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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: LWVAL PRIORITIES FOR 2015-2017 BY ANNE PERMALOFF

The new state Board held its first formal meeting on July 18th in Montgomery and set state priorities for 2015-2017. Decision-making was informed by a survey given to all Board members immediately after State Convention that focused on each member's recommendations. Discussions at Convention were also considered. Once goals were adopted discussion focused on mechanisms for achieving the goals.

The goals adopted are:

1. Enhanced voter service and voter education efforts
2. Increased League visibility and outreach
3. Improved Local League/State League communications and interaction

The three goals are viewed as interconnected and mechanisms for engaging and attracting the public to the League and its work.

Actions taken at and since the Board meeting to achieve the goals include but are not limited to the following:

1. Board committees and assignments are structured to focus on State League goals and to reflect the interests, skills, and/or experience of the members. Non-board members are included whenever possible.
2. The Board committed to use VOTE411 during the 2016 election cycle to supply information to voters on candidates for statewide elections and on statewide constitutional amendments.
 - Voter Service and Outreach Chair Scarlett Gaddy asked Barbara Caddell to coordinate VOTE411. Barbara is experienced with the software and procedures.
 - Other Voter Service and Outreach members are Vice Chair Ida Tyree Hyche and Technical Advisor Kim Bailey

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SPECIAL DATES TO REMEMBER:

- Women's Equality Day
August 26, 2015
- Constitution Day
September, 17, 2015
- National Voter Registration Day
September 22, 2015
- Bill of Rights Day
December 15, 2015

BOARD PRIORITIES—CONT'D

3. The Board committed itself to investigate ways to fund use of VOTE411 for all state and local elections in 2018. At today's prices, the cost would be \$5,000.
 - The fundraising committee composed of Gina Finnegan and Brenda Boman has begun the task of investigating possible funding streams for this and other League activities.
 - Treasurer Kristen De La Feunte has been asked to set up a line item for donations to the Ed Fund designated by donors as for use toward this process.
 - All Board members were asked to donate to the Ed Fund. No amount was specified and donations will only be reported in terms of what percent of the Board has donated. Many grant applications require nonprofits to report this percentage rate when they apply for funds.
4. After the August 2015 issue of the State Voter, future issues will be considered public and distributed to nonmembers. Proprietary information will be distributed to members only. The decision to publicly distribute the Voter is tied to increasing outreach and visibility. Educational materials will also be distributed through this approach.
5. Kim Bailey continues as Voter Editor.
6. 1st Vice President Kathy Byrd is chairing Membership Service and Outreach. She will focus special attention on responding personally and keeping in touch with those seeking information about MAL status and new League establishment. Kathy has already been handling requests in this area. Jeanne Normand will assist her focusing on informing new members about State League and its resources.
7. Local League Ed Fund Applications will be reviewed by Barbara Caddell.
8. Jean Johnson continues to handle the webpage and serve as Technical Advisor to the Board. She has updated the webpage material on State and Local Board members, Ed Fund Applications, Advocacy efforts related to the Special Session, and more. Scarlett Gaddy and Kim Bailey are assisting her with social media.
9. The Advocacy Committee remains as constituted during the regular session (Anne Permaloff, Barbara Caddell, Hattie Kaufman; Joyce Lanning; Ruth Wright). The Committee will assist Barbara Caddell with the constitutional amendment section of the VOTE411 postings. Anyone interested in serving on the committee should contact Anne Permaloff.
10. Kristen De La Fuente is serving as the State Board representative for Member Leadership Development (MLD).
11. Joyce Lanning is handling Natural Resources and Energy Policy and is chairing the Facts and Issues Committee for Energy Costs in Alabama. Others working on the project include Kathy Byrd, Barbara Caddell, and Carolyn Carr.
12. Joyce was a presenter at a Florence based alternative energy conference. Her educational presentation focused on new laws impacting alternative energy. She also worked on outreach to those interested in League.
13. In July I sent a copy of my National Council Report to the State Board and to all Local League Presidents.
14. Drafts of State Board minutes are being sent to Local League Presidents at the same time they are received by Board members. In the past they received the minutes only after they were approved at the next Board meeting, often 2-3 months after a meeting. They will also receive the approved minutes.

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LWV MONTGOMERY BY LOUVENIA GRAHAM

LWM Montgomery has worked on two tedious assignments this summer: planning and implementing political forums. We partnered with the Pan-Hellenic Council of Central Alabama (a group of graduate Greek letter organizations working as one unit).

In July, we held a Mayoral Candidates' Forum for the candidates seeking the position of mayor of Montgomery; in August, we held a Montgomery City Council Candidates' Forum. At each forum, candidates answered questions that were submitted by the audience. After each forum, a chat and chew was held so that the candidates could interact with their constituents.

