

**SEPTEMBER 2009**

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**Calendar**

**September**

- Sept. 1.....\*Luncheon Meeting, Noon at Univ. Club, Dr. R Bentley
- Sept. 22.....\*Board meeting United Way Bldg. Downtown 5 pm. ALL WELCOME
- Sept. 29th....\*5th Tuesday Meeting at 5:30 pm, Juanita Watson's home

**October**

- Oct. 6th.....\*Luncheon Meeting, Noon at Univ. Club, Hardy McCollum
- Oct. 27.....\*Board Meeting United Way Bldg. Downtown 5 pm

**November**

- Nov. 3.....\*Luncheon Meeting, Noon at Univ. Club, Nancy Pack, Library
- Nov. 24.....\*Board meeting, United Way Bldg. Downtown 5 pm

## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS EDUCATION FUND

*By Hattie Kaufman*

As we all know, LWV is an organization with a purpose—in fact, it is an organization with more than one purpose. Although LWV is fiercely non-partisan, part of League’s mission is to advocate and lobby on behalf of political issues on which we have adopted a position. The other, equally important, facet of our mission is to encourage voters to become informed about candidates and issues and to exercise the right to vote.

The League of Women Voters’ Education Fund (LWVEF) is a separately incorporated entity that was created specifically to support this latter purpose. LWVEF cannot fund lobbying activities, nor can it fund services directly to League, such as membership drives or membership meetings. What LWVEF does fund are League outreach activities, such as producing voter information materials, conducting voter forums

DUES <i>Due Now</i>	
Full Member	\$55
Full Member and Household Member /Spouse	\$80
Student Member	\$27.50
<p>Send Checks to: Lynne Richardson 6029 73rd Place East, Cottondale, AL 35453</p>	

and hosting meet-the-legislators events. Because LWV insists that an educated electorate is essential to the democratic process, these outreach activities aimed at voter education are vitally important, but they are also expensive.

Over the past few years, LWVGT’s wildly successful programs in this area have used up the bulk of the funds in the LWVEF account dedicated to our League. If we are to continue our voter education efforts, we need to replenish these

funds now! Ed Fund monies contributed by our members are earmarked only for the use of our League, right here in Tuscaloosa. This is the time to show your support of our programs and activities. Please send your check, payable to LWVEF, to Lynn Richardson, at 6029-73rd Place East, Cottondale, Al. 35453.

Because LWVEF does not fund the League’s lobbying and advocacy activities, all donations to LWVEF are fully tax deductible.



## WHAT'S NEW WITH ACCR?

By Kathryn Byrd

Every year, citizens of Alabama who dream of a fair and progressive Alabama State Constitution have to give themselves a pep talk. This year, the pep talk goes something like this: Well, we got farther in the legislature last year than before, and, after all, the whole legislative session was a disaster on many fronts.

There have been some positive developments. The Alabama Citizens for Constitutional Reform (ACCR) sponsored a mock constitutional con-

vention, beginning in February. Representatives from every legislative district helped write the document, which was unveiled on August 31<sup>st</sup> in Huntsville, just before the Third Annual Bailey Thomson Memorial Luncheon. This event, which was aired statewide on Alabama Public Television, honored Bailey Thomson, husband of our member Kristi Thomson. He was also was a talented journalist, professor, and founder of a certain grassroots organization called the Alabama Citizens for Constitutional Reform. Although Bailey

died before his dream was realized, the impact of his efforts continues. My husband Gene and I attended the Bailey Thomson luncheon, and we were both impressed with the diverse and powerful group of individuals in the room...business, civic, and education leaders and members of both the Democratic and Republican Parties. So what is in store? Certainly the LWVGT, as well as the State League, will be pushing for constitutional reform. Won't you do your part?



## COORDINATOR'S COLUMN

By Connie Malone

The League has been very busy this summer. We had a great forum in August, one of our most successful, with a large crowd attending. Thanks to Debra Fisher and all those who helped make it such a success at about the same time school started back. We are going to start working soon on our two local studies, race relations and library. We are fortunate to have Scarlett Gaddy helping us with membership, and she is helping us get a Facebook page going, too. Scarlett is also on the State board, as are Kathy Byrd and Hattie Kaufman. We're proud our local league and especially of them! Our 5th Tuesday this month, on the 29th, is especially for new members. We'll be socializing as usual, but will also talk a little about the League, what it stands for, and what some of our goals are. Don't forget to pay your dues. This is very important to the operation of the League!! Looking forward to a great fall!

