

THE ALABAMA VOTER FALL 2011

## A BYRD'S EYE VIEW [this piece should be first]

By Kathryn Byrd, LWVAL President

### *Talk the Talk, Walk the Walk, and Make the Ask!*

Election Year 2012 is just around the corner. Admittedly, the “big” November general election is almost a year away (though with all the pre-primary presidential debates, it's hard to tell). But, on March 13<sup>th</sup> Alabama will hold its Presidential Preference Primary and other state primaries (including all those judicial elections) March 13. That means our leagues and leaguers will be called to action in accordance with our mission—“to encourage active and informed participation of citizens in government.” Although advocacy on behalf of our positions on selected issues is a critical function of the League, the focus of this article is our Voters Service arm and what the League needs to do to ensure that “arm” can reach its potential.

First of all, we need to **“Talk the Talk.”** Speak to your friends, family, students, business associates, people you meet at church or work or socially. SHARE with pride how the League provides easy access to nonpartisan, unbiased information on the important issues. TELL how the League allows candidates to speak on those issues through Voters Guides and candidate forums. BRAG about the our timely, information-packed publications (such as the *Voter* and *Facts and Issues*), candidate forums, and League projects that often can be funded through tax deductible donations to the LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ALABAMA EDUCATION FUND. And these days, “talking the talk” also encompasses a telecommunications, including social media. Although the President is the League's official spokesperson, members who are familiar with texting, emails, Facebook or Twitter, are encouraged to ALERT their contacts about important dates (like registration deadlines), nonpartisan information (such as, or candidate or issue forums), AND League “happenings.” And the list goes on....

Next, we need to **“Walk the Walk.”** The LWVAL is not a large organization in terms of membership numbers or fiscal resources. So the League needs your commitment to do your share of the work of the League. Volunteer for a voter registration campaign. Speak at your church or civic club. Volunteer to work at—maybe even organize—a voter registration campaign at Walmart or at your church. Introduce yourself to a new neighbor and offer information on how to register or how to access information on the upcoming referendum on important constitutional amendments. Be creative. Be resourceful and if you have ideas that might be eligible for Ed Fund monies, bring them to the attention of your local or state board. And the list goes on....

Finally, **“Make the Ask.”** This phrase has been at the heart of the Membership Recruitment Initiative/Leadership Development campaign of the LWVUS the past few years. Simply said, we have the power within ourselves to get people we know and meet to visit and join the League because we extend a personal invitation. But let's extend that idea of making “The Ask” for include requests for contributions to promote the work of the, especially the through the LWVAL ED FUND. And what can the contributor get in return?

We plan to use Vote411 this year in a limited capacity, but think how wonderful it would be if more races could be covered. We could publish Voter Guides in print form to reach target audiences. We could expand our Vote18 campaigns and Civics 101 forums so more can benefit. We could *print* Voter Guides for Judicial races as well as the proposed amendments to the Alabama constitution—reaching greater audiences than just the website alone. At the end of 2012, when we publish two editions of our *Facts and Issues* to cover two aspects of Health Care Reform in Alabama, we could print and disseminate more. We could buy press time/space to advertise our candidate forums. The list goes on and on....

WHAT CAN YOU DO? “Make the Ask” for new members, but “make the ask” for donations to the LWVAL EDUCATION FUND from fellow members and past members, prominent members of the community and friends who might be interested. Stress the double benefit of serving the public while making a tax-deductible donation. And while you are at it, please make a donation to the LWVAL-EF yourself. We welcome large donations, of course, but every little bit helps. Here is the link to the LWVAL website—which even provides PayPal to make donations quick and easy: <http://www.lwval.org/about/donate/> Won’t you please join me as I “talk the talk,” “walk the walk,” and “make the Ask”?

### **ADVOCACY PRIORITIES SET BY LWVAL BOARD**

At its October meeting the State Board set the 2012 Legislative Priorities. They will be used as guidelines by the LWVAL Advocacy Committee as it evaluates bills introduced in the 2012 Legislative Session that begins in February. They may also be used for advocacy with state agencies and commissions.

