



The VOTER

May-June 2012 VOL. 59, ISSUE 3

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League of Women Voters of Washington County, AR

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CALENDAR

MAY 7 (Monday) – EARLY VOTING BEGINS for May 22, 2012 Elections and NW Arkansas Transit

MAY 17 (Thursday) – 6 p.m. LWVWC ANNUAL MEETING at the First United Presbyterian Church, 695 Calvin St, Fayetteville, AR. (See “League . . . Meeting” pp. 1-2)

MAY 22 (Tuesday) VOTE . . . “YOUR VOTE COUNTS!” Polls are open from 7:30 AM to 7:30 PM. You can find your precinct and voting place at the following website (See “Important Elections . . .” p. 2):

<http://www.co.washington.ar.us/index.aspx?page=374>

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From the LWVWC President

By Mary Alice Serafini

This Spring has been a time for study, forums, voter participation and thinking ahead to the next League year. Members should have received an invitation to the Annual Meeting with ideas for programs for next year, as well as nominations and a reasonable budget for the next year. Please do join us for the non-stop dinner chatter, our delightful speaker, Brenda Blagg, and the opportunity to influence next year’s programs and voter education. Speaking of voter education, League members enjoyed helping with Holt Middle School’s voter registration, voter verification, and ballot counting for the six Student Council positions (all very active campaigns) and put our signage, “Vote, It Counts!” to good use as a donation. Candidate forums for the judicial positions, held in the Fayetteville City Hall Council Chambers, were very informative with Rob Leflar and Suzanne Clark, both experienced in the law profession, as moderators. A great discovery at City Hall was that the City of Fayetteville makes the Circuit and Appeals Court Candidate Forums available on the internet at accessfayetteville.org, in addition to public broadcasts on Cox Cable and AT&T Digital TV. Voter Service topped off the forums with a vibrant discussion led by Doug Thompson on the ¼ center public transportation ballot issue. While the League supports the tax, this was a balanced discussion of the pros and cons, giving the public vital information on which to base their votes. Thanks to all who participated in the LWVUS study and consensus process on privatization of government services. We learned a lot and hope to provide voter education in the next League year for our citizens. Let’s make democracy work and continue to support efforts to have a well-informed community of voters!

League of Women Voters of Washington County Annual Meeting

by Mary Alice Serafini

All members are invited and encouraged to join us at the annual meeting featuring our traditional exchange of brilliant conversation and ideas with a complement of eclectic potluck offerings. **On Thursday, May 17, beginning at 6 PM, we will gather at the Fayetteville First United Presbyterian Church/695 Calvin Street** for dinner followed by some fun with **Brenda Blagg, Northwest Arkansas Premier Journalist** as

LWVWC Annual Meeting (continued from Page 1) . . .

keynote speaker. Brenda is a regional editor, a newspaper editorial board member, and an opinion writer, producing personal columns and editorials for Northwest Arkansas newspapers. She draws on a long career in newspaper journalism to inform her opinions. For a complete run down of her amazing accomplishments, particularly as an advocate for freedom of information, go to <http://blog.arkansasalumni.org/brenda-blagg-wins-ernie-deane-award-for-2011/>. You really won't want to miss her - because, in addition to her expertise and remarkable career, her subtle and intelligent sense of humor just can't be beat!

As part of this year's Annual Meeting, you will influence the programs for next year, elect officers and board members to the intense and fun-loving LWVWC Board of Directors, and give your input on a very healthy budget. Do come, bring a dish to share, and enjoy the evening!

Important Elections May 22, 2012

by Bettie Lu Lancaster

On May 22 important judicial positions will be filled. Washington County voters will elect judges on the Arkansas Supreme Court, the Arkansas Court of Appeals, and two divisions of the Circuit Court including the drug court. An important Transit Tax proposal is on the ballot, and the political parties will hold their primaries.

