



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GREATER TUSCALOOSA

## VOTER

### July-September 2004

#### **LWVGT**

**(205) 556-9299**

*on the web at*

**www.lwval.org**

*just click 'Tuscaloosa'*

*on the navigation bar*

#### **Board of Directors 2004-2005**

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Annette Dudgeon, 5/04-7/04

Toby Whitman 8/04-10/04

Hattie Kaufman, 11/04-1/05

Anna Jacobs Singer, 2/05-4/05

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Annette Dudgeon

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Anna Jacobs Singer

#### **A Note from Annette**

We are well into summer but lots has happened since our last newsletter. As you can see, we have a new Board of Directors, and we all welcome your comments and suggestions. Please feel free to contact us using the new member directory (the one with the yellow cover). If you don't have a new directory yet, ask for one at the next luncheon or email me. Also, be sure to check your information in the directory and let Katie Ferguson (kateferg@bellsouth.net) know about any changes if you haven't already done so. In a few weeks we will issue a list of corrections for the directory.

We would like to thank Ruth Fields and Jill Hicks for serving on our Board last year. Ruth will continue to help with membership and Jill will help publicize the luncheons. It is with regret that we accept Susie Luquire's resignation from our Board. She did an absolutely wonderful job with the after-work unit last year.

Our Board will be preparing the yearly calendar at our upcoming Orientation on July 24. If you have any particular requests or concerns, please let me know (jdudgeon11@aol.com). The Voter Service, Constitutional Reform, Education, Observer Corps, Membership and Alabama Legislative Study committees all need help. Please let the chairs know of your special interest.

Those of you who were not at the annual meeting in May missed a good time. Lenora Pate spoke; her remarks are summarized later in this issue. Thanks go to Fran Snyder for chairing the effort and to all the others who rushed about to be sure we had something to drink!

At the business meeting, we voted to raise dues next year. Individual dues will be \$50. As you may recall, we have also reorganized our board. We *continued on p. 2*

no longer have a president. If you need a public spokesperson for the League or if your concern involves something "external", contact Hattie. If your concern is about anything else, contact the appropriate chair or the current coordinator. The coordinators will serve as internal managers and supervisors for 3 month periods.

In May, our League hosted the Alabama State Council at the Ferguson Center. At the business meeting, we learned that the Alabama *Voter* will soon be available on the League of Women Voters of Alabama website ([www.lwval.org](http://www.lwval.org)). To save money, only those people requesting it will receive a *Voter* through the mail. Thank you Celeste, Hattie, Marcia, Toby, Hattie, Jeanette, Susanne, Martha and Ruth for your participation in State Council. Some of the workshops are described later.

We have distributed our new Political Directory about town, but still have a few copies left. If you can think of a good place for them, please let me know. It is also available on our website. Go to [www.lwval.org](http://www.lwval.org) and then click on the 'publications' link in the Tuscaloosa pages.

Through the Education Fund, the LWVAL has published a very nice pamphlet explaining the organization of the Alabama Court system with their corresponding responsibilities. It is very helpful and since there will be many judicial elections next fall, we need to distribute this pamphlet to the public. We have many copies. I will be asking you to take some...

On the personal side... Ella Prewitt's son has had a kidney transplant. He is with Ella at the moment and recovering well. Betty Simonetti continues to recover from her accident. Both Jeanette's and Katie's gardens were included on the latest city-wide tour. Frances and Madeleine are back from China, but Anna is back in Montenegro. How we do get about ...

If you get a chance, please thank Covenant Presbyterian Church and the United Way for allowing us to use their facilities. What would we do without them?

We will continue to meet on the first Tuesday of July and August at the University Club. Our league members travel and then travel some more, but if you are in town, please join us. It has been a long time since we have taken a local consensus and I look forward to our discussions on the local education issue. Nothing is more important to the future of our community than our schools.