The priorities are divided into three categories:

Priority I – the highest level – represents areas that will be monitored for action and receive the greatest expenditure of League resources. Areas in this category include:

- Constitutional reform
- Campaign Finance and Elections – Redistricting; Campaign finance; Timely reporting of expenditures and donations; easy access to such information
- Voting access and practices
- Ethics in government
- Government transparency and accountability; and
- Natural Resources – Energy policy.

Priority II areas are monitored, but action is dependent on opportunity and available resources. Included here are:

- Tax reform, including ending sales tax on groceries
- Judicial qualifications and selection, including merit selection
- Natural Resources – Maintaining water purity and air quality; Alabama Water Management Plan; Coastal zone protection; and Recycling
- Public transportation

Priority III is reserved for areas that may be monitored and acted upon if and when opportunities arise. An assessment is made to determine whether action is feasible given resources and priorities.

The priority list is subject to change as conditions change.

### **INVESTMENT PROPOSAL**

During the recent LWVAL State Convention, an offer was made by Mobile member and investment professional, Debra Butler, to manage the League's funds currently placed with Morgan Stanley. The League could save on the annual fee imposed by Morgan Stanley and also receive a higher level of customer service.

A proposal was submitted to the Board for consideration, but there was unfortunately not enough time left in the quarterly Board meeting to adequately consider such an important matter. Instead, the Board has tabled the discussion until the next meeting. The proposal is presented here in summary for your review.

There are many activities the Board would like to engage in if the funds were available. However, the League's operating budget is very small and could not support those activities. Investing a portion of our principal in slightly riskier products could help accomplish small projects. In considering this proposal, the Board will need to consider its current and long-term investment goals with regards to funding, contributions and gifts, endowments, timelines, and risk tolerance.

This proposal is based on four basic assumptions. The funds in the account are designated for the administration and operation of the state League and its programs. They should not be used to fund any purpose other than those mandated by the national League or determined by the state finance committee and/or executive board. The funds in the account should be invested in order to earn a "reasonable" rate of return, that is, a rate of return that equals or exceeds the annual rate of inflation. Lastly, a minimum balance should be maintained as reserves, in an amount determined by the executive board.

### **PROPOSED INVESTMENT MIX**

The following are the preliminary recommendations:

- 20-25% of the funds to be held as reserves. (Forms of fixed income, i.e., municipal bonds, preferred stock, and bond funds with quarterly dividends.) Reserves are normally held for emergencies or as financial leverage or collateral for capital projects.
- 30-45% of the funds to be held in cash or cash equivalents. (Short term certificates of deposit, i.e. 60 days or money market funds for ongoing operations.)
- 25-30% of the funds to be indexed and linked to market performance. This strategy provides the best opportunity for higher returns, but inherently has the most risk. When the funds are invested in mutual funds, they can be "re-evaluated" every quarter and if necessary, transferred into less risky funds *without* transaction costs.

- Members would be encouraged to give stock and securities. The gift provides the benefit of tax relief to the donor, and the League is able to capture capital gains. This strategy also releases additional cash if the securities are held as reserves.

#### **FEES AND COSTS**

- Account fees are generally \$100- \$150 per year. When securities are purchased, brokerage charges are based on a sliding scale determined by the transaction amount, ranging from \$35-\$75. Mutual fund shares are charged only when they are redeemed. All brokerage commissions will be rebated back to the League.

Members are encouraged to provide feedback to a member of the Board should they have any questions or concerns about the investment strategy outlined above.

#### **Constitutional**

#### **Reform**

#### **Commission**

The 16 member Commission had their third meeting two weeks ago and will have had their fourth meeting Nov. 16<sup>th</sup> by the time of publication of this VOTER. They voted to approve minor changes to Article XIII, the Banking Article, and minor changes to Article XII, the Corporation Article.

