



The VOTER

March-April, 2012 VOL. 59, ISSUE 2

Editor - Dot Neely (lwvwcar@gmail.com)

League of Women Voters of Washington County, AR

P.O. Box 4, Fayetteville, AR 72702

www.lwvarwc.org

CALENDAR

MARCH 5 (Monday) - 3:30 p.m. WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH HONOREES PRESS CONFERENCE on steps of the Fayetteville Town Center (More on page 2).

MARCH 8 (Thursday) - 6 p.m. WASHINGTON COUNTY QUORUM COURT MEETING to put ¼ cent transit tax on the April ballot (See "Clarification . . ." page 2).

MARCH 8, 15, & 22 (Thursdays) - 6:00-7:00 p.m. TRASH CLASS\$ (FREE) at the Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce, 123 W. Mountain Street (See TRASH CLASS\$ Flyer on page 4).

MARCH 12-16 & 26-30 (Monday-Friday) - 7:00-7:30 a.m. & 10:20 a.m.-12:10 p.m. HOLT MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT COUNCIL ELECTION REGISTRATION. League Member volunteers needed to assist with student voter registration at Holt Middle School 2365 N. Ruppel Road, Fayetteville, (479)445-1120 (Article on page 3).

MARCH 14 (Wednesday) - 6:30 p.m. LWVWC PROGRAM AND STUDY SELECTION FOR 2012-2013 in the home of Lynn Carver - 401 Lake Shore Drive. Board members should bring finger foods along with ideas. Joyce Hale and Dot Neely will bring the wine.

MARCH 26 (Monday) - 5:30 p.m. WOMEN'S HISTORY HONOREES DINNER at the Clarion Inn, 1255 South Shiloh Drive, Fayetteville, AR.

APRIL 18 (Wednesday) 6:30 p.m. CONSENSUS VOTE ON GOVERNMENT PRIVATIZATION STUDY in the Walker Room of the Fayetteville Public Library, 401 West Mountain Street (See "Privatization Study . . ." page 5).

MAY 1 (Tuesday) HOLT MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT COUNCIL ELECTION. League Member volunteers needed to assist with Student Council election (See page 3 for details).

MAY 17 (Thursday) 6:00 p.m. ANNUAL MEETING at the First United Presbyterian Church, 695 Calvin St, Fayetteville, AR.

JANUARY 12 - APRIL 11 Application period for Hispanic Women's Organization of Arkansas Scholarship for Latino Students.

From the LWVWC President

By Mary Alice Serafini

The League of Women Voters of Washington County welcomes all our members to an active non-partisan organization that is committed to educating voters on public policy. Since our last *VOTER* edition, League members have been quite vocal in calling for a public vote in Washington County on a tax increase for continuing and expanding public transit. The League has also assertively advocated for more responsible environmental oversight of natural gas extraction processes and stronger water quality protection regulations. A diligent group of League members have researched and presented information on the National Study on Privatization for the April consensus meeting. March will afford League members' the chance to speak up about their interests in LWVWC stands and studies. Please be a part of this and come to our March meeting for Program Planning. It may sound dry, but, if you care about an issue, this is your chance to put it before the group! Check out up-coming events in the Voter, then join us in our collective efforts and achievements. There are opportunities to volunteer at the Holt Middle School voter registration for Student Council elections. You can sign up for video production training at Fayetteville Public Access Television, then record our next programs for air to an even larger audience. Whatever your interest, remember that you do make a difference and can help the League provide meaningful, accurate voter education and advocacy in Washington County.

Women's History Month Honorees Press Conference & Dinner

By Bettie Lu Lancaster

The Washington County Women's History Coalition has recognized five women who will be honored at the Women's History dinner on March 26: Bobbie Nell Templeton, Jane Scroggs, Joyce Hale and Sue Madison, all League members, and Lib Horn.

*Women's History Month
Banquet*

A press conference to announce the names of these five outstanding women will be held **Monday, March 5, 2012 at 3:30 p.m. in front of the Fayetteville Town Center**. All League members are urged to attend to support these extraordinary women, many of whom are your friends.

