

JUNE 2009
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Calendar:

Susanne Nasir: Coordinator

- **July**
 - 7/6** Qualification for City and BOE Elections begin.
 - 7/7** Lunch Meeting: University Club: 12 noon William Brewbaker
 - 7/26** End of Qualification for City and BOE Elections
 - 7/28** LWVGT Board Meeting
- **August**
 - 8/4** Lunch Meeting: University Club: 12 noon
 - 8/10** Candidate Forum McDonald Hughes Center
 - 8/11** Public School begins for students
 - 8/17** Candidate Forum Belk Center
 - 8/19** Class begins at UA
 - 8/25** LWVGT Board Meeting
 - 8/25** Tuscaloosa Election Day
- **September**
 - 9/1** Lunch Meeting: University Club: 12 noon
 - 9/15** Voter articles due.
 - 9/22** LWVGT Board Meeting
 - 9/29** 5th Tuesday Social TBA

DUES ARE DUE

By Lynne Richardson

Yes, I know that it seems like we just finished collecting dues. However, it has actually been about 8 months.

Our chapter's year begins May 1 after the annual meeting in April. Our dues are then due Sept. 1-Nov. 30 for the upcoming year September through August.

By action of the Board, the dues for the coming year 2009-10 have been increased:

- \$55 for a full member*
- \$80 for a full member & a household member/ spouse*
- \$27.50 for a student member*

Of the amount you pay in dues the breakdown is as follows:

- to LWVUS: per member \$29.20 (increased from \$28--3rd increase in 5 yrs); per household member \$14*
- to LWVAL: per member \$10; per household member \$5*
- to Tuscaloosa chapter: \$15.80 per member; \$6 per household member*

SUPPORT THE LWV EDUCATION FUND

You no doubt have heard of the "Ed. Fund" at lunch meetings or other League functions. Our local League maintains our State League Ed Fund monies at the State League for tax reasons so that any contribution you make is tax deductible. Ed Fund monies are used for functions that educate the public. Our chapter uses the Ed Fund for candidate forums

DUES <i>Due Now</i>	
Full Member	\$55
Full Member and Household Member/	\$80
Student Member	\$27.50

prior to local elections and for our annual legislative forum each January.

So please consider making a donation to the Ed Fund so that we can continue our public forums in the coming year.

For further info, contact Lynne Richardson, Treasurer at (H) 556-4951 or elsies@dbtech.net

Important

Candidate Forums
6:30-8pm-Help Needed

Monday, August 10
McDonald Hughes Center

Monday, August 17
Belk Center

Tuesday, August 25
Tuscaloosa Elections

The Coordinator's Column

By Susanne Nasir

“Summer is here and the living is easy”; well, no, not exactly. The League is busy - as usual. Not only that, we've been busy! Elsewhere in this issue of the Voter you will find a report that was first published in the packet for our Annual Meeting held in late April. Also in this issue is more information about the Annual Meeting, the last two luncheons, the LWVAL Convention, the LWVUS “Virtual” Council, our Tuscaloosa Board Orientation, plans for upcoming forums for the candidates for Tuscaloosa city elections, and several other topics of interest.

Recently a couple of people, not League members, have said to me that they thought the League was no longer relevant in today's world. Obviously these people needed to be apprised of all the many “positions” the League has concerning our world today! Bring up almost any political topic today and the League has done a study, reached consensus, and has a position from which we can and do lobby the appropriate government. If we don't already have a position, chances are that a study is in the works on that topic. Locally we have committees studying Race Relations in Tuscaloosa and our county library. State-wide there is a study underway so that we can update our position on Health Care in Alabama, and nationally a committee is studying the “advisability of using the National Popular Vote Compact among the states as a method of electing the president of the United States”.

The goal of the LWV is to have an informed electorate taking advantage of their right to and assuming their responsibility to

vote. Since we have city elections in Tuscaloosa this August the Voter Service Committee is hard at work organizing two forums for the candidates. They need your help.

Call Betty Simonetti, 556-6945;
Debbie Fisher, 752-2101; or
Shari Augins, 759-4104.

Library Study Committee

Library Study
committee needs
members.

Contact Joan Comas for
information.

