families and only 16 percent were not in the labor force (due to disabilities, chronic illness, or serving as family caregivers)
- **Income:** Nearly 60 percent were in families with incomes below the federal poverty level (FPL: \$21,200/year for a family of four); 52 percent with incomes between 100 to 200 percent of FPL went without health insurance in 2007/2008
- **Racial and Ethnic origin:** 55 percent of Hispanics/Latinos, 40.3 percent of African Americans and 34 percent of other racial or ethnic minorities had no health insurance in 2007/2008, compared to 25.8 percent of whites. While racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to be uninsured, whites accounted for 49.8 percent of the uninsured
- **Age breakdown:** The likelihood of being uninsured declines with age; 49.5 percent of those 19 – 24 years old, 36.3 percent of those 25 – 44 years old, 32.5 percent of those 45 – 54 years old and 21.2 percent of those 55 – 64 years old were uninsured over this two-year time period. The 55- to 64-year-old age group consumes more health care on average than younger adults.

For all ethnic and racial groups, lower-income families and individuals were more likely to be uninsured than lower-income whites. This disparity continues even as incomes rise in all groups.

There is a marked increase in the number of adults having difficulty paying medical bills – the most visible consequence of the weakening in insurance coverage. In 2007, 41 percent of adults (72 million people) reported problems paying medical bills, faced bill collectors or were in debt for medical care, up from 34 percent or 58 million in 2005. The majority had insurance at the time these bills were incurred² – well in advance of the economic downturn.

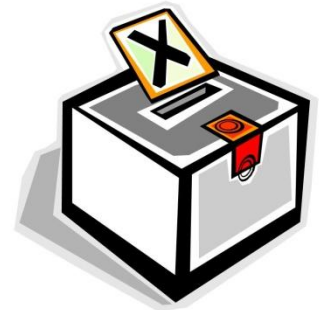
Janis McMillen (LWVUS Board member and LWVKS) is chair of the LWVUS Health Care Education Task Force.

HOLIDAY LUNCHEON

Mark your calendar now to save **December 5th** for the Annual Luncheon for LWVGB.

This year the speaker will be Carol Nunnelley discussing the Fourth Estate and Its Future.

We will be meeting for lunch at 11:30 a.m, location TBD.



ELECTIONS

Alabama House District 56 will hold its primary on September 29, with a runoff on November 10 if necessary. This district includes Lipscomb, North Johns, most of Bessemer, parts of Brownville, and other parts of Jefferson County

Runoffs for Birmingham City Council Districts 2, 5, 6, and 7 will occur on October 6.

**NOW
READ
THIS!**



TRANSIT UPDATE

The League is part of a statewide transit organization called Alabama Transit Coalition.

The ATC meets in Montgomery and is currently putting together a database of all existing ride providers that will be posted on the State's website. That link will be ON the Governor's Office on Disability website.

After that, ATC will focus on finding a way to allow callers to find the rides they need. ATC hopes to allow the 2-1-1 (the statewide call-center system similar to 9-1-1...but dedicated to social needs like health and welfare) call system to expand so that it can also handle calls from those who need transportation. This will require new software that provides the necessary match between a caller and a ride provider.

League members are invited to attend any ATC meeting. Let Nancy Ekberg know if you would like to be contacted about the meetings.
nanekberg@aol.com.

ACCR Update

As Leaguers know, Alabama Citizens for Constitutional Reform's Foundation sponsored a Mock Convention this year, bringing delegates from 105 legislative districts together to write a new Alabama constitution. They did a remarkable job. Some from the League, including immediate past State League President, Mary Lynn Bates, and Trecia Benefield, both from the Birmingham League were delegates.

Throughout the Convention gathering in Prattville in February of this year, several months of online and telephone conversations between article study groups, a second gathering in Montgomery in April and then a period of solicited commentary from the public, these dedicated, altruistic volunteers created a document that is a great improvement over our existing 1901 Alabama Constitution.

The new Constitution was unveiled to the public on Thursday, August 27, at Constitution Hall in Huntsville, where the State's first governing document was written in 1819 (see photo below). It is now available online at www.constitutionalreform.org.

At that same website, you can read the current ACCR VOICE newsletter telling about the document as well as the Bailey Thomson Award Luncheon that followed the unveiling. The late Bailey Thomson was the Professor of Journalism at the University of Alabama and founder of ACCR. That luncheon was held at the Von Braun Civic Center in Huntsville and featured Rick Bragg as keynote speaker. The Bailey Thomson Award was presented to former Governor Albert Brewer, member of the first Board of Directors of ACCR, and retired Alabama Supreme Court Justice Gorman Houston. Brewer and Houston were deans and advisors to the Mock Convention delegates.



LWVGB Calendar

Month	Day	Time	Event
September	21-24	TBD	Forum for Birmingham City Council & Board of Education Runoff Candidates
September	24	11:30am	General Membership Meeting, Location: Homewood Library
October	6	11:30am	Board Meeting, Community Foundation Building, 2100 1 st Ave North
October	22	6:00pm	General Membership Meeting, Location: Homewood Library

Quotable Quotes:

From a local candidate, after being challenged for lying about his age, education, and residence while campaigning:

"My campaign is not based on a foundation of lies. My values are not lies. It's just the information I provided to the people is false."



THANK YOU!

VOTERS SERVICE UPDATE

Thanks to Nancy Ekberg for voter registration activities at the Women of Will event August 8 and to Yvonne Brakefield for assisting residents at St. Martin in the Pines apply for absentee ballots for the Birmingham elections.