



LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®

The Voter

President's Message by Anne Permaloff

On behalf of the state board I thank the LWV of Montgomery for hosting State Council 2016 and for the hospitality the local league extended. Personally, I thank the state board members and panel chairs Hattie Kaufman and Jean Johnson for their hard work in preparation of the event and all they did the day Council met.

If you missed Council, the key discussion points from each of the panels are outlined in separate articles located in this *Voter*. Voter Service co-chairs Scarlett Gaddy and Ida Tyree Hyche cover the Voting Issues panel. Gina Finnegan and Barbara Caddell cover the panel on Establishing Media Contacts and Getting Media Coverage.

Other reports in this *Voter* cover Vote411, Member at Large recruitment efforts, and other information from state board members.

The study committee has completed its report on Payday Lending Stores in Alabama. Gina Finnegan did the final edit of the document before it was sent to the state board for comment and approval. As I write this note (August 15), the report is being approved by state board members. It will be emailed to local league presidents this month along with consensus questions once they have board approval. The study report will also be made available on the state webpage. A consensus report form (also to be emailed) is due from each local league board by December 1st.

Kathy Byrd and Annette Dungeon prepared a PowerPoint presentation based on the report which local leagues should find useful in their discussion sessions. A list of most useful sources for further reading was also prepared. Both will be

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Upcoming Dates

- Sept 27—National Voter Registration Day
- Nov 8—Election Day

National Convention Report by Ann Moss

Ann Moss thanked the State League for the privilege of being able to attend the National Convention. The primary change made at Convention was the change in membership – one does not need to be a US Citizen and the age to join is now 16. The new president is Chris Carson from California and the new state coach is Maribel Balbin from Florida. She replaces Peggy Appler. Points of interest about voters: they need clear information such as explaining terms used (what is a primary) and provide reasons to vote (especially in a presidential election – perhaps concentrate on local elections as the reason to vote if the person says there is no point in voting). Other subjects mentioned: establish the League as consultants; rather than use the term “nonpartisan” consider saying “We do not support any party or candidate;” when dealing with the media, remember to answer their question but then pivot to your message.



LWVAL Council Voting Issues Panel

by Scarlett Gaddy and Ida Tyree Hyché

The panel discussion was facilitated by Hattie Kaufman (Tuscaloosa League). Panelists were experts in several areas of voting-related issues. They were M. Heron Gadd, Senior Staff Attorney, Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program (ADAP); Ed Packard, Director of Elections, Election Division, Office of the Secretary of State, Alabama; and Stephen Stetson, Policy Analyst (Consumer and Human Rights Issues), Alabama Arise Citizens' Policy Project. Below is a summary of each panelist's remarks.

M. Heron Gadd summarized the problems experienced in the March primary election as follows:

- The delegates to the convention were in one long list on the ballot and did not clearly indicate which candidate the delegate supported.
- In some locations, the Automark machines were not turned on and ready for use.
- Some voters were questioned about their disability when attempting to use Automark machines.

While access issues had been expected, there were actually fewer problems than anticipated.

It was also discussed that a guardian of someone who is not able to vote may vote for them. There were concerns about how many individuals know this is possible.

Mr. Stetson advised League members and guests that the membership of Alabama Arise had voted to emphasize voting

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President's Message—cont'd

sent with the other study related materials.

As previously reported, LWVAL is in federal court as a plaintiff against the federal Elections Assistance Commission (EAC) and its director. Other co-plaintiffs include the LWVUS, LWVs of Kansas and Georgia and other groups. The Brennan Center for Justice associated with the New York University Law School is pro bono council for the LWV plaintiffs with assistance from a DC law firm that is also working pro bono.

The original suit asked for a temporary injunction to stop the EAC allowing Alabama, Kansas and Georgia to require proof of citizenship to be submitted with the federal voter registration form. The executive director had written to each state's chief election official granting this permission. This move was taken unilaterally by the director. Plaintiffs contend this action was illegal (e.g., violates the intent of Congress when it passed the Help America Vote Act, violates administrative law procedures, and violates commission policy) and puts an unnecessary burden on the voter and on organizations that assist voters with the registration process.