They did not vote on Article III, the Separation of Powers Article, but I do not foresee any changes and so they will probably approve that on the 16th. They will deal with the structure of the Legislature as they tackle Article IV, the Legislature Article. This is the Article where home rule for counties could be introduced. The State League will make a presentation at the meeting on the 16th. Ruth Wright and others are framing the League's position on home rule and Ruth Ott will read the statement

#### **Public Transit**

The Alabama Transit Coalition has been meeting monthly, with new chair, Karen Peterlin who heads up the non-profit transit system, Kid One.

The Steering Committee (on which I represent the League) will meet with the new head of ALDOT, Director John Cooper on November 8th, and will plan to meet with the new head of the Department of Senior Services next month. We will plan to get on the agendas of the RPCs, COGs MPOs, League of Municipalities, County Commissioners Association and Mayors' organizations to access their support of public transit.

We aim to watch legislation in 2012 and support any that might provide transit support. We are also participating in a UTCA (University Transportation Center for Alabama) study of transit opportunities in Alabama.

Nancy Ekberg

## WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING WITH REDISTRICTING?

By Kathryn Byrd

The 2010 census is complete. The law mandates that the U.S. Congress reapportion itself, based on the current census data. As a result, some states may actually gain or lose a congressional seat because of shifting population patterns. However, Alabama did not gain or lose any congressional seats this round.

In addition, each state is responsible to redrawing district lines, from Congressional seats to legislative district boundaries, down to county, municipal, and locally elected school boards. The entire process is overseen by the **PERMANENT LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON REAPPORTIONMENT** (composed of the Legislative Reapportionment 11 members appointed by the Lt. Gov. from the Senate, 1 member from each congressional district and 4 members at-large. 11 members were appointed by the Speaker of the House from the House, 1 member from each congressional district and 4 members at-large.) The task is quite complex from a technical viewpoint, because in addition to shifting numbers, there are cultural considerations, and computer software can help to consider these factors. Important dates and information (including transcripts of the hearings and existing district maps) are posted at [www.legislature.state.al.us/reapportionment/reap.html](http://www.legislature.state.al.us/reapportionment/reap.html).

In the spring, I spoke on behalf of the LWVAL at one of seven statewide hearings regarding our Congressional and State Board of Education districts. Specifically, I spoke about principles that should be applied to drawing district lines for Alabama's seven congressional seats and eight State Board of Education seats. In October, I spoke at one of 21 hearings regarding Alabama Senate and House redistricting. You can read the text of my presentation below, and also on the website shown below.

The Reapportionment Office is headed by Supervisor Bonnie Shanholtzer. Curious about the progress of the redistricting process, I emailed Ms. Shanholtzer on Nov. 7th for an update. She responded, "As of this date, we do not have a proposed map for the Alabama legislative districts. I do not know when that will be available. The submission for the Congressional plan was 09/20/2011 and the submission for the BOE plan was 09/21/2011. Justice has 60 days to give us an answer; however, about a week or so ago Justice did ask for some additional information. They may have an additional 60 days from when this

request was made. I don't know if they plan on using this additional 60 days or not. If not, we should receive an answer by Nov. 20th.”  
Of course, the LWVAL will keep checking.

**The following is a copy of the talk given by President Byrd to the Redistricting Hearing in Tuscaloosa, Alabama on October 13, 2011, It may also be found online at**

[http://www.lwval.org/http://www.lwval.org/LWVALAction/LWVAL\\_redistricting\\_testimony.111013.pdf](http://www.lwval.org/http://www.lwval.org/LWVALAction/LWVAL_redistricting_testimony.111013.pdf)

My name is Kathryn Byrd. I am State President of the League of Women Voters of Alabama. The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization dedicated to the active and informed participation of citizens in government. Although we never support or oppose political candidates or political parties, we take action on selected issues which we have studied in depth and on which we have come to consensus. As related to tonight's proceedings, the League has been a long and strong advocate of promoting a governmental system that is representative, accountable, and responsive to our citizens.