The League of Women Voters of Washington County is a Women's History Honoree Annual Dinner co-sponsor with other women's organizations. This year it will be held at the Fayetteville Clarion Inn at 5:30 pm, Monday, March 26. Tickets are \$20. Come to the dinner and support these wonderful women. Call one of the committee members to order your ticket. Berta Seitz, 442-6256; J. P. Peters, 442-5624; Bettie Lu Lancaster, 521-4069

Clarification on Ozark Regional Transit Funding Issues

By Karen Rollet-Crocker



Northwest Arkansas (NWA) urban population growth surpassed 200,000 between 2000 and 2010. This population increase has triggered a change in the federal public transit funding mechanism and given rise to a major question about the financial future of the Ozark Regional Transit system (ORT). Financial support for local bus systems comes from many sources, including fares, local taxes, statewide funding and federal funding from the federal gas tax. This article describes the LWVWC position on public transit, current transit funding issues in Benton and Washington Counties, the need for expansion of our local system, and the federal funding process.

The League supports public transit, but right now the funding question is being used by opponents who wish to eliminate the opportunity for the public to vote on this tax. It is unfortunate that the funding information has been confusing and has caused the Benton County Quorum Court and the NWA Council to withdraw support for a public vote on the ¼ cent sales tax. Public transit still needs to be at the top of our transportation list—our future economic growth depends on it.

The Washington County Quorum Court meets at 6 pm on Thursday March 8 to conclude discussion and come to a decision on whether or not to include the ¼ cent tax for public transit item on the April ballot.

The League encourages you to come to the Washington Quorum Court meeting to support putting the ORT tax issue on the ballot in April to allow voters a say regarding the fate of public transit in NW Arkansas. Our democratic process includes the right to vote on community issues. We do not believe that powerful private groups should be able to convince our representatives on the Washington County Quorum Court to disallow our right to vote on this issue.

For years, it has been known that, when the NWA urban population reached 200,000, the transit system would be affected by a cut in federal funding for its operations. Since the 2010 census, ORT has become one of the additional 55-60 U.S. bus systems in areas in which population growth has exceeded 200,000.

The bus system financing problem stemming from population growth, occurred nationally over ten years ago, after the 2000 census, when 52 bus systems in areas that had population increases were threatened with loss of funding. They were saved by an 'extension' of operational funding in a new transportation bill. In 2005, another transportation bill also had this 'extension', effective until March 2012. Now, again, new transportation bills are under consideration along with the cut in federal funding for operations. With the current economic concerns and efforts to keep government costs down, one can imagine that many types of cuts are under consideration.

“Clarification . . .” continued

The federal funding process is unbelievably complex. In the Senate, the transportation bill is cobbled together by three different committees: (1) Road and trail funding by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee; 2) Transit by the Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee; 3) Rail and innovative grant programs by the Commerce Committee. Payment is then designated by the Finance Committee. This is a very unwieldy and complicated process, likely to take a considerable amount of time. March is the current deadline, but the answer may not be determined by then.

A House HR7 bill threatens to end "dedicated" funding for public transit altogether (the traditional source of funding is from the federal gas tax). Funding would then come from a general tax account. If this happens, public transit would be subject to the unpredictable annual budget process and could be cut at any time.

These issues at the federal level may seem far away, but they will strongly affect funding at the local level. If federal transit operational funding goes on with an 'extension' as it has in the past, then the ORT system will continue in Washington County with five loop routes where buses come and go each hour. However, at the present this funding is insecure.

These federal issues have also thrown into question the proposed ¼ cent sales tax for generating funds for the growth of the ORT system, which is now very limited. The recent transit plan for Washington County suggests a more expanded system with 19 urban and rural routes running each half hour. This would attract new riders who make a 'choice' to ride the bus to work or shopping because the system is much more widespread and efficient.

A recent visit to the college community of Ann Arbor, Michigan, gives a useful comparison. In Ann Arbor, local funding is \$9,699,500 a year (in Washington County, the amount raised would be about \$7 million a year). The urban population in Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti is 283,904 and has 25 bus routes, providing an effective use of tax money. This comparison points out that our ORT system plan and its funding is reasonable. It also shows how limited our system is at present and why there is less choice and fewer riders.

By the way, to see how much fuel savings you could have when you ride public transit, go to the Ann Arbor Public Transit site www.aata.org and click on 'Calculate your fuel savings when you ride public transit'. Even with a Honda Civic and \$3.50 gas, my savings was \$400 a year. If I managed to sell one of my family's cars, I would save an additional \$5,972.88!