The Democratic Party primaries will decide candidates for President of the United States, Arkansas House District 85, J.P. Districts 7 and 13, and Constable District 10. There are more contests in the Republican Primaries. Republicans will choose candidates for U.S. President, State Senate Districts 1, 5 and 7, State House Districts 80 and 81, J.P. District 15, and six different Constable districts.

What District am I in? Where do I go to vote?

District lines have been redrawn and J.P. Districts have been added since the last census. Go online to <http://www.Vote411.org> or phone the County Clerk's office at 444-1700 for information.

How do I decide who gets my vote?

In April the League sponsored a forum for each of three judicial contests. Suzanne Clark questioned candidates for Circuit Judge - District 4/Division 6: Mark Lindsay and Brenda Austin. Law Professor Robert B. Leflar moderated two panels: candidates for Circuit Judge - District 4/Division 4, Cristi Beaumont, Bob Lambert and Amy Estes Turner and candidates for the Arkansas Court of appeals - Kenneth Hixson and Niki Cung. These forums were videotaped and will be broadcast over Fayetteville's Government Channel several times before the May 22nd election.

It made sense to ask lawyers to moderate these judicial panels. Both Clark and Leflar did an excellent job! In his introduction, Rob Leflar emphasized that men are welcome members of the League, and, as a member, he was following in the footsteps of his mother and his father.

On May 2nd a very different forum was presented. Doug Thompson, Political Editor of the Northwest Arkansas Media, moderated a forum discussing the pros and cons of an important ballot issue, a **proposed ¼ cent Transit Tax**. Although the League supports this tax, the purpose of the forum was to present the facts so that voters could make their own decision. Panelists were Jeff Hawkins, Executive Director of the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission and Jerre Van Hoose, former Mayor of Springdale. This forum will also be broadcast over the Fayetteville Government Channel several times and Butterfield Trail Village broadcast these forums on their in-house channel.

Be sure to vote in this important election May 22, or vote early at the Court House beginning May 7th.

“FACEBOOK/101”: A LWVWC Summer 2012 Social Media Seminar by Ivy Mullen

I would like to inform you of a new publicity initiative involving social media and web engagement. The League of Women Voters of Washington County regularly contributes to the voters' knowledge of local, state, and federal issues. Most recently, the League conducted a study on government privatization, therefore providing the community with an opportunity to learn about a prominent trend affecting public services and our daily lives overall.

As a member, you understand the importance of getting this type of information to as many people as possible. As the **LWVWC Publicity Chair**, it is my responsibility to ensure that is exactly what happens. In today's age of technology and information overload, however, getting the word out has become an organic, community effort, particularly in the world of social media. Although sometimes misused, outlets such as Facebook, Twitter and other sites can be powerful tools for advertising.

Wonder why? Because often times the "promotion" that occurs in social media doesn't look like advertising at all, it looks like *conversation*. Utilizing social media tools, such as Facebook, takes "word-of-mouth advertising" to a whole new level. Conversations on Facebook are instant, visual, and permanent. They create a way to track what people are talking about, how often, and when.

The beauty of social media is that when people are interested in a topic they tell their friends about it, start a conversation, and create a "buzz." This organic flow of information can be powerful and helpful to groups, like the League, whose mission involves disseminating knowledge to the public.

So, League members, this is where I need your help. The first step of growing LWVWC's web presence is the effective utilization of Facebook. To this end, I would like to organize a **basic Facebook training** for people who want to learn how to use some tools on the site and help make this new publicity initiative a success.



This training will be for *you*, so to ensure it covers topics you will find helpful, **please send me your feedback allowing me to gauge member interest and formulate the content.**

The following are topics I tentatively plan to cover:

- Why should I use Facebook?: A brief overview of the many ways to use Facebook and find the one that works for you.
- How to "Like," "Share," and "Comment" on topics, and why this is important.
- Organizing your "Friends" list.
- Inviting your friends to events.