Phone: 345-6761

E-mail:

comasj@earthlink.net

MAYOR MADDOX SPEAKS TO LEAGUE LUNCHEON

By Annette Dudgeon and Isabelle Marrero

Tuscaloosa mayor Walt Maddox spoke with to our local League at the June luncheon at the University Club. He used a question and answer format. He explained the Hope Initiative which targets 7 zones in our city that have high crime rates and blight. All city departments and agencies including housing, police, and environmental entities are involved in the effort to reduce crime, improve infrastructure, work on economic development and eliminate blight in these zones. Another important part of this Initiative is faith-based. Churches are joining together across denominational and racial lines to partner with city agencies and services to provide needed help. Surveillance cameras in high crime areas are a part of effort. Cameras are used only in public areas and do not intrude on a person's privacy, he said.

He commented briefly on the overcrowded situation in state prisons suggesting that we once again look at alternatives other than prison for drug offenders.

We discussed the Bryce Hospital situation. The city was not notified in a timely fashion that the Alabama Department of Mental Health was negotiating with the University of Alabama to sell the Bryce Hospital land. Mayor Maddox favors the university buying the land, but he has several concerns.

Provisions must be made for the patients now housed at Bryce. Tuscaloosa is not equipped to handle those patients that need custodial care if the current residents are released and remain in Tuscaloosa. Another concern is the possible loss of jobs (as many as 700) if some of the services are moved to UAB (or elsewhere). Tuscaloosa has served the state well

in caring for our mentally ill. Tuscaloosa deserves to keep the adolescent center and nursing home and the 100's of jobs involved. There is some speculation that mental health services may be privatized. The mayor feels the quality of service to the mentally ill would suffer were this to occur. The best solution for our city is a new state-run Bryce Hospital with expanded space. He recommended we contact our state legislators.

Please write as individuals. Only our spokesperson can make official statements for our League.

He encouraged us to volunteer to serve on a city board or agencies. Appointees, he said, are often those who show interest in an area. Often it is hard to find people to serve. He agreed that diversity on our boards is important.

NEW MEMBER: ISABELLE MARRERO

Here's probably more than you would ever want to know about me.

I'm 71, a native of New Orleans and majored in journalism at Loyola University. I've been married for 51 years have four children and 4 grandchildren. I lived in Huntsville for 48 yrs where my husband worked for NASA. We were very active

during the Civil Rights days and at our church. We taught Health and PE and coached 4 difference sports during 33 years at a Catholic School. We took in foster children from Catholic Social Services for about 12 years. I was a charter Board member of Girls, Inc in Huntsville.

We moved to Tuscaloosa 3 years ago because of illness to be by one of our daughters, Donna. She is an administrator at DCH.

We live in The Oaks, belong to (now defunct) NTNA, member of TNT, LWV, Oaks Homeowners Assn., have lobbied for Sierra Club. I attend city meetings and report on subjects I consider important and email these to mostly District 3 residents (over 100 on list).

Thank You, Thank You

By Susanne Nasir

Our League has functioned well this year because dedicated members have given of their time and energy. At the risk of overlooking someone, I'm going to use this space to say "Thank you" to them. To Kathy Byrd for being our able and faithful Spokesperson, to Pat Goff for outstanding Special Events (the Legislative Forum and the Annual Meeting), to Annette Dudgeon for keeping us informed through emails and for serving a term as Coordinator plus many other tasks to numerous to mention, to Lynne Richardson for another year as our competent treasurer, to Helena Bain and Anna Singer for interesting and challenging luncheon speakers, to Charlotte Gattozzi for doing the telephoning, to Christine Dietsch for being Voter editor for several years, to Debbie Fisher, Betty Simonetti, and Shari Augins for their hard work on the Voter Service Committee, to Kay Ellis who served at secretary, to

Shari Augins and Catherine Davies who each took a turn as a coordinator, to Connie Malone was responsible for the Annual Meeting during her term as coordinator, to Hattie Kaufman and Juanita Watson who both served on the board and shared their expertise on League matters.

LWV-us, not LWVUS, just LWV-us as in we, you and I. LWV-us is the motto of the LWVUS nominating committee who are seeking board members for the national League. I am struck by the simplicity of it, not a long harangue about how we need each member to pull her own weight, how the League cannot continue to function unless each of us is willing to step up and assume our share of the responsibility to keep us active and ongoing organization. Read the list of "Thank You's" again; many of these names appear month after month, some year after year; these members have done a great job, but some of them are ready to retire and let someone else assume some of the responsibility. If no one

else is willing to make the time for League, then LWV in Tuscaloosa will die a slow death. It's fun to come to lunch once a month and hear an interesting speaker; there is more to League than this so remember LWV-us and offer to help.

Currently the Voter Service Committee is looking for help with the forums in August. Contact Debbie Fisher, Betty Simonetti, or Shari Augins if you are willing to help. Their phone numbers are listed in the Coordinator's Column. (If you don't have a membership list with phone numbers and email addresses, Lynne Richardson, 556-4951, will be happy supply you with one.)