## INSIDE STORY ON CONNIE MALONE

I was born in Wheeling, W.V. and moved to Tuscaloosa when I was in the 4th grade. I went to the Tuscaloosa City Schools except for my senior year, when I went to and graduated from

the Florida State University School. (My father was on sabbatical there). I attended the University of Alabama and received a B.S. degree in Geology. I'm married to Philip Malone (33 years), have 3 children and 8

grandchildren. I have worked as an environmentalist and most recently worked in picture framing. Now I'm retired and help out with the grandkids as much as possible!

*"Connie became involved in League due to her mother Charlotte Gattozzi, a long-time League member. Connie is our current coordinator and special events chair."*

## LUNCH WITH DR. ROBERT BENTLEY

By Isabelle Marrero

Dr. Robert Bentley, District 63 Alabama State Representative, spoke at the League of Women Voters monthly luncheon meeting this week. His main topics were two problems facing Alabama - education and health care. Bentley stated that even with 10.2% unemployment, the state is ahead of the curve at this time. Education is funded 54% by income tax and 26% by sales tax and because both are down, the education budget is down two million dollars. But we have avoided higher proration because of the enactment, 15 years ago, of the Education Trust Fund Rolling Reserve Budget Act, which provides sustainable funding growth, eliminates high proration, creates a reserve of funds and reduces financial uncertainty. He predicts that within two years there will have to be huge budget cuts locally and nationally as the country is now 11 trillion dollars in debt.

Another way to cut debt is in health care for state employees and teachers. The best way to accomplish this, according to Bentley, is with health savings accounts, similar to IRA's, which can save 100 million dollars. "There are people in the state education budget who should not be there," he said. This should be corrected by putting the money into the people's hands and allow them to decide what they want in health care. By giving education budget money to local systems much can be saved, such as delaying on the purchase of text books and the automatic ordering of new school busses every 10 years. The state should also look into on-line text books. The Alabama Education Association is opposed to these methods now, but will have to sign on eventually, according to Bentley.

In health care, the House Bill 3200, the America's Affordable Health Choices Act, states that everyone must have health insurance. Insurance exchanges by which people would get subsidies to lower the cost of mandatory insurance, increase eligibility for Medicaid and alter Medicare and Medicaid programs are some ways to accomplish this. If you are not insured, you must pay a 2.5% penalty, and a company earning over \$500,000 must furnish insurance for all employees. There may be competition between private insurers and the government. The public option would be based on Medicare payments and so would not put private insurance companies out of business.

The basic national goal is a single payer bill, which Bentley is personally opposed to because by 2011 there will be 16 million people still uninsured. The best method, he said, "is to improve Medicare, which now pays only 91% of what it costs hospitals. Medicare must pay the same as private insurance companies do. We must also improve Medicaid by giving Alabama block grants to change patients from an entitlement program to an ownership program. Right now, even though Medicaid is free, only five of every ten people show up for treatment under Medicaid, which is why we must get people off entitlement.

During the question and answer segment, it was noted that there is an Alabama county with NO DOCTORS AT ALL. Bentley said tort reform must be redesigned as it was not addressed in legislation. Physicians practice defensive medicine and order unnecessary tests which add to the rising cost of care. "We can no longer let lawyers hijack

medicine". Some doctors must now pay \$60,000 to \$80,000 a years for malpractice coverage. We must pay doctors a decent salary to get them to practice in rural counties.

One manner in which this could be accomplished is to set aside 25% of the seats in Medical School for primary care physicians, award them full scholarships in return for four years of service in rural counties. In 2012, a school of osteopathic at Troy University will graduate 150 students. After that, 100 students a year will graduate, all for rural counties.

In Alabama, Blue Cross can no longer be allowed to suppress other insurance companies. Tax incentives should be offered to other companies to come into Alabama, and forming Health Savings Accounts would give Blue Cross some competition. Rationing of care in the future may be aimed at the 15 to 45 year old age group. Computerizing medical care must be instigated. **THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION HAS ENDORSED THE HEALTH CARE REFORM PROPOSAL EVEN THOUGH IT ONLY REPRESENTS 15% OF ALL DOCTORS.** Hospitals are negotiating to bill patients much smaller costs - some money is better than none at all, but there are 13 million illegal immigrants receiving medical care for free. Bentley also said that Canada should not be advertising pharmaceuticals for less. **NO ONE** should be advertising pharmaceuticals for less.