The Facebook training will likely take place in mid-summer. Once I have heard from you I will come up with a plan and send an update. Remember, social media has become the predominant way to reach many people from multiple demographics, and to breathe life into important topics and issues.

Thank you for your time,

Ivy Mullen/LWVWC Publicity Chair
ivy.mullen@gmail.com

NW Arkansas Transportation Issues

By Karen Rollet-Crocker

The Washington County vote for the ¼ cent sales tax for bus transit is on the ballot starting with early voting on May 7 extending to the official voting date of May 22nd. The board of the Washington County League of Women Voters has agreed to support this public transit funding effort.

Karen Rollet-Crocker has been working with Joyce Hale to produce leaflets that can be handed out at the Fayetteville Farmer's Market and other venues. This leaflet was translated into Spanish for distribution at the celebration of Cinco de Mayo (5th of May) at the Jones Center in Springdale.

Jerre Van Hoose, former mayor of Springdale, and Jeff Hawkins, Director of the NWA Regional Planning Commission participated in a May 2nd panel discussion moderated by Doug Thompson. The discussion was videotaped and shown on Fayetteville's Government Channel.

Two new regional planning efforts, which have public involvement, are underway at the NWA Regional Planning Commission: 1) Northwest Arkansas Livability Partners; 2) Northwest Arkansas Alternative Analysis Federal Grant Funded Study

1) Northwest Arkansas Livability Partners is a coalition of organizations and special interest groups who are making a joint effort to address regional planning issues in housing, transportation, and environmental quality. The "**Partners**" approach to community building is based on Federal government programs initiated to help communities improve access to affordable housing, increase transportation options and lower transportation costs, while protecting the environment. Three major Federal agencies are involved: Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Department of Transportation (DOT), and The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The effort incorporates six principles of livability into funding programs, policies, and future legislative proposals.

The League will be attending **Northwest Arkansas Livability Partners** meetings. If you, as a member of the League, wish to serve as a co-representative at up-coming meetings of the "**Partners**", please call Karen Rollet-Crocker at 442-9360.

2) The Northwest Arkansas Alternative Analysis, funded with a \$250,000 Federal Grant, will focus on the proposed "Light Rail" corridor that would extend from Greenland, in Washington County, to Bentonville, in the northern part of Benton County, along the existing railroad. This section of the original railroad is approximately 35 miles long. There are four existing train depots in Fayetteville, Springdale, Rogers and Bentonville, all of them located in the historical downtowns. Revitalizing these train depots and making them functional once again would automatically aid in the regeneration process of the respective downtown areas, a plan that all the aforementioned city governments are interested in pursuing. These old downtowns have existing designated parking areas that could be used as park-and ride lots. Using the extant depots would also encourage more business and recreation activities in the core of each city.

The Alternative Analysis study will address shorter Light Rail "starter" segments or phased implementation. It should also address BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) modes in the same corridor. Additional alternatives may include some new location alignments and street-running rail sections that could operate in streetcar mode or in exclusive lanes with contra-flow sections.

Improving the existing bus system may be necessary, as critical feeder routes to any new transportation alternatives will be required. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities should also be evaluated to support the comprehensive alternative transportation system.

After three years worth of attempts to secure funding, the Regional Planning Commission was finally awarded the grant for the study earlier this year. Project goals descriptions development is underway, and a consultant is to be chosen. The League expects to follow this planning process as it unfolds.



PLEASE LIKE
 “Advocates for Public
 Transit”
 and “Transit, Not Traffic”



**VOTE FOR OUR
 FUTURE!**

BUS TRANSPORTATION WORKS!

¼ cent sales tax for Ozark Regional Transit

Early voting starts May 7

Election on May 22

Funds will be spent only on riders in Washington Co.

