



The VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GREATER BIRMINGHAM
<http://www.lwvgb.org>

OCTOBER 2013

VOTER SERVICES

Nancy Sales, LWVGB Director

As is familiar to the League, LWVGB hopes to identify other groups working on voter service issues and see how we can work together or support their work. First is through a group that Catrena Norris Carter is already working with on facilitating the new Alabama Voter Photo ID law. To help Alabama voters be fully prepared for 2014 elections we will be looking for the best ways to put our strengths and resources to work. What about joining with Catrena Norris-Carter, Joan Burroughs and myself to make plans for that work?

The same group, and some of you, we hope, will be deciding what kind of response and action we want to make regarding this year's Supreme Court decision removing fundamental protection in the Voting Rights Act.

LWVGB OCTOBER PUBLIC MEETING

Date: Tuesday, 10/22/13

Time: 6:00 p.m.

Venue: TBD

Topic: TBD

Details will be provided on www.lwvgb.org when available.

DUES ARE DUE!

Dues were due by 9/30. Please submit your dues payment online or by postal mail. See [Pay Dues](#) webpage for details.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2013

Monthly LWVGB Board of Directors Meeting, 4th Tuesday, 11:30am, Landmark Center

October 8: Birmingham Runoff Elections

October 17: United Nations Day Banquet; The Club Ballroom; 6:00 p.m. Reception; 7:00 p.m. Dinner; Contact UNABhamAL@gmail.com for reservation information.

October 22: LWVGB October Public Meeting; 6:00 p.m.; details TBD

October 24: [United Nations Day](#)

November 11: [Armistice/Veterans/Poppy Day](#)

November 17: LWVAL Health Care Study Presentation; 3:00 pm; Vestavia Public Library

November 19: LWVAL Health Care Study Consensus; 6:00 pm; Vestavia Public Library

Be in touch so your ideas can be considered by our Voter Services group. I can be contacted at magoriannancy@yahoo.com or 591-8908.

LWVAL HEALTH CARE STUDY

Nancy Ekberg, LWVGB Director

The Health Care Study is ready for your study and involvement. Please review the material and be ready for the consensus.

Save the Dates of November 17th and 19th in the new Vestavia Hills library on Highway 31. On Sunday the 17th we will meet from 3:00 to 5:00 pm and on Tuesday the 19th we will meet from 6:00 until 8:00 pm.

Here is the material for your review:

<http://www.lwval.org/takeaction/health-care-2013-consensus/>

Or visit lwval.org. There's a prominent link to the Health Care Study Consensus Kit on the homepage.

Committee members Connie Arnwine, Ginny Randolph and I look forward to seeing you!!!

CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION COMMISSION

Nancy Ekberg, LWVGB Director

Well, the Constitutional Revision Commission has completed its work and we see we have work ahead of us.

As you know, they approved wording for the Education Article revision that is good and bad.

The good words say:

The Legislature shall establish, organize and maintain a system of public schools throughout the state for the benefit of children thereof.

But the bad words are from an amendment originated by Commissioner Matt Lembke that adds:

...provided that nothing in this Section shall provide a judicial right or obligation

So next January when the Legislative Session begins, we must work with the sponsors of the legislation to remove the bad words.

We are particularly grateful to members of the education community for their effort in getting the Commission to change the wording.

A letter written by Sally Howell, Executive Director of the Alabama Association of School Boards, Eric Mackey, Executive Director of the School Superintendents of Alabama, and Earl Franks, Executive Director of the Council for Leaders in Alabama, representing ACCR Inc, ACCR Foundation, Alabama ARISE, Greater Birmingham Ministries and Alabama Appleseed, asked the Commission to reconsider the wording.

The letter asks them to seek legal advice on the impact of the language and particularly its likely consequences and how it relates to other sections of the Education Article. This and other documents will be part of our effort to get the legislature to remove the offensive wording from the Education Article.

In other matters, the Commission did provide a window to additional powers for counties. This is the proposal they approved. Here again, we will work with the sponsors of the legislation to clarify the wording. This proposal was a joint effort of the Association of County Commissioners and ALFA.

PROPOSAL RESPECTING ADDITIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS FOR COUNTIES

It states:

...legitimate county needs (can be) adequately addressed by providing in the Constitution for a straightforward grant to counties of particularized, specific powers respecting the management by County Commissions of county offices and essentially administrative county activities.