## CALENDAR

through July 20th  
*Qualifying Period for  
Northport City Elections*

Tuesday, July 6th, 12:00  
University Club  
*Luncheon:  
Education Consensus  
Discussion*

Saturday, July 24, 10:00  
Hattie Kaufman's home  
*Board Orientation,  
Meeting & Luncheon*

TBA (August)  
*Forum for  
Northport City Elections*  
(**please** contact Debrah Fisher  
to assist with this event)

Sunday, August 1  
*Toby Whitman  
replaces Annette Dudgeon  
as quarterly coordinator*

Tuesday, August 3, 12:00  
University Club  
*Luncheon:  
Final Discussion on  
Education Consensus*

Tuesday, August 24  
Northport Municipal Elections

Tuesday, August 24, 5:00  
United Way Offices  
*Board Meeting*

Tuesday, September 7, 12:00  
University Club  
*Luncheon:  
speaker TBA*

Tuesday, September 28, 5:00  
United Way  
*Board Meeting*

Peace,  
Annette, Quarterly Coordinator

## **BOARD ORIENTATION ALL MEMBERS WELCOME!**

On Saturday July 24, our new Board will meet at Hattie Kaufman's for an orientation. We will begin at 10:00 AM and stay most of the day. If you want to be in on League planning, please join us. We would be thrilled!

For directions to Hattie's, please email Annette at [jdudgeon11@aol.com](mailto:jdudgeon11@aol.com) or call 758-4604.

## **LWVGT DUES INCREASE**

As Annette mentioned, at our annual meeting in May LWVGT voted to increase our membership dues. Individual dues through August 31, 2005 are now \$50.00, while household dues are \$75.00.

While most of our dues are passed on to LWV at the state and national levels, this modest increase will remain with us locally, empowering us to be a more effective organization in the greater Tuscaloosa area.

## **AFTER-WORK UNIT WILL NOT MEET THIS SUMMER**

The after-work unit, which meets on the 3rd Thursday of each month throughout the school year, will not be meeting this summer.

We urge those who attended the after-work unit to come to the luncheons. Some of our members of this unit are teachers who cannot come to a luncheon unit during the school year, but we hope they can join us this summer especially since we will be taking consensus on local education funding. Teachers will have much to contribute to our discussion.

We hope to reorganize in the fall.

## **ANOTHER NEW MEMBER!**

Joan Lawson is a first time League member. She is a life-long Tuscaloosa resident and a certified public accountant with Tidwell DeWitt LLC.

Please make Joan feel welcome!

## **STATE COUNCIL MEETS IN TUSCALOOSA**

The LWVAL State Council met in Tuscaloosa on May 15. Besides give the statewide organization the chance to review and revise its program and budget, it also offered us the chance to mix and mingle with Leaguers from other Alabama communities. Several workshops also took place, including on the subjects of membership and community dialogue.

**The workshop on membership was very helpful.** We received a notebook of materials and suggestions that will be very useful in the future. We learned that some Leagues have application forms on their websites. Others prepare new member packets that include League ABC's, League vocabulary and terms, and positions. Mentoring and pairing new members with a veteran members also work.

Scarlett Gaddy and Starr Bloom presented **a workshop on Deliberative Community Dialogue.** Our League is familiar with this method since Starr once worked with us on a dialogue about education. The League of Women Voters of the United States is interested in this format as a way for getting more people involved in politics. Scarlett and Starr emphasized the basic principles of this form of dialogue:

- framing the issue so that all stakeholders understand the discussion
- making sure that all the stakeholders are represented
- brainstorming about all possible solutions
- trying to find common ground

This method creates a comfortable atmosphere that allows people who have never been involved in community or public affairs begin to feel more comfortable and important. Community Dialogue is a wonderful way to fight apathy.

## **EDUCATION CONSENSUS**

### **LOCAL STUDY ON EDUCATION – ADEQUATE FINANCING FOR TOTAL NEEDS**

Mary Rogers, Kathy Byrd, Susie Luquire, Lynne Richardson and Annette Dudgeon have been preparing materials and questions for our consensus on local education. We have heard from both Tuscaloosa City and Tuscaloosa County officials about how their systems are financed.

During the July and August luncheons, we will discuss the answers to the consensus questions. The committee will use the comments to write our position statement. Then we can lobby more effectively for adequate funding and wise expenditure of funds at the Board of Education meetings or through letters, etc.

If you cannot attend the meetings in July or August, and would like to send comments on the questions, feel free to do so. Send comments to Annette Dudgeon at [jdudgeon11@aol.com](mailto:jdudgeon11@aol.com). The consensus questions we will discuss are below. We will have some handouts at the meetings. Should this reach you before our July meeting, please bring the questions with you. It will save us some printing costs.

### **CONSENSUS QUESTIONS**

1. What should the citizens, governing bodies and school boards of Tuscaloosa and Tuscaloosa County do to provide more money for their schools? (None of these options require amending the Alabama Constitution.)