On another topic, the Representative stated that in his opinion constitutional reform will not happen in our lifetime because people do not trust the lobbies having a

(Continued on page 7)



## LIBRARY STUDY COMMITTEE

By Joan Comas

The LWVGT's Library Study Committee is working to update previous position statements on the Tuscaloosa Public Library (TPL). Members of the committee are

Kathy Byrd,  
Celeste Burnum,  
Joan Comas,  
Annette Dudgeon,  
Madeleine Hill, BeBee McKinley,



and Willita Zoellner. To date, the committee has discussed its specific objectives and means of gathering information, and it has reviewed previous studies and related documents. Dr. Nancy Pack, TPL Librarian, will meet with the committee on September 24 to provide current information and answer questions. Thereafter, the committee members will conduct additional interviews, tour facilities,

and exam relevant documents. Dr. Pack will speak to the League at our November meeting. Please visit the website of the library ([www.tuscaloosa-library.org](http://www.tuscaloosa-library.org)) in preparation for her presentation. The site provides an excellent overview of the programs and services of the library. We think you will be surprised and pleased to see the many offerings of the TPL.



## APPLY FOR "ED FUND" MONEY

By Ginnie Bennett, LWV AL-EF Treasurer

There are probably projects you do for which your league could use money from our local Ed Fund account. To do so you need to submit an application explaining the project, a budget for it, when the funds will be

needed and how much you want to withdraw.

This application must be received and approved ahead of the project and should be sent for approval to: [Sarah McDonald, 3357 Cherokee Rd., Birmingham, AL 35223.](mailto:Sarah.McDonald@3357CherokeeRd.Birmingham.AL.35223)

She will send the approved application to me so I can send you a check. A final accounting for your project should be sent to me after completion with any left over funds.



## CANDIDATE FORUM

by Shari Augins

On Monday, August 17<sup>th</sup>, the League held a very successful candidate forum at the Belk Center. The candidates for Tuscaloosa City Council and Tuscaloosa City Board of Education who had opposition were given an opportunity to present

their views and answer questions from the audience. Although it was a very rainy night, the room was crowded with over 140 citizens for each session who came to listen and question the candidates.

Hattie Kaufman did a great job again as

moderator. Debrah Fisher coordinated the event with the help of several other members. We were also pleased to see so many League members there. Attendance at League events is a very important way to support our efforts.

# AUGUST LUNCH FEATURES HERNDON

*By Isabelle Marrero*

The August meeting of the League of Women Voters featured Northport Mayor Bobby Herndon, who gave a genial, but very fact-filled report on the year old city government. Herndon presented himself as "a lowly land surveyor" who is dead set on improving his city's government. His plans include a "change in attitude" with a business-like approach to Planning, including a focus on

recycling (at present this involves the Mayor in his truck going through a neighborhood and picking up whatever homeowners have put out on the curb), street maintenance and improvement, as well as Riverfront development.

He said that Northport has never had a bond rating, and that the City has now applied for a rating that is "awesome". When he and the City Council took office, the

City was \$1.1 million dollars in the hole. They immediately slashed the budget and are working with a 5 year budget plan. They have had to slow expenses and some projects due to the current economic times. Sales taxes are down. He is working with Tuscaloosa Mayor Maddox on several ventures. On the Northport Riverfront tests have determined that there are no architectural

sites to hinder development and that the soil contains no barriers to opening up the area. Many projects are planned, including a new movie theater, a motel and others.

The City's government is working on applying for grants for public transportation, there is a library scheduled, and a Master Plan for the Riverfront has already won an award. The Northport water system pays the second lowest rates of the 13 systems and those rates will have to increase. He told the group if there was anyone who wants to apply for a spot on any government Commission that all they need to do is send in a resume to the Commission of interest. A question was asked about parks in Northport and Herndon replied that they will certainly plan for green space areas.



## STUDY OF RACE RELATIONS

*By Juanita Watson*

As authorized by the Annual Meeting in 2008 we are conducting a review of the position of the local League on Race Relations in Tuscaloosa City and

County. We are interested in any areas of concern in situation that members may have. Also we are interested in any questions that members may have. Please contact Dena Strong or Juanita Watson (205 759-1440).