NEW MEMBER: RENE KATSINAS

We welcome Rene Katsinas as a new League member. Rene was raised on Long Island. From 1985-87 she taught therapeutic recreation at the University of Alabama.

Her husband, Stephen, taught courses in higher education at UA. They then began what Rene calls a "higher education round-about", teaching and working at various university towns throughout the United States.

We are delighted they are back in Tuscaloosa once again. Rene is Director of Residential Services at Capstone Village. Her husband is the Director of the Educational Policy Center at UA.

They have 2 children: Steven, 24 years old; and Elena, 16 years old.

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

League of Women Voters of Greater Tuscaloosa

The Annual Meeting of the LWV of Greater Tuscaloosa was held April 23, 2009, at Covenant Presbyterian Church with Connie Malone presiding. The minutes of the 2008 meeting were approved; Connie Malone and Charlotte Gattozzi will review the minutes of the 2009 meeting.

Anna Singer presented the Nominating Committee's proposed slate for the coming year; a

list of the complete board is in another article in this Voter.

Juanita Watson presented the report concerning our Local Program, recommending no changes from the past year's Program which included a new study of the Tuscaloosa County Library. The Race Relations study is continuing with Juanita as chairman.

During presentation of the Financial Report, Lynne Richardson noted that LWVUS dues are going up by \$1.20 per member to @29.20., LWVAL dues remain at \$10.00 per member. With the increase at National, we would be left with only \$10.80 per member for local expenses and programs. The Budget Committee proposed in-

creasing our total local dues to @55.00 per individual member and @80.00 per household member. The vote was favorable.

Following a discussion about the budget including a strong proposal conduct a fund drive this year to support Voter Services, the budget was approved.

An amendment to the By-Laws was presented by Kathy Byrd. The vote was favorable to allow the board to be canvassed by phone or email when action is needed between board meetings.

JUDGE HARWOOD SPEAKS AT ANNUAL MEETING

Judge Bernard Harwood discussed the pros and cons of election of judges by political parties at the League of Women Voters of Greater Tuscaloosa annual meeting on April 23rd. He gave a short history of his experiences in running for judicial office.

He was appointed to finish the term of Judge Cochrane in 1991 and subsequently ran for the same seat on the Republican ticket. He ran for a Supreme Court seat in 2000. Judge Harwood explained that running for a state wide judicial office is a daunting and exhausting experience. Twenty-two candidates were running for the 11 appellate positions that year. Such a crowded field made for great confusion. Voters have a diffi-

cult time just determining who is running for what position, let alone making a wise decision on Election Day. Perhaps running by party would help when so many candidates from so many different places are in the races. He made his point by asking us how many Alabama appellate judges we could name.

Money is a problem, but advertising is exorbitantly expensive and it is impossible to become known state-wide without it. Only in theory would non-partisan judicial elections improve the problem of special interest money in judicial campaigns. States with nonpartisan elections have problems with special interest money as well. PACS are used for cover. Twenty-four states elect judges but only 7 states elect judges by party. Twenty-four states use a nominating committee. Judge Harwood tends to favor some sort of a nominating committee system. Tusca-

loosa County uses a nominating committee system to fill mid-term vacancies. When a judicial vacancy occurs in our County, a local committee of attorneys and legislators submits 3 names to the Governor who makes the selection. In some states that use a nominating committee rather than elections where judicial candidates oppose each other, the electorate must vote to retain or excuse the judge after he/she has served a certain period of time.

Judge Harwood declined to run for a second term of the Supreme Court. He explained that being a conscientious Supreme Court justice is often a lonely experience.

VOTER SERVICE SPONSORS CANDIDATE FORUMS

By Debrah Fisher

"We need your help."

Voter Service is sponsoring two Candidate Forums. The first is on Monday, August 10 at the McDonald Hughes Community Center and the second on Monday, August 17 at the Belk Community Center.

Please volunteer for one or both nights, here is a list of positions where we need your help.

Committees: (Before Forum)

- Question Committee – Kathy Byrd Chair: Develop questions for the Candidates
- Set up/Clean up Forum Committee
- Organize the Forum set up, signs, water, microphone, table, chairs,

- Greeters
- Time Keeper
- Clean up
- Get The Word Out Public Relations & Advertising Committee: Go on Talk Shows; Get the word out – posters, flyers, email, contact City schools Social Studies/Government classes and any other good ideas, contact Tuscaloosa News and Radio Stations.

