



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GREATER TUSCALOOSA

## VOTER

### Winter 2005

#### **LWVGT**

**(205) 556-9299**

*on the web at*

**www.lwval.org**

*just click 'Tuscaloosa'*

*on the navigation bar*

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Toby Whitman 8/04-10/04

Hattie Kaufman, 11/04-1/05

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#### **A Note from Hattie**

As we come to the end of another year, we can take great pride in what we have accomplished in our very productive fall.

Our candidate forums in August (Northport City Council) and October (Tuscaloosa County Commission) were well attended and received wonderful cooperation from Comcast Cable, which recorded them for periodic rebroadcast to enable us to reach even a wider audience. Our thanks to Debra Fischer, Betty Simonetti, Toby Whitman, Kathy Byrd, Rush Watson, and everyone else who worked on these valuable League contributions to our community.

In September, we had our Membership Party at the home of Celeste Burnum. It was, as always, a great pleasure.

October saw our League honor Zelma Wyatt on her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday and present her with a certificate memorializing her life membership in League of Women Voters. Zelma continues to be an inspiration to us all.

On election day, members of LWVGT, in cooperation with ACCR, staffed polling places with petitions for Constitutional Reform. As a result of our good work, Tuscaloosa garnered the greatest number of signatures of any county in the state.

Since the summer, we have reactivated our after-work unit, and have been providing stimulating programming for both our luncheon group and this late-afternoon group. In September and October, both groups heard from representatives of the Republican and Democratic parties, talking about their grass-roots activities. In November, Susan Hamill led discussions about why Constitutional reform is having such a difficult time in Alabama. The December

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meetings heard from Martha Rogers and Jeanette Vandermeer, providing information about the Alabama Legislature, which they are studying as part of the LWVAL study task force.

Now it is time to enjoy, relax, and get ready for a busy League January.

On January 4, 2005, Bob McCurly, from the Alabama Law Institute will speak to our luncheon group about what to expect this term in the Alabama Legislature. He will repeat the program on January 20, for our after-work group.

Our annual Legislative Breakfast will take place on Tuesday morning, January 18 at 7:00am at CHOM. We are inviting all of the Montgomery legislators who represent Tuscaloosa County. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend for this excellent opportunity to speak to them directly.

We hope to see all of you who can attend either our Tuesday lunch meetings or our Thursday after-work meetings. If you need any information about either group, don't hesitate to give me a call.

Wishing you all a wonderful new year...

### **Membership Party**

Our annual membership party was held on September 28 at Celeste Burnum's house. Celeste has opened her home and garden to us for a number of years and once again the weather was perfect and her garden was delightful.

We have six new members who joined us this fall. They are Patricia Goff; Sheila Hayes; Karla Johnson; Marion Johnson-Wesley, Connie Malone; and Kristi Thomson. Welcome to LWVGT!

Katie Ferguson would like to thank the membership committee and everyone who helped with the party.

### **Renew Your Membership!**

Our new membership year began at the beginning of September and runs through the end of August. This year the new cycle sneaked up on many of us. If you still haven't renewed your membership, time is running out! Your membership is valuable to the League of Women Voters of Greater Tuscaloosa.

Please send your dues (\$50 for individuals; \$75 for households) to our hardworking treasurer, Susanne Nasir, at the address below:

Susanne Nasir  
62 Coventry  
Tuscaloosa, AL 35404

Hattie Kaufman  
Quarterly Coordinator

### **A Busy Year for Voter Services**

The League of Women Voters of Greater Tuscaloosa was very active and visible during two local elections in 2004.

Our thanks go out to all the candidates who participated in LWVGT's Candidate Forums during the summer and in the fall. This gave the voting public an opportunity to meet the names on the ballots in the Northport Municipal Elections in August, as well as those running for seats in the Tuscaloosa County government in the general election on November 2.

People got to ask the candidates questions and hear about local issues, so they could be informed and ready when they stepped into the voting booth.

Next up on the Voter Services agenda – it's already time to start planning for municipal elections in August!

Residents in the city of Tuscaloosa will be voting for mayor, all seven city council seats, and for members of the city school board. To get involved with this exciting and dedicated group of LWV members, contact Voter Services chair Debrah Fisher at 752-2101.