Holt Middle School

Student Council Elections

By Libby Wheeler

Holt Middle School Counselor Jane Corrigan asked for LWVWC volunteers to help with Holt's Student Council officer elections this spring. A planning meeting was held in January with Jennifer Price, the Washington County Election Coordinator, a League member, and several Holt faculty and students. The goal of the meeting was to organize an election so students could learn the process, from candidate filing to voter registration to presenting voter identification on election day. The school has printed up filing forms and a voter ID card with picture for each student and will have ballots ready when the candidates are known.

Holt student voter registration will be March 12-16 and March 26-30 from 7 to 7:30am and 10:20am – 12:10pm each day. The League has been asked to have a volunteer on hand on these dates and times to help with the voter registration, which will be done by the sixth graders. The seventh graders will help the candidates prepare their election speeches and campaigns. We will also need volunteers to help set up and run the **election on Tuesday, May 1st**.

If you are able to volunteer any of these times, please e-mail Libby Wheeler at glwheel@prodigy.net. Holt Middle School is located on N. Ruppel Road off of Mt. Comfort Road in west Fayetteville.

**MARCH 8****Clean Recycling for Cash and the Community****Presenters: Bella Vista AARP**

Come learn about a clean, citizen-run recycling program that costs the community \$0, saved the community a \$100,000 in tip fees, and gave back to the community \$256,000 in grants, to over 50 local organizations.

**Trash Class Sponsors:
Treadwell Institute &
Waste Reduction
Resources**

MARCH 15**Metrics that Matter . . . when talking trash and recycling****Presenter: Don Marr, Chief of Staff, City of Fayetteville**

In this economy, you bet numbers matter. How can you determine the cost effectiveness of your recycling program? Learn about the expenses, the revenues, and the savings associated with reducing waste streams.

**TRASH CLASS\$****March 8, 15 & 22 / 6:00-7:00pm**

Fayetteville, Chamber of Commerce /123 W. Mountain St.

FREE & OPEN to the PUBLIC**MARCH 22****Silver Bullets in Solid Waste
Presenters: Fran Alexander,
Ron Giles, & Louise Mann**

Most recycling programs in Arkansas were started by volunteers. These citizens got firsthand understanding of markets, contamination, and worker safety. Unfortunately most programs did not create infrastructure for continued citizen involvement. Reviewing the lessons of our recycling past could save the community time, money and missteps in the future.

**FREE PUBLIC PARKING
- ACROSS THE STREET
AFTER 6:00PM**

**Fact Check Resources for Campaign Advertising Now Available
By Joyce Hale**

Are you hearing claims in national campaign ads where you question their "truthiness"? The 2012 campaign advertising season is shaping up to be the most expensive on record now that Super PAC ads are being produced without contributor limits. Media coverage is at a saturation level but reliable content is often strained or altogether non-existent. While candidates claim they avoid making negative ads, the Super PACs representing them consistently go in that direction.

The Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania is providing fact checking resources to help individuals judge ad content in presidential and congressional campaign ads. The following links can be educational and entertaining. Check them out.



<http://www.flackcheck.org/> features ads demonstrating poor tactics in a humorous way. Examples show how difficult it would be for Abraham Lincoln to get elected today when lifting statements out of context.



Want to know more about the congressional and presidential candidates? Here are some sites you might find interesting.

<http://www.factcheck.org/> will link you to the background of this non-partisan organization along with who funds them. You will want to see what political Internet rumors have gone "viral", quizzes you can take on your political fact savvy and featured articles giving the facts behind the claims.



OPEN SECRETS - <http://www.opensecrets.org/> A site run by the nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics that provides information on campaign finances, personal finances, earmarks and more.

FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION - <http://fec.gov/> An official government website run by the Federal Election Commission that provides campaign finance reports of federal candidates and PACs.

TAXPAYER - <http://www.taxpayer.net/> Taxpayers for Common Sense is an independent and non-partisan voice for taxpayers working to increase transparency and expose and eliminate wasteful and corrupt subsidies, earmarks, and corporate welfare.

Privatization Study

By Libby Wheeler, Susan Rausch, Karen Minkel, and Karen Crocker with help from JP Peters

The first phase of the LWVWC's participation in the National LWV's Privatization Study was completed on February 22 with an information meeting at the Fayetteville Public Library. A panel of four local Leaguers (good readers, not experts) did their best to define, give a brief history of, and discuss the legal issues around privatization in the US. Special attention was given to education and the pros and cons of charter schools.