Additional funds will provide

**28 fixed routes
 15 paratransit vans**

Service Hours

**6 am to Midnight
 Monday – Sunday**

BENEFITS OF PUBLIC TRANSIT

ECONOMY

Money spent locally
 Enable people with no transportation to get to
 work
 Expand employment opportunities for low income
 families

ENVIRONMENT

Alternative to higher gasoline prices
 Reduce cars on road

QUALITY OF LIFE

Access to shops, services for seniors & people with disabilities
 Transportation for kids to after school and summer activities

FUTURE

Attract new businesses and industry
 Affordable, easy, convenient travel

For information: www.transit.org

Advocates for Public Transit

Endorse! Donate! Volunteer!

2012-2013 League Year

by Mary Alice Serafini

Members of the LWVWC gathered at Lyn Carver’s home on March 14, 2012 to discuss and offer ideas for programs for the coming League Year. The discussion focused on providing our citizens with accurate voter education pertaining to the following listed program topics during the next League year.

1. Panel to discuss education’s Common Core (Result of LWVUS Study)
2. Panel to discuss local examples of privatization of government services (Result of LWVUS Study)
3. Innovative transportation alternatives
4. Social justice issues regarding immigration
5. Problems of bullying, particularly cyber-bullying
6. Local infrastructure and development issues
7. Suggestions from the membership

All members who attend the **Annual Meeting, on Thursday, May 17 at 6 PM**, can add to or change the topics list, offer ideas, and vote on our priorities for the next League year. Your input is important and will make a difference. Give it some thought and come prepared to discuss, advocate, and make some decisions. As we say, “Your Vote Counts!”

**Activism for Resource Extraction Safeguards:
It All Started with the League of Women Voters of Arkansas**
by Joyce Hale

The League of Women Voters of Arkansas's most vital function is educating voters. In true LWV fashion, members of the LWV of Fairfield Bay thought it important to get information from all perspectives before passing judgment on the natural gas industry that was about to change the face of Arkansas. They knew that listening only to reports generated and paid for by the industry would not provide the whole picture. In 2007 after agreeing to take the topic on as a state study, a panel was formed through co-sponsorship of the Arkansas Sierra Club and LWVAR. This program brought representation from a mineral/well owner, head of Arkansas Oil & Gas Commission, a senior advisor for the Natural Resource Defense Council, an Arkansas legislator from the impacted region, and an attorney from the Texas region where horizontal hydro-fracking was first developed. This program set the stage for a state study on environmental and economic issues that were not yet in the public's awareness. By developing consensus positions, LWVAR was free to educate and advocate.

At first the LWVAR was the lone voice to urge people to look past the industry's claims. But as the awareness of a poorly regulated land rush developed, other individuals and organizations began building on what the League had started. When our sister Leagues in New York and Pennsylvania became aware of our advanced knowledge and activism, they invited us to be part of the LWVUS Safe Drilling and Mining Caucus that was being organized to alert League members throughout the country about the environmental concerns of resource development. Two members from Arkansas, Joyce Hale, LWVWC, and Nell Matthews, LWVPC, participated in this caucus and saw the entire convention unanimously adopt a resolution outlining mining and drilling safeguards that were needed.

This was the ambitious and visionary beginning that continues actively today. Many educational programs have been conducted throughout the state. Even Josh Fox, producer of the Oscar nominated, *Gasland*, was hosted by the League for film screenings in Fayetteville and Clinton, AR and at the Clinton School of Public Policy. To add strength to our advocacy, we now interact with landowner organizations (AR for Responsible Gas Development), environmental organizations (Sierra Club and Ozark Society), and public policy groups (Arkansas Public Policy Panel and Arkansas Conservation Coalition). The League has been at the forefront in helping develop new regulatory legislation, reports, and website references. Associations made through blogs, Facebook, and email contacts have produced vast amounts of information that is widely shared around the world.