To achieve these goals, the League of Women Voters urges transparency of the redistricting process and a meaningful opportunity for interested parties and for the public to participate effectively. Alabama, with its infamous history in this area, is making progress. The 21 hearings around the state regarding legislative redistricting, such as the one tonight, give evidence of that. We hope that these hearings will really have an impact, and not become just a *pro forma* exercise, with backroom decision making still being the reality.

In these days with easily generated redistricting maps through computer software, boundaries can be developed to meet a variety of criteria. The reality is that redistricting remains a very political process. Here are some points we urge our legislators to consider the following standards for redistricting:

1. We urge the Permanent Legislative Committee on Reapportionment and subsequently the whole body of the Alabama Legislature to adhere to all Constitutional and Voting Rights Act requirements. As one of the states which must abide by Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, our new plan must achieve federal approval. Let's hope a plan is

developed that is readily accepted, rather than having it face federal intervention.

2. We urge a plan that will promote competitiveness and partisan fairness. The temptation is present for allowing political gerrymandering to guarantee incumbents their seats or to gain additional seats in the legislature. The League of Women Voters, as I mentioned is always nonpartisan, and we never favor one party over another. But we do believe in the importance of a two-party system that allows for give-and-take discussion of the issues facing the state of Alabama.
3. Respect political subdivisions and communities of interest. Keeping communities intact increases the chances that representatives find themselves responsive to a more unified set of interests, ensuring that political and social communities have some representation in the legislature.
4. Encourage geographical compactness and respect for natural geographical features and barriers. Certainly Tuscaloosa County is a good example of representation that is not compact. We currently have seven House members and three Senators representing our county, with some members of the local delegation having only a relatively small edge of the county that they represent. We are not questioning the sincerity with which all our local delegation has represented us, but the current system is unwieldy.

On behalf of the League of Women Voters of Alabama, I thank you for this opportunity to provide our input on legislative redistricting in Alabama. I hope the Redistricting Committee and the Permanent Legislative Committee on Reapportionment and ultimately Alabama legislature will make a concerted effort to listen to its citizens and to do the right thing.

**League of Women Voters of Alabama Testimony to the Constitutional Revision Commission**

**Presented November 16, 2011 by League member, Ruth Ott**

The League of Women Voters of Alabama is heartened by the legislature's decision to revise the Constitution and finally allow citizens to vote on the revisions. We have been devoted to this cause since 1967, when we first undertook a study of the 1901

Constitution. We thank the Commission for this opportunity to discuss Article IV with a focus on the need for Home Rule.

We are a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase the understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. League advocates only after study and membership agreement through consensus. We have been committed advocates for a better constitution at every opportunity since 1967. This is by no means our first such testimony.

The background for our testimony today includes our past knowledge combined with our steady and close observation of state government, our studies of policy issues, and the knowledge our local leagues gain from their heavy involvement with city and county governments. All that we know convinces us that constitutional revision should have the highest priority. Home Rule is a necessary prelude to the solution of many problems. Through home rule citizens are able to exercise their democratic right to decide purely local issues for themselves.

The League seeks a functioning and accessible constitution. That constitution should provide a framework for government that broadly defines authorities, responsibilities, and relationships between branches of state government and between state and local governments. Unlike our current document, it should contain neither statutory law nor restrictive detail that requires continual amendment. The current tangle of laws, amendments, and complex arrangements constructed over the years to avoid the limitations of the 1901 constitution create an insurmountable barrier to efficient, effective government and thwart the efforts of citizens who seek to work for good government.

To the extent that citizens' current distrust of government is based on this failure to understand, there is no hope for improvement until the Constitution is freed from the 110 year old restrictions created by outdated circumstances and details.

Until then, the old problems with the constitution and the lack of home rule persist and new problems arise. According to county officials complaining in forums of the Redistricting Committee, old relationships between county government and the legislative delegation have failed since 2001, because many counties now have delegations too large and members too distant for legislators to make informed decisions on local issues and interact with county governments as they once did. In tracing Constitution Revision and Home Rule through the proposed versions and in following public discussion, the League finds encouragement to hope for general agreement about the problems caused by lack of home rule. In our comparison of previous Home Rule proposals we believe that the broad outlines of a rational plan are available.