As noted, the exercise of many such administrative powers often do, or are thought to, require under the 1901 Constitution specific county-by-county constitutional amendments, and the Constitution is as a result overrun with many such local Amendments.

The Committee believes that a grant of specific administrative powers for counties will obviate much of the perceived present need for the many constitutional amendments that are proposed each year regarding county governance and administration.

...The Committee emphasizes that it does not favor granting substantive powers to counties in the realm of business or land regulation or in regard to other such "hot button" matters as eminent domain, gambling, zoning, taxes, salaries of elected officials, or fees charged for ordinary county services. Rather, the powers granted should relate to day-to-day activities and actions such as management of county offices and programs and related administrative activities.

Because a grant of such powers to counties in the constitution would be a matter that local voters have heretofore had the opportunity to determine whether to allow, the exercise of any such new constitutional powers ought to be required to be carried out by County Commissions only with specific reference to the new Constitutional authorization. Further, the exercise of such actions by particular counties should be allowed to be negated, from and after enactment of a local law to the contrary applicable thereto, notwithstanding the grant of power contained within the Constitution, provided such local law is enacted within a set period of time from initial exercise by a county of the power in question, perhaps within a 12 to 18 month "window."

Then in previous revisions the Commission did approve a change in the Legislative Article that would expand the number of legislators it would take to force a local constitutional amendment to a statewide vote.

They did approve elimination of the procedure known as the BIR, the Budget Isolation Resolution. This was a constitutional amendment from years ago that required any bill offered before both budgets were passed, to have a super majority vote of approval before the bill could even be considered.

They did approve a measure allowing economic development without requiring a constitutional amendment.

And they passed a measure that moves all promotional amendments of industries such as swine, poultry, catfish, soybeans etc., out of the economic development sections of the Legislative Article and moved to the Miscellaneous Article.

The Miscellaneous Article is a catch-all to make sure any changes proposed do not drop necessary items or have unintended consequences. It's content was not addressed.

Also left unfinished were Executive Article revisions because two of the critical Commissioners were not present.

Governor Brewer asked for and received approval of a statement that said unfinished business could be handled by e-mails at the Call of the Chair.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Trisha Powell Crain

A new membership year has begun and your League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham is off to another great start. We greatly appreciate Alamerica Bank for hosting our Membership Mixer on September 26. Many thanks to Membership Chair Catrena Norris Carter for putting together a wonderful event to share the work of the League with our community. And welcome to our new members! Thanks to our returning members as well! We appreciate all who are able to support the work and mission of the League.

This year promises to be as busy and productive [as last year](#), with the League addressing many important issues facing our community. Just a few of the projects we have in store for this year:

Photo Voter ID Education and Acquisition Efforts – We are making plans to collaborate with government organizations to ensure our greater Birmingham residents are able to obtain photo IDs prior to the June 2014 primaries. Nancy Sales, our Voter Services Chair, is keeping us up-to-date with the latest information as it becomes available. Look for these efforts to begin very soon.

Repairing the Voting Rights Act – We join with Leagues across the country in asking Congress to repair the Voting Rights Act. The League of Women Voters of the United States [communicates regularly](#) with local Leagues to encourage advocacy efforts. They have [provided an easy online way to write to your Congressman to urge action](#).

Health Care Consensus Study – Leagues across Alabama will host discussions this fall among members to learn more about health care in Alabama. Please join us on November 17 and 19 in the Community Room at the Vestavia Hills library as we reach consensus on the position of the League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham. [Here are the materials we will use in our discussions](#). Many thanks to Connie Arnwine, Virginia Randolph and Nancy Ekberg for leading this effort.

In addition to these big projects, the League will continue conducting voter registration drives and providing educational opportunities to our members and our community at large. We are always seeking opportunities to serve our community in accordance with [the League's mission](#). Please contact us if you believe the League can assist in any efforts in your neighborhood.

It is a privilege to serve as president of our League. Please contact me if you have any questions or ideas to share to enhance the work of our members.

P.S. Birmingham residents: Don't forget to VOTE in runoff elections on October 8! [Here is a sample ballot](#).

Board of Directors, 2013-2014

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QUOTABLE QUOTES

There is nothing more deceptive than
an obvious fact.

~ *Sherlock Holmes*

The Bascombe Valley Mystery

When you're at the end of your rope,
tie a knot and hold on.

~ *Theodore Roosevelt*

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