We have made tentative plans for our fall activities. The LWVMontgomery fall schedule includes Informational meetings examining

- Issues related to amending the U. S. Constitution
- Soft money in elections – positive and negative aspects
- A presentation by an Appleseed representative on the organization's work
- Continuous Registration of voters with special emphasis on National Voter Registration Day, September 22.
- We plan to implement an essay contest for high school students on **Civility in Government**.

Guests are welcomed to all meetings.



Louvenia Graham (LWV of Montgomery president) with Melissa McNeil of the Pan Hellenic Council of Central Alabama opening the forum.

Incumbent mayor Todd Strange bantering with one of his four opponents, Ella Bell who is currently on the State Board of Education.



SCENES FROM 2015 STATE CONVENTION IN AUBURN

The Tuscaloosa delegation with Peggy Appler, LWVUS Liaison for Alabama (L to R: Sheri Augins, Peggy Appler, Peggy Hamner, Hattie Kaufman, and Kim Bailey).



Terry Dunn receiving the first Transparency Award.

BOARD PRIORITIES—CONT'D

Finally, a great deal of assistance was directly or indirectly offered to the State Board by Peggy Appler (our liaison with National) and Haley Richards (the Shur Fellow working with Alabama on MLD). Both played important roles at National Council and worked with the smaller states in breakout sessions. They helped with planning process documents we worked on. Peggy arranged a South East Caucus meeting that allowed an exchange of ideas and issues faced by the group. Both Haley and Peggy have continued to supply information and are available to answer questions. Haley even attended our first Board meeting.

NATIONAL COUNCIL REPORT BY ANNE PERMALOFF

Celebrating the Past, Embracing Our Future was the main theme of National Council 2015. National President Elizabeth McNamara opened formal presentations with a short history outlining many of the ways League has adapted its operations and structure to political, social, technological and economic environmental changes. This history served to introduce the challenges League faces in the 21 Century and the pressing need for new adaptations while at the same time continuing to embrace League's core mission.

Many of the presentations and the group exercises and discussions focused on the challenges and possible adaptations. Others focused on two national studies: amending the U.S. Constitution and soft money. Materials for both studies, including Council presentations, are available on line at forum.lwv.org under the heading Our Work. [The forum site is now the location for all materials for members' assistance.] For that reason, I will highlight only a few of the key challenges/adaptation messages transmitted by presenters and through breakout groups and discussions.

Key Messages:

- Leagues should focus on the mission – creating an active and informed citizenry.
- Recognizing that the League's focus should return to democracy issues due to environmental changes (e.g., soft money; increased partisanship; lack of civility, etc.)
- Democracy focus: Keeping elections free, fair and accessible. All levels of League should concentrate on: protecting the vote; stopping restrictive actions on voting and voter registration; and work to block political gerrymandering.
- To be most effective, all Leagues and members in each League must work together and speak out with one voice.
- To be effective, each League should identify and communicate to others (the public and funders) League accomplishments. This process should involve all members, not just boards.
- Leagues need to communicate with each other more – share successes, positions, innovative programs and activities as well as fundraising ideas.
- Leagues should focus on messaging, not just institutional preservation. Use less League jargon, be specific, and use inclusive language.

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IN MEMORIAM

Vesta Grace Hutchins, age 94, of Tuscaloosa, died August 4, 2015, at Hospice near Melbourne, FL. She was a significant contributor and involved with League of Women Voters of Alabama and Greater Tuscaloosa. The family requests that donations be made in Vesta's name to Hospice of West Alabama.

[50 YEARS AFTER THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT BECAME LAW, IT NEEDS TO BE RESTORED BY ELISABETH MACNAMARA

Fifty years ago today, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act (VRA) into law, calling the day "a triumph for freedom." The VRA was an historic achievement that changed America. But two years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned a key part of the law, leading to a full frontal attack on the voting rights of American citizens.

For 95 years, the League of Women Voters has been fighting to keep the power of our democracy in the hands of the people, and we will not remain silent as the voting rights of Americans remain at risk. **Join us as we tell Congress to restore the Voting Rights Act.**

Congress currently has before it various proposals to restore the Voting Rights Act, but has taken no action in spite of mounting evidence of voter discrimination. Every day that Congress fails to act Americans are at risk of finding new barriers at the polls. In fact, we are dangerously close to holding our first presidential election in 50 years without the critical protections once embodied in the VRA.

Voter discrimination cannot be tolerated. *Tell your members of Congress to mark the 50th anniversary of this influential law by restoring its key protections!*

Our nation has taken great strides in advancing equality since 1965, but voter discrimination still exists today, and minority voices are still being silenced. The civil rights activists who helped pass the Voting Rights Act 50 years ago left our country with a legacy of strength and bravery in the fight for equal rights for all. Now is the time to build on that legacy.