## **Forum Thank-Yous**

In hosting the forums, we partnered with the Chamber of Commerce and with Comcast Cable TV, who taped each forum and aired them several times before the municipal election in August and the general election on November 2. What a great service to the voting public!

We'd like to thank the following for their contributions, which helped make all three forums such a success:

- Lisa Keyes of the Junior League for helping on the question review table
- Patricia Clark from the UA Women for being a Greeter at the forums.
- Matt Smith & Frank Deaver at Covenant Presbyterian Church for their expertise with their sound system
- Volunteers from the UA Women, whose efforts are greatly appreciated.
- The Children's Hands-On Museum for the use of their sound system during the Northport forums.
- Tuscaloosa Ad Fed for adopting LWVGT as a community project and helping us get the word out to the public.
- The Tuscaloosa News and WVUA-7 for their coverage of the forums on TV and in the newspaper.

## **Northport Kudos**

We'd like to thank PARA for allowing our forums to be at the Northport Community Center at no charge. This was a great public service for the Northport community.

A special thank you goes to all our League volunteers, including:

- Moderators – Hattie Kaufman and Katie Ferguson. Thanks for your talent and professionalism.
- Set up – Debrah & Brad Fisher, Louise & Robert Lewis & Anna Singer

- Greeters – Ann Bell, Willa Kay Goodson, Joan King & BJ Mills
- Time Keepers – Betty Simonetti & Jeanette Vandermeer
- Question Review Table –Kathy Byrd, Louise Lewis, Frankie Thomas & Toby Whitman
- Sound System – Claire Evans & Donnie Jones
- Voter Registration/Membership Table – Betty Simonetti
- Voter Registration/Organization caller – Betty Simonetti
- Contacting Candidates – Toby Whitman
- Question Committee – Kathy Byrd, chair; Debrah Fisher, Ella Pruitt, Frankie Thomas & Toby Whitman
- Publicity – Frances Tucker, Betty Simonetti & Debrah Fisher

## **Tuscaloosa County Kudos**

The forum featuring candidates for Tuscaloosa County Commission and the Tuscaloosa County Board of Education took place October 4 at Covenant Presbyterian Church.

We'd like thank all the volunteers who participated:

- Moderator – Rush Watson
- Greeters – Donald Brown, Annette Dudgeon, Sheila Hayes, Joan King, Louise Lewis, Frankie Thomas, and Ann & John Toppins
- Time Keeper – Toby Whitman
- Question Review Table – Kathy Byrd & Debrah Fisher
- Sound System – Frank Deaver
- Question Committee – Chair, Kathy Bryd; Annette Dudgeon & Debrah Fisher
- Contacting Candidates – Kathy Byrd, Annette Dudgeon, Debrah Fisher, Betty Simonetti & Toby Whitman
- Publicity – Frances Tucker, Betty Simonetti & Debrah Fisher

## Party Turnout Efforts

At the September luncheon we listened as Ms. Lawley explained the local voter registration efforts of the Republican Party. Ms. Lawley also discussed voter apathy and the various reasons why people don't vote. At our luncheon the next month, Jeanette Vandermeer spoke about the local Democratic Party's voter registration efforts. Jeanette gave us wonderful packets of information as well as precinct lists.

## Working On A Local Education Consensus

Annette Dudgeon

This summer the LWVGT devoted our luncheon programs to learning about the finances of the two local public school systems, Tuscaloosa City and Tuscaloosa County schools. The study was divided into two parts. The first portion dealt with where the funding came from, how the schools allotted their discretionary funds, and what priorities should govern eliminating services and programs in the event of proration. One thing we learned for certain is that educational funding is very complex. Kathy Byrd presented this program.

From this program and member questionnaire responses, the board was able to approve the following consensus statement:

*The League of Women Voters of Greater Tuscaloosa supports increasing funding for local public schools, including such locally-generated funds as grants and support by the private sector and city councils.*

This statement will be added to our local program at the next annual meeting. This support position can be used for lobbying purposes.

We were unable to reach consensus on which programs/services should be

eliminated in the event of proration.

Mary Rogers presented the next program concerning what the systems could do to further cooperate to reduce costs and increase efficiency. Only two questionnaires were returned from this portion of the consensus and so it was not possible to reach a position. It is disappointing to spend so much time accumulating, organizing and presenting information and not have response.