Reform is a Must

Activism in gas drilling has matured, but more people **MUST** take part to make a difference. Now that we know what we are up against, legislation is needed to put environmental and public health safeguards in place and see that taxpayers do not pick up the tab for the industry's damage. **Volunteers are badly needed to gather petition signatures to correct the existing severance tax.** The present tax's loopholes prevent the industry and mineral owners from paying a tax comparable to other states. The industry's damage to highways alone had grown to \$454 million in 2010. Only \$55 million was paid last year in severance after companies received \$3.5 billion in sales. **League members are needed to help with the petition drive, please call Joyce Hale 479-527-2777 and lend a hand.**

Holt Middle School Students Experience Election and Voting Procedures By Libby Wheeler



Student Council Officer Elections at Holt Middle School occurred on Tuesday, May 1st. Students had the choice of voting for their officers for the coming school year electronically or by paper using privacy booths and a ballot box. By the end of the day, results were tallied, and the new officers announced.

Under the leadership of school counselor, Jane Corrigan, the Student Council election process closely resembled a political election. Students had to fill out a voter registration form and sign the voting ledger in March to qualify to vote. They were issued a picture ID, which they presented as they signed the ledger again to vote on May 1st.

Candidates were 6th graders, who will be 7th graders in the fall. They had previously represented their “pack” (Holt students are Huskies; three homerooms together are a pack) in student council and now wanted to be officers. They campaigned and made presentations before the whole student body. Several of the candidates used power points in their short speeches; one created a video. How times have changed!

League members helped with the planning process for the election, the voter registration, the voting, and the vote counting. The students involved in the process were enthusiastic as were the League members who helped: Genie Donovan, Bettie Lu Lancaster, Rita Officer, Joyce Hale, Anita Bukey, Karen Crocker, Mary Alice Serafini and Libby Wheeler. Extending this election process to other area schools would be a worthwhile project in the coming years.

Privatization Consensus by Susan Rausch

The League of Women Voters of Washington County met on April 18 to address the privatization consensus questions provided by National. More than 20 members and several guests were present for the discussion. The consensus report has been submitted to the National Office. It has been suggested that we convene a panel of local decision-makers to address this issue at our Membership Meeting in September. Suggestions for panelists will be greatly appreciated.

LWVWC Nominating Committee Report by Genie Donovan

The LWVWC Nominating Committee is pleased to nominate the following members as Officers of the Board for the next two years:

1st Vice President - Karen Rollet-Crocker

Secretary - Nancy McCartney

Members who will be nominated as Board Members:

Two Year Terms - Rita Officer, Ivy Mullen, Laura Kellams, and Libby Wheeler

One Year Term - Carole Harter

Officers who will continue to serve are:

President - Mary Alice Serafini

2nd Vice President - Joyce Hale

Treasurer - Susan Rausch

Continuing Board Members are:

Dot Neely, Sally (Kelly) King, Martha Ward

New Member or Renewal Application & Interest Survey Form

Name _____ Date _____ New/Renewal _____

Address _____ City/Zip _____

Phone Number _____ E-Mail (Please print carefully) _____

DUES: Individual Membership - \$40 Family Membership - \$60 Student - \$20

If preferred payment is by check and delivery by mail, write check payable to "LWVWC" and send to the following address: LWVWC / P. O. Box 4 / Fayetteville, AR 72702

Check LWVWC activities for which you may be interested in volunteering:

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attend City Council, Planning Commission, Task Force, Quorum Court, etc. Meetings when needed | <input type="checkbox"/> Lobby State Legislature |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Voter Registration | <input type="checkbox"/> Provide a Facility/Home for Meetings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help with TV Candidate Forums | <input type="checkbox"/> Provide Transportation to Meetings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help with Publicity, Displays, or Posters | <input type="checkbox"/> Video Record or Photograph Activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assist with Mailings | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter Writing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assist with Telephoning | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Provide Food for Events | |

I wish to receive calls to action on specific issues of interest: All League Concerns _____ Education _____ Environment _____
 Social Policies _____ Voting & Governance _____

I wish to limit my membership to receiving the newsletter. _____

I do not wish to join, but would like to make a contribution (any amount appreciated). _____

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
 OF WASHINGTON COUNTY
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