Motion for the temporary injunction was denied by the judge. However, his opinion recognized the standing of the plaintiffs to sue but did not address the merits of the case. His decision has been appealed to the Circuit Court of Appeals in DC. A separate court case has been filed in the DC District Court to negate the action of the director and EAC. Both cases are scheduled for September hearings. In the meantime briefs and answering briefs are being filed. As I receive further information from the

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National Voters Registration Day by Scarlett Gaddy

National Voter Registration Day is coming! I'm sure your League has plans for voter registration drives this fall. Remember to keep a tally of the number of citizens registered and add it to your drive totals since we last reported. Then phone in your count after the final counts on National Voter Registration Day, September 27, 2016. The contact person for your League should receive an email asking for your counts, but the information on reporting can be found on the website. [About National Voter Registration Day](#)



President's Message—cont'd

lawyers, it will be posted on the state website just as previous action and related press releases and new stories have been.

In terms of other activities, I have conducted board orientations with the boards of LWV of Greater Birmingham and LWV of Mobile, joined Kathy Bryd at a meeting for MALs held in Montevallo, and on August 19 together with Voter Services representatives from LWV of Greater Birmingham will participate in presenting an Elections Workshop for deaf clients of the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind Regional Office in Birmingham. The Birmingham members will also assist with voter registration for those who have yet to register. And, in July a telephone conference state board meeting was conducted. Once drafts of the minutes are available, they will be sent to local league presidents. The reports by board members in this *Voter* also outline activities undertaken and/or in progress.

Finally, two reminders to local league boards.

1. Please review and vote on your league's nonpartisanship policy if you not done so this league year. This should be done annually.
2. Update Articles I through III of your bylaws to mirror national bylaw changes. It is likely that only Article III will need changing to reflect the changes in membership qualifications adopted at national convention. Changes to these articles are mandated by national bylaws and require no vote from local or state league boards or members.

LWVAL Council Media Panel by Barbara Caddell and Gina Finnegan

Say "please," do as much work as possible to make it easier for Alabama news organizations to cover LWV events, and don't be discouraged when reporters don't show an interest. Organized by LWV-Birmingham's Jean Johnson, a four-member media panel offered these three key pieces of advice to League members eager to more effectively engage with the media in the shifting sands of Alabama's news desert. The panel of experienced journalists was tasked with explaining how to establish rapport with the media and how to obtain appropriate media attention for League issues and events.

The panel consisted of the following members:

- Chuck Dean – a 33-year veteran of the newspaper business, currently covering business for al.com
- Carol Nunnally – founder of the Alabama Initiative for Independent Journalism and BirminghamWatch.org, retired from the Birmingham News
- Rachel Osier Lindley – news director for the Birmingham Public Radio Station (WBJM at 90.3 FM)
- Troy Turner – editor of the Opelika-Auburn News

The panelists presented a wealth of practical advice. All stressed the importance of doing homework, both on the issues/events on which we want to focus media attention as well as on researching news organizations. Leaguers usually have a plethora of information on issues, but we do need to be reminded to consider the structure of the media outlet we are approaching. Finding out which reporters cover stories pertinent to the League's interest and then contacting them personally is a good way to begin the relationship. This contact should be both verbal (on the telephone) and written (email or even snail mail). Personal contacts are especially important because most news organizations in the state no longer have one point of contact. Having a "hook" is critical to pique both the reporter's and the public's interest, since consumers of news now decide on what content they want to explore further.

Many of the suggestions made were obvious ones –

Use social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, but also Next Door and Instagram to make our own news

Capitalize on local and state LWV webpages and keep them up-to-date.

Have a clear message to deliver – even to the point of writing your own headline – to make sure the journalist knows why the message is important now.

Include photographs and eye-catching visual information.

Make the subject line of email communications interesting and request a response.



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WHEN DOES “MAL” MEAN “GOOD” AND NOT “BAD”? by Kathy Byrd

Members and friends of the League of Women Voters quickly learn we have our own “lingo.” For example, the word “program” may refer to its usual meaning, *i.e.*, “a performance or presentation.” But for the League, it also refers to topics and issues discussed and studied in depth, often leading to a position or stand on the issue—based on the consensus of the membership.” But “MAL,” which often serves as a prefix indicating something negative, is one of the best features of the League. It refers to Members-at-Large, and reflects the grassroots nature of our organization.

