



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GREATER TUSCALOOSA VOTER

September-December 2003

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Rush Watson  
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**Phone number for  
LWVGT  
(205) 349-6206.**

## PRESIDENT'S NOTES

It seems so long ago that we put out our last Voter. As you know, our former Voter editor, Lisa Johnson, has moved to Wilmington N.C. I received an email from her recently. She is settled and working at Sylvan. I have Lisa's address for those of you who would like to keep in touch.

What a whirlwind four months we have had since our annual meeting early last May--- we have worked so hard on the tax package. The amendment has failed and we are still recuperating. It probably is a little too soon to decide where we go from here. What is important is that we keep going....We did our best; our entire membership came together in a  
(cont. on page 2)

## CALENDAR

*Oct.1-Dec.31, dues are due*

*Oct. 7,, noon, Lunch meeting, Tusc. Country Club, Crystal Room*

*Oct. 14, 5:00 pm, Board meeting, United Way Office*

*Oct. 16, 5:00 pm, Evening Unit meeting, United Way Office*

*Oct. 23, 5:30 pm, Membership Party, 4 Monnish Drive*

*Nov. 4, noon, Lunch meeting, Tusc. Country Club, Crystal Room*

*Nov. 11, 5:00 pm, Board meeting, United Way Office*

*Nov. 20, 5:00 pm, Evening Unit meeting, United Way Office*

*December 2, noon, Lunch meeting, University Club*

*December 9, 5:00 pm, Board meeting, United Way Office*

## **PRESIDENT'S NOTES (CONTINUED)**

monumental effort. One important result of that effort is our working with like-minded organizations as cosponsors. We worked with the Chamber of Commerce on both the forum and the town halls. For the town halls, we had 5 other sponsors. I think having help led to the large crowds we had at all three events. We also have a network going that may gain us new members and set the stage for more effective community involvement in the future.

In preparing for our meetings, we needed an update of our membership brochure. Anna Singer updated it (our new Board meeting time etc.) and Mary Jane Watson very graciously made us copies. Thank you, Mary Jane.

After we heard the City Planning Director, William Snowden, speak last spring at the after-work unit, we made it a goal to have some League representation on the subcommittees of the comprehensive planning committee for Tuscaloosa. It has been many years since we have had a comprehensive plan for our city. To our delight, two League members now sit on subcommittees of this larger committee: Christine Dietsch and Jeanette VanderMeer.

We now have a website through the League of Women Voters of Alabama

web site. It will take a while to get all the information posted, but at least our meetings will be publicized and our political directory will be on-line. We thank Clarie Evans for handling this for us. Having a website is especially important to us since our phone number does not appear in the phone book. We use an answering service for our number, 349-6206, and to date, we have had no luck in getting a listing at a fee we can afford. Toby Whitman is looking into the phone problem and at the moment we are considering a cell phone that could take messages.

The LWVAL has set up a discussion bulletin board for members. It is called LWVAL forum and can be reached at <http://www.lwval.org/discussions>. The first time you visit, you will be asked to register and provide your own user name and password. Email me if you have difficulty. The state board has also approved student memberships at one-half the regular per member payment. The LWVUS already has this policy. Maybe we can draw some University students into our ranks..... we need young blood.

The State League is also going to emphasize interviews with legislators on LWVAL priorities prior to the Legislative sessions. The State League will develop the questions and timelines for these interviews.

The state board approved a restatement of

Phase One of the study on the legislature which includes (1) the Legislature's management of the budget process, (2) How the structure and functioning of the houses affect the Legislature's ability to address the needs of the state, and (3) Proactive efforts that affect the Legislature's openness and responsiveness to all Alabamians. The study committee expects to observe legislative budget processes during the special budget session in September. Jeanette VanderMeer is our local board member who will be handling this study for our local league once information becomes available.

We will be back on our regular schedule beginning in October. Please choose a unit-- luncheon or after-work-- and join us. We want all members to be involved and participating. We have good momentum going. Let's keep it up.

*Annette*



## **LOCAL BOARD ORIENTATION**

On August 16, our Board met for an orientation at Hattie Kaufman's home on Lake Tuscaloosa. Hattie had told us we would have a "light" lunch..... she had at

least 10 different salads, cheeses, etc. She should not have set such a precedent----- it will be hard for her to get out of doing it again next year.

Kathy Bolland did an excellent job acquainting us with the over-all League picture. She spent some time telling us about all the information that is available on-line for League members. Kathy's handout was very thorough and informative. In addition to information about internet services, it contained tips for membership growth, a glossary of terms and other trouble-shooting ideas. We would love to share that with you. Kathy put in a great deal of time preparing for her time with us and we thank her.

Katie Ferguson and Annette Dudgeon put together a folder for Board members with bylaws, program, budget, calendar etc. hoping we can get back in the habit of keeping files and passing them along.