## MEMBER: BARBARA RICKARD

Barbara Rickard was born in Maryville, Tennessee. She graduated from the University of Tennessee with a BS in Foods and Institutional Management. Barbara worked for the State of

Tennessee as an East Tennessee School Lunch Supervisor. Her family moved to Tuscaloosa in 1961 when husband Charlie Rickard was hired by the University of Alabama Psychology Department.

She has 4 children and 10 grandchildren. The interests she enjoys are Genealogy and sewing.



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[http://www.lwval.org/Voter/Voter\\_LWVAL\\_Summer\\_09/Voter\\_LWVAL\\_summer\\_09.html](http://www.lwval.org/Voter/Voter_LWVAL_Summer_09/Voter_LWVAL_summer_09.html)

# LWVGT IN 2009-2010: SUCCESSSES AND CHALLENGES

by Kathryn Byrd, LWVGT Spokesperson

My involvement with the League of Women Voters of Greater Tuscaloosa is a source of great pride and satisfaction. But there are also challenges that continue to face us, and that need for us to step back, take a good look, and try some innovative approaches.

We have been busy since our Annual Meeting in April. The new board held a board orientation in June, setting the new calendar and determining objectives for the year. It was definitely a productive session, but, alas, not as well attended as we had hoped. League members tend to be very busy. We discussed big projects: holding a forum for the Tuscaloosa City Council and Tuscaloosa City Board of Education elections (now accomplished!) and whether we can repeat our great success with our “Meet Your Legislators Night” held the past two years. Two major concerns were the fact that the same members keep being recycled to take on key responsibilities, and we need to attract and retain more members,

especially younger members.

The candidate forums were an overwhelming success... thanks to talent and teamwork. Hattie Kaufman’s skill as our moderator kept the pace going well as questions were posed to the candidates. Debrah Fisher provided her expertise covering about 25 years of forums. (Wow!!) Connie Malone did a great job setting up. Frances Tucker arranged for an amazing publicity campaign. As a result, I spoke for 15 minutes on the “Town Hall” on the website of the [Tuscaloosa News](#) with Tommy Stevenson, talking about the forum in particular and the League in general. We received more excellent coverage in the paper, as well as having two radio interviews, two television interviews, and even a Letter to the Editor. We held the event at the Belk Center in Bowers Park—the room was packed.

As previously mentioned, we are trying some new approaches to reach our members and the public. Scarlett Gaddy (who is probably the busiest yet most efficient person I know)

agreed to be our Membership Chair, introducing us (and the LWVAL as well) to “Facebook.” We have our own page—please check it out, and her article elsewhere in this [Voter](#).

At this point, the LWVGT is trying to decide how to handle the “Meet Your Legislators Night” this year. By law, the Alabama Legislature must convene on January 12, 2010. The past two events have been in late January, because the legislature convened in February. School and the University do not open in time for us to hold a forum prior to January 12<sup>th</sup>, so we are exploring other options. For example, we have been advised that the legislators generally do not drive to Montgomery until Tuesday, so maybe we could sponsor a forum on a Monday night early in the legislative session. The venue is another issue. Lovely as the auditorium at Central High School has been, it is really too large to make it appear that we have many people in the audience, even when we have had about 110 or so. Also, the cost has become prohibitive—paying for

\$1 million dollar special event liability insurance costs about \$400. Rent and fees to the school are at least \$260 *if* we get our \$240 deposit back. On the other hand, we are anxious to reach the student population, and having it at Central High School has resulted in our having many students in our audience. Stay tuned to see what happens.

Finally, we have been lucky to have many new members join the LWVGT. We want to make them feel special and “part of the family,” so we are extending them a special invitation to attend our Fifth Tuesday Social at Juanita Watson’s on September 29<sup>th</sup>. Of course, we want to see our current (or even past) members as well at the Social. We meet after 5PM, with plenty of wine and food to eat. Members are encouraged to bring a dish or some wine, but it is not required.

This promises to be a busy year—and 2010 is going to be even more exciting with all the state and Congressional elections coming up. I look forward to seeing you then.

# THANK YOU, THANK YOU

by Debrab Fisher

Wonderful forum from start to finish.

We had a great public and LWVGT member turn out.

Hattie did a fantastic job of Moderator. Kept it on time with a friendly tone, GREAT!

Kathy is the BEST. Kathy worked hard on the questions and was a great spokesperson.

Thanks Shari for filling in for Kathy as a spokesperson and for being such a good time keeper.