The most common form of privatization is contracting out, where the government provides the funding for a service, which is privately delivered. Technological services and services that are part of a revenue stream are well suited to privatization. A case study of a wastewater treatment plant in Ohio was used to illustrate how privatization can be done successfully. Panelist Karen Rollet-Crocker provided information on our Fayetteville sewer plants, which are successfully contracted out to a large private firm that manages wastewater plants all over the country. Thorough attention to detail in formulating contracts is essential to public/private partnerships. Contracting out social services involving vulnerable populations (prisons, mental health facilities, youth services), where profit is more difficult to achieve without limiting services offered and wages of qualified personnel, needs special oversight and transparency.

Privatization of here-to-fore public sector services is increasing, and citizens need to be aware of the best practices for successful privatization. Please check the privatization materials on the LWVWC's website and attend the **April 18th Consensus Meeting**, when our League will determine its stand for advocacy on this important issue in the Walker Room of the Fayetteville Public Library, 401 West Mountain Street.

Marion Orton Memorial Scholarship Presented

By Mary Alice Serafini



The League of Women Voters of Washington County received gifts in honor of Marion Orton, a League member who was active and engaged in environmental issues and policies. The Board of Directors voted to combine and offer the gifts as a grant for a student at the University of Arkansas who is engaged in research on environmental policy. On Monday, February 27, a check for \$500 was presented to Angela Hines whose PhD dissertation is a national study on environmental justice and marginalized populations. The \$500 grant will allow Ms. Hines to give concrete feedback to the participants so that they can use the information to increase the involvement of marginalized populations in environmental issues. The League looks forward to learning more about environmental justice from Ms. Hines.

LWVWC Call for Nominations

The LWVWC Nominating Committee would welcome suggestions from the membership about individuals to serve on the 2012-2013 Board of Directors. This is an excellent way learn more about issues and establish friendships while building a strong organization. Contact Genie Donovan, Committee Chair, at gdonovan29@sbcglobal.net if you or someone you know would like to participate more fully in LWVWC activities.

Natural Gas Pricing and What that Means for You

By Joyce Hale

The goal of the League's focus in studying natural gas (NG) has been largely to understand the environmental impacts of extraction and advocate for protection of water, air, and the land. While there are many factors influencing production in the Fayetteville Shale, the issue of pricing now carries huge consequences that are only marginally understood by the public. For those who may find economics and business matters less than exciting, the drama that is playing out because of natural gas pricing will have direct consequences for all of us personally, as well as environmental impacts. Everyone should have a sense of how we arrived at this point and where we are headed, if we hope to influence energy policies in a healthy, sustainable way.

Arkansas's natural gas wells are recognized as being some of the least expensive to develop because of their geology, a minimum of state regulations, and a favorable political climate. The abundance of surface water, low cost labor, and modest taxation were additional benefits for industry. A land rush of leasing activity started about 2004 as NG prices were beginning to rise and speculators rapidly secured acreages that would require massive investments in order to secure the leases before they expired. With prices continuing upward large investments to develop enough wells to lock-in the leases seemed very do-able.

After spending vast amounts on exploration, signing bonuses, public relations, well development and infrastructure, production was profitable and economic projections were rosy for companies, royalty owners, and state coffers. This led to further investment speculation. Studies funded by the industry projected strong earnings without a dip in demand in sight. But then the signs of over production began to surface about the time that exploration and production companies were having cash flow difficulties. In order to continue the intensive capital investment track they were on, mergers and sales to foreign interests began taking place to find deeper pockets. But still the prices continued to drop.

A weakened economy along with a mild winter further eroded demand and overloaded storage capacity, which traditionally emptied in the winter making room for summer production. In order to cope with this glut, the appeal to export liquefied natural gas (LNG) and encourage vehicle conversion from gasoline to compresses natural gas (CNG) has come into full bloom.



Liquefied natural gas (LNG) tanker

This change from being an importer of natural gas to an exporter in less than a decade introduces serious policy issues. Once the U.S. has the capacity to export LNG into the world market, we will be subject to prices being paid in Japan, China, and Europe. Production will increase substantially once the price generates a profit over production and environmental risks will continue if regulations have not been improved. The intensive, expanded production of LNG (largely methane) will have serious

negative impacts on climate change. Ironically, the price increase will make use of NG less favorable in electrical power generation so that coal will remain the fuel of choice for generating plants.