Each LWV member should attend and bring at least 2 friends.

During each Forum August 10 & August 17 we will need people for these positions:

- Greeters
- Voter Registration Table

- Pick up audience questions
- Time Keeper – for August 10 and August 17

Thank you for your involvement in this important Community Service. Our LWV Candidate Forums provide the Voting Public an opportunity to meet and hear what their candidates have to say. Be involved and enjoy our LWV. Betty, Shari and I look forward to working with you!

Contact Debrah Fisher, Voter Service Home- 752-2101 or Cell-292-8801 for more information

NEW MEMBER: FRANCINE MARASCO

Francine Marasco is a new member of League of Women Voters in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. She received her B.A. in History and Spanish from Marquette University and M.A. in Spanish Languages and Literature from National Autonomous University of Mexico. She earned an Ed. S. Specialist in Education Administration and Ph.D. in Administration and Higher Education both from the University

of Alabama.

For more 20 years, Dr. Marasco worked in administration and teaching in higher education in Mexico, California and Alabama. Francine is a businesswoman and currently is president of Salon Studios, Inc. Francine is active in OLLI at The University of Alabama and serves as the Curriculum Chair and VP of Curriculum. She served as President of

the board of directors for Pav-Mar, Inc. for ten years and for many years on the Board of Directors of Turning Point, Prevention of Domestic Violence.

Her love of her family takes her to Knoxville, TN frequently since her three children and their spouses and her five grandchildren reside there. Her hobbies include boating, swimming, travel and collecting art.

LWVAL Convention and LWVUS Council

By Kathy Byrd

The Tuscaloosa League has been well represented a two con-claves-the state convention and the national council. The League of Women Voters of Alabama met the first weekend in May at the Highlands Conference Center adjacent to the Highland Hotel in Birmingham, Kathy Byrd, Hattie Kaufman, and Juanita Watson represented the LWVGT. Mary Lynn Bates, outgoing state president, presided ably and we were joined by the LWVUS 1st Vice President, Elizabeth MacNamara, who is so knowledgeable. Some bylaws changes were addressed, dealing primarily with: the mechanics of special meetings, determining a quorum, the number of elected directors increased to six beginning with the 2011 election, nominating committee reports, election, state program and finally amendments. Specifics can be found on the LWVAL website.

In the discussion of the program, the LWVAL voted to revise the current health care position, placing an emphasis on "basic health care services," "access to basic

health care as a universal right" and wording else where that emphasized eligibility, "affordability" and "access" and promotion of healthy lifestyles and wellness programs. The final wording is on the LWVAL website.

We also adopted a new position on Coastal Zone Management to concur with that of the Baldwin County and Mobile Leagues resulting from greater in depth study. We have already used this new position in testimony at the state level at the Alabama Department of Environmental Management's triennial review. We also voted to adopt the Initiative and Reform insert to our current constitutional reform position. Based on a study done in the past year. Finally, we voted to conduct anew health care study with emphasis on cost, access, quality and equity of care.

The LWVUS is in dire financial straits and therefore decided to hold a virtual council in June. Many local leagues would have found it difficult to send delegates so this was a help to them. Kathy Byrd, Scarlett Gaddy

and Susanne Nasir met in Kathy's dining room and watched the proceedings projected on a screen via a laptop computer. Most of the time it went well. This meeting basically took care of "housekeeping" and budget details. An opportunity to discuss the budget and final report was available early in the week for those interested so most of the proceedings went very smoothly. No new program items were added; that will happen next year. One sad note is that the LWVUS "Voter" has been suspended this year for financial reasons, and the national League is tightening its belt in other ways as well. It is amazing that the national league council could be completed in three hours since similar councils took a couple of days in person. The chance to attend caucuses and network with other leagues was sorely missed, but I would be surprised if LWVUS goes back to live face-to-face council any time soon.





"Dedicated to making Democracy work."

Denise Downs
1036 Brandywine Road
Tuscaloosa, AL 35406

Welcome to the 2009-2010 BOARD

- Spokesperson: Kathy Byrd
Membership Chair*:
Secretary: Denise Downs
Treasurer - Lynne Richardson
Directors - elected 2008: Hattie Kaufman, Betty Simonetti, Juanita Watson, Shari Augins, Helena Bain, Annette Dudgeon
Appointed: Susanne Nasir, Connie Malone, Juanita Watson, Joan Comas, Anna Singer, Anne Bell
Nominating Committee: Starts in January, need 5 people.
Off Board: Linda Albritton, Charlotte Gattozzi