### **MEETING BETWEEN CHALLENGE 21 AND LWVGT**

Star Bloom, Katherine Merritt, Jackie Gardner, and Angela Fulmer from Challenge 21 met with Annette Dudgeon, Scarlett Gaddy and Mary Rogers from the League in August 2003. The purpose of the meeting was to investigate ways that the two organizations could work together and help each other.

Challenge 21 has

presented a series of forums at county schools over the last year. The purpose of those forums was to get public input on different educational concerns and priorities. Challenge 21 has since published those results and the County Board of Education used this material is setting forth new goals and objectives. This information is available on their website.

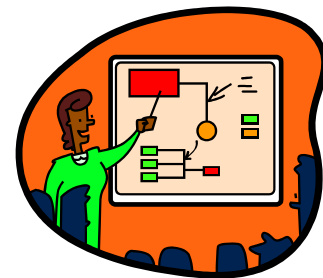
The League is beginning a new study on education. This study will eventually lead to a member consensus (hopefully this year). The League study concerns getting information to the public and financing for total needs. Mary Rogers, chair of the League study, will investigate and gather information from the Challenge 21 website, since some of their findings from the public will be pertinent to our study.

We agreed that information from both the City and County Boards of Education should be obtained. Mary will see about setting up interviews to request appropriate information.

Challenge 21 is continuing to hold public forums throughout the city and county this coming year to gather input from the public. The question to be addressed in these forums is : How can Tuscaloosa prepare all children for the 21st century? They will keep us informed of the dates of these forums and we will try to send League representatives. We also are interested in having

them present a forum at one or two League meetings. Challenge 21's next big project involves urban planning, a topic the League is very involved with. We want to work together on this, perhaps even developing a new League study item from it for next year. The League night unit already has two representatives on the Comprehensive Planning Committee for the City of Tuscaloosa: Christine Dietsch and Jeanette VanderMeer. Mary will keep in touch. We can learn much from the Challenge 21 facts which are emailed every Friday. Annette receives them and Mary will be added to the list.

*Annette*



### **TOWN HALL MEETINGS ON TAX PACKAGE**

LWVGT held two town hall meetings on the tax package. Cosponsors were Alabama Association of University Women, Alabama PTA, Alabama Arise, Junior League, Students for a Better Alabama, and the Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama. Representatives from all these organizations attended both town halls,

served as greeters, provided refreshments and, most of all, helped publicize so that attendance was good. A special thank you to Alabama PTA and Nancy Lambert Brown for providing the funding for our flyers (25,000 of them) that went home with every city and county school student. The Alabama Partnership for Progress through Jon Chalmers, Alethia Pittman and Pam Baker, provided materials for us.

The first town hall at Hillcrest on August 19 drew nearly 200 people. The second on August 21, at County High, drew nearly 70. Many Leaguers contributed to the success of these town halls.

Jeanette VanderMeer did an excellent job recruiting the panel (Joyce Sellers, John England, Carl Ferguson, Schmidt Moore, Bill O'Connor, Neal Wade) and the moderator, Culpepper Clark. All participants were articulate and persuasive. Debrah Fisher and Anna Singer served as facilities chairs, and Claire Evans worked very hard with the sound and stage arrangements to set up an informal conversation format. I think her efforts were successful. Attention was good and we had more questions submitted than could have been answered if we had stayed all night. Frances Tucker and Kathy Byrd worked with the media. We had excellent publicity and coverage for both events.

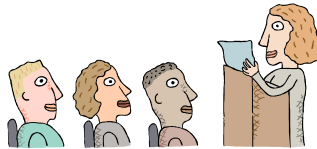
We even fed some of the panelists before they

took the stage. True to my old habits when I am deeply involved in something, I probably ate more brownies and finger sandwiches than anyone else.....

One humorous note----- Joyce Sellers called to tell me that a "gentleman" called her very angry because he had heard on talk radio that the League of Women Voters had thrown an elderly woman "out on the street" for passing out literature for the opposition. Oh well, some things do not deserve a response.....

Thank you to all of you who helped for a job well done.

*Annette*



## COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP FORUM

On Tuesday, August 5, the League convened a community leadership forum, cosponsored by The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama. The meeting was held at the University Church of Christ from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. The purpose of the forum was to educate a group of Tuscaloosa leaders about Governor Riley's proposed tax reform and accountability package, in hopes that this group would become better prepared to advocate for the plan.

Caroline Novak, Chair, Alabama Partnership for Progress, and David Perry were the speakers for the event. Caroline serves also as the president of A-Plus and is a long-time advocate for public education. David spoke to our group once before as a stand-in for Bill O'Connor and is an expert on the tax implications of the bills making up the package. The format was a power-point presentation in which Caroline addressed accountability issues and David explained changes in the tax structure.