University of Arkansas Immigration Law Clinic By Mary Alice Serafini

Elizabeth Young, Founder, Director, and Professor of the University of Arkansas Immigration Law Clinic provided an informative talk on the Immigration Law Clinic on February 15 at the First United Methodist Church. Numerous League members availed themselves of the meal, fellowship, and information. The Clinic provides opportunities for students preparing for a career in immigration law or general practice by developing critical skills through experiences. The Clinic has a commitment to the community to offer pro bono representation to people in need of legal assistance in immigration.

Professor Young described the various laws which impact the status of immigrants to the United States. She gave historical information on the creation of the laws and the impact on individuals and families. Of particular concern is the status of an estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants in the United States. The pathway to citizenship is complex and lengthy.

People in need of the Immigration Law Clinic (<http://law.uark.edu/prospective/jd/immigration-law-clinic.html>) can contact the clinic and work with students who have specialized training in immigration law along with an experienced immigration attorney

Immigration Law Clinic contact information and additional resource links and are listed below:

Mailing Address – Immigration Law Clinic/University of Arkansas School of Law/1045 West Maple Street/Fayetteville, AR 72701

UA School of Law Telephone – (479)575-5601

About the Clinic - <http://law.uark.edu/prospective/jd/about-the-clinic.html>

Immigration Resources - <http://law.uark.edu/prospective/jd/immigration-law-clinic.html>

Prospective Clients - <http://law.uark.edu/prospective/jd/prospective-clients.html>

Perspectivos Clientes - <http://law.uark.edu/prospective/jd/perspectivos-clientes.html>



Fayetteville Public Access Television

Source: http://www.accessfayetteville.org/government/city_tv/public_access_television/index.cfm



The City of Fayetteville supports the free-speech efforts of its residents by providing a platform that can be used to express your views and opinions on any subject. Fayetteville Public Access Television is YOUR channel. You, the residents, decide what is telecast.

Fayetteville Public Access Television is telecast to viewers on Cox Communications cable channel 218; AT&T Uverse channel 99; and is streamed on the Internet.

In addition to providing an entire channel dedicated to the programs produced and provided by the residents, the City of Fayetteville also provides all the talent and resources needed to teach residents to become video producers! **Any resident can learn how to make their own video programs through FREE classes.** The City of Fayetteville also provides professional-level video equipment you can use to make programs at no charge!

Fayetteville Public Access Television is operated under contract with Your Media, a local, non-profit media support organization. For more information and the program guide visit the Fayetteville Public Access Television website: www.faypublic.tv

UA Cooperative Extension Service Water Quality Podcasts
(<http://www.uaex.edu/washington/podcast/default.htm>)
By Dot Neely

League members are invited to visit the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service Website to view any or all of 11 audio-video programs on the importance of protecting water quality, in general, and the source waters that enter public water supplies (Beaver Lake in Northwest Arkansas), in specific.

The entertaining, informative videos cover various topics including tips for using water resources more efficiently; the water cycle and watershed processes; ways in which composting, rain barrels, and rain gardens help to protect water quality; methods for managing pet waste and reducing or eliminating polluted stormwater runoff; and the value of soil tests in determining appropriate fertilizer and pesticide applications. "Podcast" run-times vary from two to 10 minutes.

Funding for the video series was provided by the Arkansas Natural Resource Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency. The series is available for a limited time only, so give in to your curiosity now and view a few "Podcasts" from the list provided below:

- Composting to Protect Water Quality (6:03 minutes)
- Soil Testing to Protect Water Quality (2:39 minutes)
- Using Rain Barrels to Protect Water Quality (2:57 minutes)
- Using Rain Gardens to Protect Water Quality (3:24 minutes)
- What is a Watershed (5:51)
- Measuring the Yard to Protect Water Quality (4:17 minutes)
- Protecting Water Quality from Stormwater Runoff (4:22 minutes)
- How to Build a Rain Barrel to Protect Water Quality (7:28 minutes)
- How to Build a Rain Garden to Protect Water Quality (6:03 minutes)
- How to Calibrate the Fertilizer or Pesticide Spreader to Protect Water Quality (9:38 minutes)
- Protecting Water Quality by Properly Managing Pet Waste (2:20 min)

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF WASHINGTON COUNTY
Post Office Box 4
Fayetteville, AR 72702

Nonprofit Organization
U. S. Postage Paid
Fayetteville, AR
Permit #461