A big thank-you to Mary Rogers, Kathy Byrd, Susie Luquire and Annette Dudgeon and the after-work unit for their work gathering, organizing and presenting material for this study.

Last year at the annual meeting we voted to continue our study of the two local education systems. What remains is a study concerning dissemination of information and open meetings. We have two programs scheduled this spring to present information on this topic. At present we do not have an education chair to coordinate efforts toward this study, and based on the response to consensus questionnaires last time, we are somewhat hesitant to proceed.

If you have any suggestions, or if this is an area which interests you, please contact Annette Dudgeon at 758-4604 or [Jdudgeon11@aol.com](mailto:Jdudgeon11@aol.com)

## Constitutional Reform Madeleine Hill

The November 2 election was a narrow defeat for Amendment two but provided impetus to a statewide call for a new constitution. On that date, the Alabama Citizens for Constitutional Reform launched a year-long drive for signatures of voters petitioning their state legislators for change. Specifically, the petition asks elected officials to “take the action necessary to call for a convention of elected citizens for the purpose of presenting a new constitution to the voters of Alabama as soon as possible.”

In Tuscaloosa, 4,496 signatures were secured. Members of the LWVGT worked closely with the ACCR-Tuscaloosa chapter and the Alabama Students for Constitutional Reform to staff ten voting wards. Over 60 volunteers helped with this coordinated grassroots effort, working outside polling places and through inclement weather 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Poll captains were Annette Dudgeon (Forest Lake UMC), Charlotte Gattozzi (Skyland Elementary), Elizabeth Hendrix (Boys and Girls Club), John Lee (Skyland Oaks Retirement Center), Marcia Lehman (Hillcrest High), Beebe McKinley (McAbee Center), Taylor Nichols (UA Presidential Pavilion), Rufus Partlow (Phelps Center), Tom Rogers (Courthouse Annex), and Madeleine Hill (McDonald Hughes).

The ACCR petition drive will continue through much of 2005. For information about constitutional reform, ACCR, or signing the petition, visit ACCR's website at [www.constitutionalreform.org](http://www.constitutionalreform.org) or call 752-0289 locally.

### Honoring Zelma Wyatt

At our October luncheon we honored Zelma Wyatt, who turned 100 in October and who has been a member of our local League for 50 years. Zelma joined us for lunch along with her daughter. Juanita Watson told stories about Zelma's activist years in our local league. We presented Zelma a framed certificate from the League of Women Voters of the United States signed by Kay Maxwell, president of the national league. Thanks go out to Kay Ellis for making the arrangements.

### LWVGT CALENDAR

Tuesday, January 4, 12:00 noon  
luncheon meeting  
Tuscaloosa Country Club  
*A Legislative Preview*

Tuesday, January 18, 7:00 AM  
Legislative Breakfast  
Childrens Hands-On Museum

Thursday, January 20, 5:00 PM  
After-Work Unit Meeting  
United Way Offices

Tuesday, January 25, 5:15 PM  
Board meeting  
United Way Offices

Tuesday, February 1, 12:00 noon  
Luncheon Meeting  
The University Club

Thursday, February 17, 5:00 PM  
After-Work Unit Meeting  
United Way Offices

Tuesday, February 22, 5:15 PM  
Board meeting  
United Way Offices

Tuesday, March 1, 12:00 noon  
Luncheon Meeting  
The University Club

Thursday, March 17, 5:00 PM  
After-Work Unit Meeting  
United Way Offices

Tuesday, March 22, 5:15 PM  
Board meeting  
United Way Offices

No Luncheon in April

No After-Work Unit in April

Thursday, April 14  
Annual Meeting

Tuesday, April 26, 5:15 PM  
Board meeting  
United Way Offices

### Observer Corps

We are now signing up volunteers to observe public meetings for LWVGT's Observer Corps. Below are the meetings and times. Please contact Frances Tucker at 553-4254 or [frantuck@simplecom.net](mailto:frantuck@simplecom.net) if you can attend one or more of these meetings.