The LWVAL support position, reached in 1970, states: "The state constitution should provide a broad grant of authority to local governing units to enable them to attempt to meet their own local problems independently of the state legislature and/or of the state electorate. It should provide guarantees that the choice of form of local government should be determined by the local electorate and it should promote



maximum inter-governmental cooperation in seeking solutions to problems that cross the boundaries of political subdivisions."

We are most grateful to you for your work on this important Commission. We promise to promote public support for the revisions through education.

The League of Women Voters of Alabama

[Special thanks to Ruth Wright of Auburn for her help in preparing this document.]



### **Stay "in the know" with LWVAL Facebook and Twitter**

LWVAL is now on both Facebook and Twitter. These social media tools are ubiquitous forms of online and mobile communication and a powerful means for engaging citizens. Facebook's stated purpose, "giv[e] people the power to share and make the world more open and connected..." fits well with the mission of the League of Women Voters. Using short snippets of text, Twitter, likewise, makes it possible for the League to quickly connect to our members and the public. Fast-paced, ever-changing communication on Facebook and Twitter allows the League to instantly share election and public issue news (print, photos, video and audio), action alerts, editorial opinion and links to the "rest of the story."

How can you join in the conversation? If you do not already have one, create a free Twitter account at [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com) <<http://www.twitter.com>> . Then please go to [twitter.com/LWVAL](http://twitter.com/LWVAL) <<http://twitter.com/LWVAL>> and "follow" LWVAL on Twitter. The state League's Twitter name is @LWVAL.

If you don't have a Facebook account, create yours for free at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) <<http://www.facebook.com>> . Then go to [www.facebook.com/pages/League-of-Women-Voters-of-Alabama/119494879019](http://www.facebook.com/pages/League-of-Women-Voters-of-Alabama/119494879019) <<http://www.facebook.com/pages/League-of-Women-Voters-of-Alabama/119494879019>> (or simply search for LWVAL on Facebook) and click to become a "fan" of LWVAL's Facebook page.

Here are ways that you can further participate in the conversation and spread the word about the League's social media connections: Leave comments on LWVAL Facebook posts. Refer to League posts in your own Facebook status. "Tweet" about LWVAL and "re-tweet" your favorite League tweets. You can see the most recent LWVAL tweets by simply going to the LWVAL homepage at [www.lwval.org](http://www.lwval.org) <<http://www.lwval.org>> . Share League Facebook and Twitter news in your email and casual conversations.

By the way, your own local League may be on Facebook and/or Twitter. Check these out...

LWVGB Facebook - [www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=32227693013](http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=32227693013)

<<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=32227693013>>

LWVGB Twitter (@LWVGB) - [www.twitter.com/#!/LWVGB](http://www.twitter.com/#!/LWVGB) <<http://www.twitter.com/#!/LWVGB>>  
LWVGT Facebook - [www.facebook.com/groups/145590686531/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/145590686531/)  
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LWVEA Facebook - [www.facebook.com/pages/League-of-Women-Voters-of-East-Alabama/101381839926870](http://www.facebook.com/pages/League-of-Women-Voters-of-East-Alabama/101381839926870) <<http://www.facebook.com/pages/League-of-Women-Voters-of-East-Alabama/101381839926870>>

And the national League...  
LWVUS Facebook - [www.twitter.com/LWV](http://www.twitter.com/LWV) <<http://www.twitter.com/LWV>>  
LWVUS Twitter (@LWV) - [www.facebook.com/leagueofwomenvoters](http://www.facebook.com/leagueofwomenvoters)  
<<http://www.facebook.com/leagueofwomenvoters>>

And finally, if this is all "Greek geek", check out this article in the Wall Street Journal, "How to Tweet" at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123638550095558381.html> for a short, non-technical explanation of social media and how to use it.

Stay connected!

### REMINDER

Consensus on charter schools is due in March, so that the proposed consensus/position statement can be presented at the State Council meeting in May. The Facts and Issues paper and consensus questions can be found on the LWVAL website. Be prepared for your local League's consensus meeting on this issue. Read the paper and think about the questions.