- a. fundraising at individual schools
- b. fees for classes
- c. additional sales tax
- d. raises in costs of business licenses etc.
- e. lodging tax
- f. grants

2. Should the Tuscaloosa City or County schools find themselves short of money, what criteria should be considered when forced to make spending cuts? Which of the following are important to that criteria? Which are most important? (These options all involve discretionary money.)

- a. access to programs
- b. extracurricular activities (athletics, band)
- c. class size
- d. Advanced Placement or IB classes
- e. elective classes
- f. school maintenance
- g. central office personnel  
    number  
    salary

3. Should the Tuscaloosa City and County school systems continue to explore ways to cooperate to improve efficiency and hold down spending? What new cooperative efforts might be possible?

4. Because counties in Alabama have no taxing authority, The Tuscaloosa City Council has more constitutional authority to raise revenues than the Tuscaloosa County Commission has. If the City Council takes additional steps to raise revenue for schools, should some of that money go to the County School system? Why or why not?

5. What can be done to convince the voting public that Tuscaloosa City and County schools are responsible stewards of their money?

## **A STUDY OF THE ALABAMA LEGISLATURE**

Jeanette VanderMeer

This LWV of Alabama Program is a 3-part study of the Alabama Legislature to examine its effectiveness in dealing with statewide issues and its openness and responsiveness to all Alabamians. The three study areas (with members in parentheses) are:

1. The Legislature's management of the budget process. (Anne Permaloff & Gunnie Bennett)
2. How the structure and functioning of the two houses affect the Legislature's ability to address the needs of the state. (House – Martha Rogers & Jeanette VanderMeer; Senate – Beth Kellum, Judith Hand, Yvonne Koslowsky and Ruth Wright)
3. Legislative practices that affect the Legislature's openness and responsiveness to all Alabamians. (Jane Nichols, Anne Shumaker, & Carolyn Tamblyn)

For the House portion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> area of the study, Martha and I have chosen four topics to pursue. These topics are:

1. The role of party affiliation and the functioning of party caucuses.
2. The committee system:
  - a. How legislators are assigned.
  - b. How bills are assigned to committees.
  - c. The role of the Rules

Committee.

- d. The power of the Committee chairs.
3. How local legislation is handled.
4. Specific practices:
  - a. Playing baseball
  - b. No limitation on time a bill can sit after being sent to the other House.

### study timeline

Summer 2004: Study committee members collect and evaluate information Consensus questions and study materials developed for local Leagues.

Mid-October 2004: Study packet to Local Leagues

Mid-October - January 2005: Local Leagues use study materials for programs and discussions preparing to formulate consensus by February 1<sup>st</sup>.

LWVAL Convention 2005: Positions established.

## **HELP AMERICA VOTE**

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) was signed into law by President Bush on October 25, 2002. HAVA is the most important piece of legislation to do with voting since the Voting Rights Act of 1965. It seeks to increase voter confidence in the election process and make voting more accessible to all.

Call Debbie Fisher 752-2101 or Betty Simonetti 556-6945 for further information.

**LENORA PATE  
ADDRESSES ANNUAL MEETING**

Lenora Pate spoke at our annual meeting. She continues to believe that our out-dated constitution is the root of Alabama's problems. She outlined the various commissions that have worked on constitutional reform. She has served on several of those commissions, including Riley's latest commission that concentrated on several areas: recompilation, limited home rule, earmarking reform, and accountability. The Legislature did pass a bill to remove the Jim Crow language and that amendment will be on the ballot in November. The constitution is in the process of being recompiled but that does nothing but reorganize, it does not address the tax or home rule problems.

In Ms. Pate's opinion, it may have

been wise for Governor Riley to call a special session in December to deal solely with accountability issues. Also, he should have asked the various commissions to work more closely with the legislators immediately after the September defeat of Amendment 1.

She believes that there is a major disconnect between government and people in this state. We have not completely come out from under the cloud of our racial past. And sadly, it is hard to find a universal commitment to public education here.

She is not without hope, however. We don't need more commissions; we need to educate the public on the need for reform. Last years successes in raising awareness about the deficiencies of our current constitution should give us hope and keep us going.

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OF GREATER TUSCALOOSA  
4314 WOODLAND FOREST DRIVE  
TUSCALOOSA, AL 35405**