#### City of Tuscaloosa

meeting	location	day	time
City Council 349-0117	Tuscaloosa City Hall 2201 University Blvd.	Tuesdays	8:30 AM
		Thursdays	6:00 PM
Public Projects Committee	Tuscaloosa City Hall	Tuesdays	after City Council mtg.
Finance Committee 349-0110	Tuscaloosa City Hall	1st & 3rd Thursdays	4:30 PM
Public Safety Committee 349-0160	Tuscaloosa City Hall	1st Thursday	4:30 PM
Administrative Committee	Municipal Court	1st & 3rd Mondays	12:00 noon
Planning & Zoning Committee 349-0160	Tuscaloosa City Hall, Council Chambers	3rd Tuesday	6:30 PM
Zoning Bd. of Adjust.		4th Tuesday	6:00 PM
City Board of Education 759-3700	City BOE Central Office 1210 21st Avenue	3rd Monday	6:00 PM

#### Tuscaloosa County

meeting	location	day	time
Tuscaloosa County Commission 349-3870 x212	Tuscaloosa County Courthouse 714 Greensboro Ave.	3rd Wednesday	9:00 AM
County Board of Education 758-0411	3rd floor, County BOE 2314 9th Street	2nd Monday	5:00 PM

#### City Of Northport

meeting	location	day	time
Northport City Council 339-7000 x 221	Northport City Hall 3500 McFarland Blvd.	1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Mondays	6:00 PM
Finance Committee	Northport City Hall	1 <sup>st</sup> Friday	9:00 AM
Public Safety	Northport City Hall	1 <sup>st</sup> Tuesday	9:00 AM
Administrative	Northport City Hall	3 <sup>rd</sup> Tuesday	11:00 AM
Planning & Zoning		2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday	6:00 PM
Zoning Bd. of Adjust.		3 <sup>rd</sup> Thursday	6:00 PM
Public Works		2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday	

#### Tuscaloosa Public Library

meeting	location	day	time
Library Board	Main Library	3 <sup>rd</sup> Monday	2:30 PM

# *HOW DO YOU GET YOUR COMMUNITY TO TALK ABOUT THE IMPORTANT ISSUES?*

*If you want to encourage greater citizen participation in your community, plan to attend this interactive one-day workshop, sponsored by Challenge 21.*

## *“Involving Citizens – a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Challenge”*

*FEBRUARY 5<sup>th</sup>, 2005 8:30-3:30 Hillcrest High School Tuscaloosa AL*

*In this workshop, you will learn how to lead a “Community Conversation,” a practice that encourages and values citizen opinion.*

*During Community Conversations, participants have an opportunity to express their concerns, listen and learn from each other and deliberate the costs and trade-offs of various choices.*

*This workshop will offer you practical experience that you can use to help your church, community or neighborhood group more effectively engage citizens in deliberating issues.*

### **Agenda**

8:30 - 9:00 am	Registration and Continental Breakfast
9:00 - 9:45 am	Opening Session: The Road to Citizen Participation
9:45 - 11:15 am	Experience a Community Conversation: Topic: <i>Your Community’s Future Growth</i>
11:15 - noon	Creating a Community Conversation – from A to Z! (Part 1)
1200 - 12:45 pm	Lunch with Q and A
12:45 - 1:45 pm	Creating a Community Conversation – from A to Z! (Part 2)
1:45 - 3:00 pm	Putting it into Practice
3:00 - 3:30 pm	Where Do We Go from Here? Making a Difference in Your Community

### *Challenge 21 Community Politics Team*

An association of volunteers committed to community who are working to promote citizen participation. We are committed to helping groups find ways to deliberate issues and concerns in a meaningful way, learn from one another, and support positive change in their communities.

[www.challenge21.org](http://www.challenge21.org)

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

*2005 Challenge 21 Community Development Conference*

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Name                      First    Last    MI

Preference on Nametag

Mailing Address

City    State    Zip Code

Phone    Fax

Email Address

*Please indicate some of the volunteer and civic groups in your community that you work with.*

REGISTRATION FEE

\$15 PER PERSON. Print materials, continental breakfast and lunch are provided in the program cost. Please mail your check made out to the Challenge 21 Foundation.

*Note: We strongly recommend that at least 3 people from a community attend. Registration will be limited to 80 participants and will be determined by the registration form postmarks. Please complete a separate form for each participant.*

Mail registration form and program fee to:

Sena Stewart, Challenge 21  
P.O. Box 870388      Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0388  
(205) 348-2316      [www.challenge21.org](http://www.challenge21.org)      [senas@ua.edu](mailto:senas@ua.edu)