### FROM YOUR VOTER SERVICE CHAIR

Election Year 2012 is fast approaching and local Leagues are making plans for how to engage citizens to become informed voters. This article will highlight some of the projects LWV Mobile is working on and maybe some of these ideas will inspire projects within your League. Please share your League's voter service projects and we will highlight them in the next LWVAL Voter.

**VOTE411.org** is LWV's one-stop source for voting information. A Voter Guide with information on all offices and candidates on the Mobile County ballot will be published on VOTE411. Questions on relevant issues will be posed to all candidates in contested races so voters may compare the candidates. Unfortunately, there are not as many contested races as there might be. LWVAL may publish voter guides for the state Judicial races and this information would be available for all local Leagues to access and promote. To help promote this useful resource we will ask political organizations, candidates and local papers to put a link on their websites. A nifty feature of VOTE411 is the ability to select your preferred candidates and print a ballot to take to the poll as a reminder. All voter service programs will promote and use VOTE411.

**The 2012 Youth Voter Registration Project** aims to engage 500 high school, community college, and vocational school students in the electoral process in order to redress the fact

that more than half of all 18-year-old citizens in the United States were still not registered to vote in 2008. Using VOTE 18, an interactive 45 minute program, students will experience the power of their vote, have an opportunity to register to vote, and be inspired to volunteer and get involved in their communities. To remind new registrants about an upcoming election, a suggested *Treasure Hunt lesson plan* will be emailed to participating teachers at each school. This activity will help students locate candidate and other information on VOTE411.org to become informed voters as they prepare to vote. *School Announcement templates* will be provided to remind and encourage eligible students and adults to vote on Election Day. To increase League visibility and opportunities, after each VOTE 18 event an email is sent to the school's point of contact summarizing the classes and number of students that participated, including the number of registrations completed, along with a brief paragraph for the school to use in their school or PTA paper or as a press release in the community paper. This project is funded by a League of Women Voters Education Fund pass-through grant.

**Activating Voters** is important because elected officials give their attention to those constituents who vote. When certain populations and/or neighborhoods are not exercising their vote, and the power it represents, they become disenfranchised from resources made available to populations more engaged in the political process. To ignite civic engagement LWV Mobile is using a *NeighborWorks America* action planning grant to support their "Activating Voters" initiative. Using Secretary of State and Census data, we have identified a low-turnout precinct within Mobile County and will use events to bring a people within this selected community together and provide information on the political process. We will work to connect pre-existing networks and institutions in an effort to drive up the turnout. We will compare voter turnout rates between the 2012 and 2008 Presidential elections for the selected precinct and determine if our community engagement efforts have a positive impact on voter turnout.

**Voter Stations - Public Library Partnership.** A very simple idea may have a big impact. LWV Mobile purchased holders for Voter Registration Forms for each of the nine public libraries in Mobile County. These holders allow the libraries to move the forms from behind the counter, where they were available upon request but not visible to patrons, to a table or counter where patrons can see and access the forms directly. This reduces the problem of "out of sight out of mind" and puts the form in the path of the patrons as a visual reminder. The library takes completed registration forms and delivers them to the Voter Registration Office downtown so no stamp is needed. As Election Day approaches, a sign will be added to the form holder to indicate dates for registration deadline and Election Day. We will be asking the libraries if we may place information or a sign about VOTE411.org at their public computer terminals so patrons may use this resource to become informed. We will ask the libraries if they have seen a notable increase in completed registration forms since using the more accessible holders.

**Candidate and Issue Forums.** We may hold a County Commission Candidate Forum for the Primary Election. An Issue Forum may be held for the Forever Wild Constitutional Amendment in the General Election.

Mary McGinnis

## **LWVUS STATEMENT ON IMMIGRATION**

In the furor over Alabama's recently enacted immigration Law, people expect to hear from the League of Women Voters. But as all leaguers know, we cannot speak on an issue without study and consensus. Since we have not studied this issue at the state level, the LWVAL Board thought our best response would be to cite the national position if asked where the League stands. Below is the National position. Remember, as an individual member you do not speak "officially" for the League, but you can use this information if you are asked.