MALs, our members-at-large, are dues paying, full-fledged members of the League, but do not reside where a local league is located. So in Alabama, they become members of the State League (LWVAL), with voting rights of other members. They are a beneficial presence, because they can share our “program” with other citizens. They can encourage residents in their locale to register to vote, for example, through letters to the editor and other media. Of course, if they are speaking in an official capacity for the LWVAL, they need to get permission and guidance from our state president or designee.

Why all this discussion about MALs? Because one major objective of the LWVAL under President Anne Permaloff’s term of office has been to

expand our influence around the state. Under the leadership of 1st Vice President Kathy Byrd, we are working to develop MAL programs in two locales, Shelby County and the Florence areas. A meeting was held at the Parnell Memorial Public Library in Montevallo, with MAL Tonya Lee enthusiastically taking the lead to develop an MAL unit that considers the needs and interests of residents of Shelby County that are different than those of neighboring Birmingham/Jefferson County. As a follow up, we sent LWVAL bookmarks to public libraries in those municipalities in Shelby County having mayor/city council elections on August 23rd.

These two-sided bookmarks listed deadlines and procedures for registering to vote, voting absentee, etc., on one side, and League information on the other.

On August 29th, a membership rally was held at the Florence-Lauderdale County Public Library. This is a follow up to a meeting held almost one year to the day in the same location, at which we signed up MALs. However, we want to strengthen that presence. The local paper, the *Florence Times-Daily*, has published a front-page article about our effort, and even an editorial. Bookmarks tailored for the Florence-Muscle Shoals-Sheffield-Tuscumbia area were sent to local public libraries and senior citizen cen-

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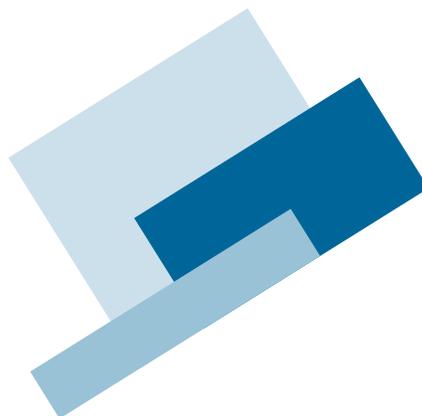
Consensus Study Information

Local League presidents have been sent the study Facts and Issues, consensus questions, Local League Board consensus report form (due December 1), suggested readings for discussion leaders, and a PowerPoint presentation for use at Local League meetings.

The study materials and consensus questions have been placed on the League web page at <http://www.lwval.org/leagdemoc/payday-lending/>.

If you are a League member and need assistance accessing materials, contact Jean Johnson at jjohnson@lwval.org.

The Facts and Issues paper can be accessed by the public at <http://www.lwval.org/learn-vote/payday-lending/payday-lending-facts-&-issues.pdf>



MAL—cont'd

ters. MAL members Nancy Muse, Michelle Bernstein, and Meghan Muse worked with Kathy Byrd to make this meeting a success. Florence once boasted a strong league, and is ready again! One more bit of good news! We have a new MAL from Dothan, an area we have hoped to serve. In this big election year, the League has a wonderful opportunity to serve the citizens of Alabama with helpful and accurate information (such as our www.Vote411.org coverage of races at the state level and statewide amendments on the November 8th ballot). And hopefully, interested residents will want to join us in our efforts as well.



Voting Issues—cont'd



rights indicating a broad mandate from its members to actively pursue fair access to voting registration and the ballot.

Voter ID issues are considered a key issue for Alabamians. Mr. Stetson presented a brief history of the changes in voter access laws. In 2011, a number of states passed voter ID laws, including Alabama. Representative Rich introduced the Voter ID bill in the House of Representatives. Currently, citizens can get a voter ID from the Secretary of State's office, County Registrar's office, and the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) if they have the proper identification. For many, the required documentation is a hurdle to registering. Missing birth certificates and other documents are usually, but not always, replaceable, but at a cost.



Mr. Stetson indicated concerns about voter fraud were exaggerated. Actual fraud is very rare and seldom exists when the ballots are cast. Some of the allegations stated by supporters of the voter ID laws include allegations of people voting 5-6 times. These have been unsubstantiated.

Opponents of voter ID laws point to intentional partisan efforts to exclude certain groups who vote Democratic as a reason for the passage of the restrictive laws. Minorities, the elderly, and women make up a large percentage of the groups most affected.