Approximately 125 persons attended the forum. They were an attentive audience during the presentation and afterward participated in a lively question and answer session. Questions ranged from detailed ones about retirement funds and taxes on utilities to general ones about the accountability of our legislators. When the question was raised about the possibility of our legislators actually changing their way of doing business, Caroline Novak pointed out that they had already changed somewhat by passing the bill that makes pass-through pork a criminal offense.

Jon Chalmers, Director of Rural Services at the University of Alabama, was introduced as the organization leader for the Alabama Partnership for Progress efforts in the counties of northwest Alabama. He announced that Martha Rogers and

Jeanette Vandermeer would be serving as team leaders for Tuscaloosa. Jon closed the meeting with a challenge to the group to work hard for tax reform so that, regardless of the outcome, on September 10 we would have no regrets about our lack of effort.



## LWVG T WEBSITE

The League of Women Voters of Greater Tuscaloosa has begun the initial phases of developing a website offering our political directory, basic citizenship information, and an introduction to the local League. The site will be a featured area of the state League's website, [www.lwval.org](http://www.lwval.org). The League of Women Voters of Alabama currently features information about the Auburn and Montgomery Leagues.

Members are encouraged to review the Montgomery and Auburn webpages and consider how we can best take advantage of the format established by the state League's site to serve our membership and promote our activities and interests. Please send

your feedback and suggestions to Claire Lewis Evans at [sukkal@bellsouth.net](mailto:sukkal@bellsouth.net). Offers of assistance will not be rejected!

Claire can also be reached in the evenings at 758-2278.

*Claire*

## PARTY!

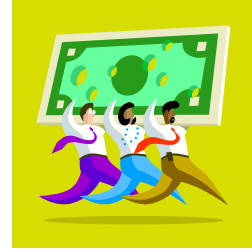
On Thursday, Sept. 11, from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m., fifteen members and one potential member of the LWVGT enjoyed a party at Jeanette VanderMeer's house. We sat on the back porch, looking at Forest Lake and enjoying the wonderful cooler weather as we ate and talked. There was no agenda and no business conducted at this meeting. The sole purpose was to come together and get to know more about each other and we certainly accomplished that. In today's busy world, we all scurry around and do multiple tasks and fail to take time to enjoy all the folks that come into our lives.

I want to thank my friend, Susie Luquire, who helped with the party. She came early to help prepare the food, contributed to the cost, and stayed to clean up. A true friend.

Let's make this a regular part of the LWVGT!

*Jeanette*

*P.S. From the editor: A huge thanks to Jeanette, not only for all her effort, but for reminding us what is important.*



## INFORMATION FROM THE TREASURER

As you know, the League is organized on 3 levels, LWVUS, LWVAL, and LWVGT. Although each level has its own financial structure, all 3 levels use the same League Year, July 1 through June 30. Budgets are based on this time frame. Each level also sets its own dues: LWVUS by delegates to the biannual convention, LWVAL by delegates to its yearly convention, and our own local League by those attending the Annual Meeting in late April or early May.

Currently dues for Tuscaloosa are \$40.00 per year. (When 2 members live in the same household the second person pays only half of the regular dues, for a total household dues level of \$60. This is possible because only one set of publications/ mailing will go to the household.) Of each \$40 dues payment, \$23.00 goes to LWVUS and \$12.00 to LWVAL. These amounts are known as PMP (per member payments). That leaves \$5.00 for local needs, which explains why contributions are most welcome and the League must seek outside support

for any important project.

The membership year is from September 1 through August 31. Dues are delinquent as of December 1 and the treasurer is directed to drop from the role any who have not paid dues by that date. It is important to observe this cutoff date because each January the treasurer must send to LWVUS an accurate membership list. Both national and state PMP are determined by this membership list. If names are sent in for people who never pay their dues, the local league is still obligated to pay PMP for them.

Members who first join LWVGT after January first, but before the Annual Meeting, pay only 50 % of the annual dues. They will

then be expected to pay regular annual dues in September. New members who join after the Annual Meeting, but before September 1, pay full regular dues, but they do not pay again until the following year. Lapsed members who pay dues after January 1 pay regular dues and are expected to pay dues again in September.

*Susanne*

### **MEMBERSHIP PARTY**

Please join us for LWVGT's annual Membership Party on Thursday, October 23, 2003, 5:00-6:30 at the home of Celeste Burnum, 4 Monnish Drive,

Tuscaloosa. As we do each year, we would like also to invite members of the community who might be interested in joining League. To accomplish this goal, we need the help of *all* League members—please give us the names and addresses of friends, co-workers, neighbors, etc. who you think would find League's activities of interest. Send your list of names to Katie Ferguson, 1622 Alaca Place, Tuscaloosa, 35401, or e-mail her at [kateferg@bellsouth.net](mailto:kateferg@bellsouth.net). We depend on this party to give us an opportunity to introduce ourselves to potential new members, and we need those new members to keep League growing and active.

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
OF GREATER TUSCALOOSA  
4314 WOODLAND FOREST DRIVE  
TUSCALOOSA, AL 35405**