### **The League's Position**

*Statement of Position on Immigration, as Announced by National Board, April 2008:*

The League of Women Voters believes that immigration policies should promote reunification of immediate families; meet the economic, business and employment needs of the United States; and be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises. Provision should also be made for qualified persons to enter the United States on student visas. All persons should receive fair treatment under the law.

The League supports federal immigration law that provides an efficient, expeditious system (with minimal or no backlogs) for legal entry of immigrants into the United States.

To complement these goals the League supports federal policies to improve economies, education, job opportunities and living conditions in nations with large emigrating populations.

In transition to a reformed system, the League supports provisions for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status

The League supports federal payments to impacted communities to address the financial costs borne by states and local governments with large immigrant populations.

### **Criteria for Legal Admission to the United States**

The League supports the following criteria for legal admission of persons into the United States:

- Family reunification of spouses or minor children with authorized immigrants or citizens;
- Flight from persecution or response to humanitarian crises in home countries;
- Economic, business and employment needs in the United States;
- Education and training needs of the United States;
- Educational program opportunities; and
- Lack of a history of serious criminal activity.

### **Administration and Enforcement**

The League supports due process for all persons, including the right to a fair hearing, right to counsel, right of appeal and right to humane treatment.

**The League supports:**

- Improved technology to facilitate employer verification of employee status;
- Verification documents, such as status cards and work permits, with secure identifiers;
- Significant fines and penalties for employers who hire unauthorized workers;
- Improved technology for sharing information among federal agencies;
- More effective tracking of individuals who enter the United States; and
- Increased personnel at borders.

The League also supports programs allowing foreign workers to enter and leave the United States to meet seasonal or sporadic labor needs.

**Unauthorized Immigrants Already in the United States**

In achieving overall policy goals, the League supports a system for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status, including citizenship, by paying taxes, learning English, studying civics and meeting other relevant criteria. While policy reforms, including a path to legal status, remain unachieved, the League does not support deporting unauthorized immigrants who have no history of criminal activity.

Want to know what your State Board is up to and where your money goes? Any member who is interested can find LWVAL Board meeting minutes and quarterly treasurer's reports in the "members only" section of the LWVAL website at <http://www.lwval.org/members/> . Your local president can supply the proper ID and password needed.

**NATURAL RESOURCES NEWS**

Joyce Lanning

The LWVAL was a co-sponsor of the Interfaith Environmental Initiative of Alabama (IEIA) Forum, *Building Forward – Sustainable Communities Through Collaboration*, which was held from 8:30-3:30 on October 13, 2011 at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. Over 90 people heard Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 4 Administrator, Gwen Keyes Fleming, discuss collaboration activities at the EPA. She affirmed the work of IEIA for finding ways for individuals and groups with disparate environmental viewpoints to come together around a common purpose.

The morning sessions focused on tools and examples of collaborative action. Lessons for sustainable practices for water and energy efficiency from rebuilding efforts from the tornados were covered in the afternoon. The speakers looked ahead to what can be learned for future building projects. There were reports from the IEIA working groups and opportunities for discussion. The Forum program can be found at the IEIA website, [www.InterfaithEnvironmental.org](http://www.InterfaithEnvironmental.org).

The proposed revised legislative priorities for the Alabama League place Energy Policy in the first priority section. Other natural resources issues are in Priority Level II. They are: Maintaining water purity and air quality; Alabama water management plan; Coastal zone protection; and Recycling.

Join the team to work on the revision of the 1999 document, [Environmental Management in AL: Facts & Issues](#), which is designed to educate citizens on the issue of environmental management of land, air and water resources in Alabama. Our document needs to be updated to reflect the changes in the last 12 years. Contact Joyce Lanning, [joyce.lanning@gmail.com](mailto:joyce.lanning@gmail.com) if you have internet access and interest in helping with this useful project.