According to estimates, there 250,000 eligible voters without voter ID in Alabama. During an interview with MSNBC, the Secretary of State indicated his office's mobile units visiting locations around the state only registered 29 people (MSNBC interview).

Once the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Indiana's voter ID law was constitutional a flurry of other states followed suit, passing restrictive voter ID laws. The Texas law, one of the most restrictive, is currently under scrutiny in federal court. The U.S. Supreme Court has suggested the federal court must rule soon or intervention will occur.

In the most recent legislative session, most of good election-related bills did not pass. SB 186 Coleman which would have streamlined the process to restore voting rights after they have been lost Moral turpitude laws came within 40 sec of passing – time ran out in the Senate.

Ed Packard reminded those in attendance that Alabama citizens may now register to vote online. Applicants are not registered to vote until their County Board of Registrars reviews and approves their application. Voter registration services are now available at several state and local government offices and agencies: Driver's licensing offices, County and select municipal public libraries, Department of Human Resources, WIC Program, Department of Public Health, Medicaid Agency, and Department of Rehabilitation Services. "Fortunately, 80% of the people in Alabama are registered to vote. We are now focusing on that last 15 or 20 % to get them registered to vote," said Ed Packard.

Crossover voting was briefly discussed. Crossover voting occurs when a voter who participated in one political party's primary election votes in the primary run-off election for an opposing political party. Alabama election law authorizes each political party to establish rules governing its primary elections (§17-13-7, Code of Alabama, 1975, as amended), including the establishment of rules as to who may vote in its runoff election. The Democratic Party has adopted a crossover voting rule that prohibits a voter from participating in its primary runoff election if the voter participated in another political party's primary election. For example, a voter who participated in the Republican Party primary may not vote in the Democratic Party's primary runoff. The Republican Party has not

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Mobile/Baldwin County



Montgomery

East Alabama

Local Leagues at Council 2016



Birmingham



Tuscaloosa



*Visit our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/LWVAL/>)
for more pictures from Council 2016!*

LWVAL Council Media Panel—cont'd

Make sure League contact information is on every communication with the press.

The journalists also suggested that we pursue additional information outlets including radio and local or alternative newspapers. Many of these media are hungry for the stories the League can tell.

Nunnally noted that although her organization didn't have the time, personnel or space to cover most League events, she was informed as a journalist by the information provided to her about League efforts and events.

Likewise, Lindley recommended sending radio information on when a guest speaker or issue expert might be available for a radio interview -- even suggesting that arrangements be made for in-studio interviews.

Dean suggested simple courtesies -- using the word "please" when asking for media attention.

"You need to be courteous but persistent. When you email your targeted reporter, ask for a response and ask again if you don't get a response," he said.

Turner reminded League members that newspaper editorial pages, for both longer op-ed pieces and shorter letters to the editor, offered great opportunities for communicating League information to the public.

Finally -- and most importantly -- the journalists challenged the League not to give up on the media. Granted that consumers' "want to know" may seem more important to media outlets than what they "need to know", people still need to hear the League's in-depth examination of issues. We need to continue to reach out to the media to get our story out!



Voting Issues—cont'd

adopted a crossover rule. Therefore, voters who participate in either the Republican Party's or Democratic Party's primary election may legally vote in the Republican Party's primary runoff election.

When queried about some of the rural areas whose drivers' license divisions were closed by the Secretary of State, Mr. Ed Packard informed the council that "there are two different issues here. One is registering people and the other is giving them an ID. Our mobile units are scheduled for every county in the State of Alabama now through mid-summer. Those mobile units will do both voter registration and issue voter photo ID if someone is already registered." According to Mr. Packard the Mobile unit cannot register someone and issue them an ID the same day, whereas a Registrar's Office can do so. "There is a Registrar's Office in every county seat," continued Ed Packard, "so citizens can get an ID, not a driver's license, and register to vote at the same time."

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**LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®**

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ABOUT THE LEAGUE

The League of Women Voters is a citizens' organization that has fought since 1920 to improve our government and engage all citizens in the decisions that impact their lives. We operate at national, state, and local levels through more than 800 state and local Leagues, in all 50 states as well as DC, the Virgin Islands and Hong Kong.



League of Women Voters Mission Statement

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

League of Women Voters Education Fund Mission Statement

The League of Women Voters Education Fund works to encourage the active and informed participation of citizens in government to increase understanding of major public policy issues.