The League of Women Voters has been fighting to protect the right to vote since 1920, and restoring the VRA is an important step to keep our elections fair, free and accessible. *Join us and tell your members of Congress that the right to vote is one of the most basic rights in our country and it must be protected.*

<http://lwv.org/blog/50-years-after-voting-rights-act-became-law-it-needs-be-restored>



click here to view an historical slideshow

Happy 95th Birthday to the 19th Amendment!

On August 18, 1920, the 19th Amendment, which guaranteed women the right to vote, was ratified. The following week it was certified by Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby, officially enshrining the new law into the U.S. Constitution.

Although it was made law in 1920 with ratification by two-thirds of the states, it wasn't until 1984 that the final state, Mississippi, passed their ratification.

The League of Women Voters was there from the beginning!

EAST ALABAMA NEWS BY KRISTEN DE LA FUENTE

The LWV of East Alabama has been busy planning our Women's Equality Day Celebration set for August 26th in Auburn. This celebration marks the 95th anniversary of the passage of the 19th amendment granting women the right to vote. Alabama native Lilly Ledbetter will be the guest speaker. Ms. Ledbetter's legal action against Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. regarding unequal pay for women led to the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act in 2009.

Proceeds from the event will support the LWV of East Alabama's voter services projects, including the goal to register at least 1000 voters by November of 2016. Members of the LWVEA are holding registration drives at high schools, universities, city events, and senior living centers. The LWVEA will also participate in National Voter Registration Day on September 22nd and are planning to hold drives at several locations in Auburn and Opelika that day.

NATIONAL COUNCIL REPORT—CONT'D

21st Century changes in the younger electorate that require adaptation in League tactics include:

- Distrusting public and private institutional structures and viewing them as treating voters as the child in parent-child type communications. They want to share information and be part of decision-making.
- Younger voters are technology oriented. The Internet has changed their behavior. They rely on Internet, messaging, and social media for information. On line communities have formed at international, national, state and local levels and often substitute for traditional institutions.
- Pictures and images as well as expression of emotions attract their attention and may bring them to seek more information.
- Engagement, not recruitment-focused strategies, draws younger people in. League must get their attention, involve them in activities of interest to them, and include them in decision-making. They may never join League but by working on common concerns and through financial and other support mechanisms may assist League in accomplishing its mission.

More material discussing these ideas is available on the forum web page. A more detailed report was sent to the Local League presidents and should be available to you through them or email me for a copy at griftonpermaloff@charter.net.

VOTE 411 BY BARBARA CADDELL

This year, our state league is undertaking an exciting project – once again, we are subscribing to Vote411. Vote 411 is a nonpartisan on-line election resource developed and used by Leagues all over the country. It allows citizens to see basic information about voting, including voter registration requirements and forms, schedules of elections and forums, and maps of voting districts. More importantly, in election years, it contains an on-line voter guide providing in-depth ballot information and candidate responses to questions voters might have. With numerous elections and candidates on the ballot, vote411 provides a reliable way to compare candidates. In 2016, all over Alabama, voters can go to www.Vote411.org to find information about candidates for US President, US Senate, and Alabama Supreme Court, as well as information about the proposed Alabama Constitutional Amendments and the election process itself.

Not only will Vote411 be an amazing feat of public service, but it can also be a valuable recruitment tool as we seek to increase our visibility and membership throughout the state.

I have agreed to chair this project on behalf of the state league board and I need lots of help to make it a success. Here's what I will need:

- Question writers to draft pertinent questions for candidates to answer (we have a list of questions from past elections to start us thinking about what we want to know in this election)
- Eagle-eyed editors to read and correct the league's written copy for the website (candidates supply their own unedited responses to our questions)
- Contact persons (one assigned to each campaign to remind and encourage candidates' participation)
- Computer wizards to help us troubleshoot and educate those of us (like me) with minimal computer skills – mainly to act as “back-up testers”

You do not need to have any special computer skills to help with Vote411 – you just need to be committed to providing the best non-partisan information possible to our citizens. If you are interested in being a part of this interesting project, please contact me (Barbara Caddell at caddellh@comcast.net or 251-610-2279). Come join the fun!!!

I am very proud of the leadership exhibited by Anne Permaloff and our board in finding funding for Vote411 this year. For the future, we have established a special fund within our education fund earmarked for the purchase of Vote411. If you'd like to make a meaningful tax-free donation to maintain this valuable resource, please contact Kristen de la Fuente at klondi1@yahoo.com.



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Scarlett Gaddy, 2nd Vice President
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Kristen De La Fuente, Treasurer
Kim Bailey, Director
Brenda Boman, Director
Barbara Caddell, Director
Gina Finnegan, Director
Joyce Lanning, Director
Jeanine Normand, Director
Ida Tyree-Hyche, Director

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.