### **Successful Sustain Our State Rally in Birmingham's Linn Park August 16**

The League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham joined the League of Women Voters of Alabama and environmental and civic groups in a rally in Linn Park to Sustain Our State. In addition to the LWV, organizations hosting the rally included the Alabama Environmental Council, Alabama Rivers Alliance, GASP, Coalition of Alabama Students for the Environment (CASE), Greater Birmingham Ministries, and Metro Birmingham Branch NAACP.

Sixty people signed the LWVUS Clean Air Promise and almost that many signed postcards asking our state leaders to take a proactive approach to air, energy, water, and transit – all elements that are necessary components of sustainable living and stewardship of the environment. We have a wealth of natural resources in our state, and it is our duty to protect them for future generations.

See a news article about the [SOS Rally at al.com](#) and [photos of the Rally](#) courtesy of Jenn Patterson and [Black Warrior Riverkeeper](#). More photos can be found by scrolling down on the LWVGB web site at [www.lwvgb.org](http://www.lwvgb.org).





SOS Rally participants decorate a Dart trolley with signs calling for clean air, water and real public transportation.



Visiting United Methodist Women attended the SOS Rally in Linn Park on August 16<sup>th</sup>, adding their climate justice concerns in support of Alabama's need to address our sustainable future.

As part of our effort to address the lack of energy planning in Alabama, the LWVAL has submitted a recommendation to the Alabama Permanent Joint Legislative Committee on Energy Policy to create an energy plan as called for in their enabling legislation and to investigate legislation aimed at improving public involvement in the energy planning process. The reorganization meeting for the Senators and Representatives on that committee is November 15. Joyce Lanning represents the League on two of the subcommittees, Environmental Issues and Efficiency and Conservation.

To complement our position on Coastal Zone Management, which was updated in 2009 as a result of efforts led by Jeanne Lacey, we are reviewing the Alabama Rivers Alliance Water Agenda (see [www.alabamawateragenda.com](http://www.alabamawateragenda.com)). Alabama's lack of a comprehensive water management plan leaves us at a disadvantage in dealing with other states' claims on our water resources and managing drought conditions.

### **LOCAL LEAGUE NEWS**

The Baldwin County League is rebuilding its membership. We had a successful kick-off event with the brilliant editorial cartoonist JD Crowe as presenter to a good crowd at the Daphne Public Library on September 15th. On November 30, we're offering a guided tour, "Autumn on the Week's Bay Bayou Boat;" seating is limited, so reserve soon by calling 251-644-5882 or by emailing [lswitzky@hotmail.com](mailto:lswitzky@hotmail.com). Plans are underway for a December social event at the Grand Hotel.

L. Switzky

The summer and fall meetings of the League of Women Voters of East Alabama featured speakers on the Alabama tax system and the new immigration law. The "consensus" was that both need some work. A good start on the LWVUS consensus on the role of the federal government in public education was made in October. We expect to finish the consensus discussion in November. In December, Leaguers will gather at a local restaurant for a Christmas social. We will get back to work in January with a reception for our legislative delegation. Leaguers attending the local hearing on redistricting reported that several other organizations share the league's concern over the fragmentation of our delegation. Six of the nine members represent only tiny fragments of Lee County, yet any one of them can block needed legislation, perhaps only because they are not familiar with the situation that is remote from their base.

C. Ward



## **Social Justice Training Seminar supported by LWVAL Board Members**

The United Methodist Women held their National Social Justice Training Seminar at the Sheraton Birmingham Hotel on August 13-17. Every four years over 200 UMW members from all over the U.S. gather to study and make action plans to address social justice issues. This year the participants addressed immigration, domestic violence, human trafficking and climate change.

Alabama League board members Mary Lynn Bates and Joyce Lanning served as resource people for the trafficking and climate issues for the 5-day conference. Each learned from the intense experience and appreciated the UMW leadership for addressing these difficult issues and coming to our city for this work. Shown below are Joyce and Mary Lynn with Sung-ok Lee, UMW National Seminar Chair.