Frances, good job getting the word out!! Thanks for arranging the

talk shows for Kathy.

Tuscaloosa News covered LWVGT well. Thanks to our LWVGT members who put out our Forum flyers.

Connie, you did a really good job of having the Belk Center set up and the candidate tables ready. Thanks for that cooler full of water and locating the LWVGT signs.

Juanita and Kathy kept the questions prepared and ready for Hattie. Thanks Kathy and Juanita for contacting all the candidates about the date, time and location.

We are a GREAT TEAM!

There were many League members that contributed their time and energy at the Forum; greeting the public, handing out index cards and pencils, picking up the public's questions and walking them to the question table and then to Hattie, and handling the good problem of moving in additional chairs for our large crowd.

Thank you weather for cooperating! We had around 140 people at one point... Really good turn out. THANK YOU

## LEGISLATIVE NIGHT

By Connie Malone

In 2010, the legislative session is going to start in January, not long after New Years Day. This only happens every 4 years. The session also begins within a few days of school starting back. Since we would love to have our students involved, the timing will be a little bit of a problem. We are considering having Legislative Night at a later date than we would normally (early or mid-session maybe) in order to accommodate more participants. TBA.

## Dr. Bentley

(Continued from page 3)

voice in it. Gambling to add money to needy coffers and raising taxes will not happen either. He voted against the Sunday sale of alcohol because in cities it is illegal. It should be voted on by counties, not cities. He closed by saying that part of the State legislative log jam is in the State Senate, where members do not seem to be able to agree on anything, while the House works well together.

F.Y.I.

SEPTEMBER 29TH—5TH TUESDAY

DON'T FORGET!

Directions to **Juanita Watson's** house: 1026 Meadow Lane North  
Tuscaloosa, Alabama  
205 759-1440

From Tuscaloosa:

1. Take McFarland Blvd. North and Cross the river.
2. After crossing the river you will turn left at the fourth traffic light (Watermelon Road.) There is a WinnDixie on the right and a Shell station on the left.
3. After you turn left on Watermelon Road, you will turn left again onto High Forest Drive.
4. You will be turning into High Forest Subdivision. There is a large stone and brick sign.
5. Go to the end of High Forest Drive and turn left onto Overlook Road.
6. Go to the next corner and turn right (the only way you can turn) onto Pinemont Drive
7. Go to the next corner and turn left (the only way you can turn) onto Meadow Lane Drive
8. House is the second house on the right not counting the one on corner that that does fully face Meadow Lane.

From Northport:

1. Take McFarland Blvd. south going toward Tuscaloosa.
2. At the corner of Watermelon Road and McFarland Blvd., turn right.
3. Follow above directions which means making a left immediately after the right turn on Watermelon Road.



League of Women Voters  
Of Greater Tuscaloosa

"Dedicated to making Democracy work."

Denise Downs  
1036 Brandywine Road  
Tuscaloosa, AL 35406

## LWVGT HAS JOINED FACEBOOK

*by Scarlett Gaddy, LWV-AL and LWVGT Membership Chair*

Two of our greatest challenges are membership development and maintenance of our League. If we are to grow and flourish as a League we have to continuously reach out to potential members. This means we must transition along with technological change. Baby boomers and younger men and women are utilizing social networks like Facebook daily to keep abreast of their friends, social and professional groups, and causes. To reach these potential members and to keep our current members updated on League information we have created a Facebook discussion group. To utilize this tool you much

join Facebook, but this is easily accomplished. Go to <http://www.facebook.com> and follow the directions to set up your page. Once there you may go to our page <http://www.facebook.com/home.php#/group.php?gid=145590686531&ref=ts> and click to join the group. If you prefer, once you have a page you can contact me by email and I will send you an invitation to join the group. While you are there you should join the pages of Greater Birmingham and Mobile. They also have Facebook pages. This can be a great tool to reach potential members. The LWVAL Facebook

page already has over a dozen non-League fans that are now receiving updates from League! The address of the LWVAL page is <http://www.facebook.com/home.php#/pages/League-of-Women-Voters-of-Alabama/119494879019?ref=ts>. You do not have to be a member of Facebook to become a fan of LWVAL on Facebook. It is a slightly different type of Facebook account. If you have any questions about setting up a Facebook page, email ([sbgaddy@yahoo.com](mailto:sbgaddy@yahoo.com)) or phone Scarlett Gaddy (205 556-3394.)