



Tennessee Voter

League of Women Voters of Tennessee, P.O. Box 158369
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Winter 2011-2012

Officers and Directors for 2011-13

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Off-Board Position

Lynn Williams, PR/Communications

LWVTN Education Fund Board of Trustees

The elected officers

Brief Calendar for 2012:

March 6: Presidential Preference Primary

March 10: LWVTN Poll Observer Guide Deadline

April: Tennessee State Redistricting Deadline (est.)

April 1: Quarterly PMP due to LWVTN

May 1: County Primary Elections

May 5-6: LWVTN Spring Council (Nashville)

May 14: Lobby Expense Report Due (LWVTN)

June 8-12: National Convention (Washington, DC)

August 2: Tennessee State Primary and County
General Elections

November 6: State and Federal General Elections

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President's Corner

LWVTN SPRING COUNCIL- MAY 5th and 6th

LWVTN Spring Council will be in Nashville at the Club-Hotel Nashville Inn and Suites, 2435 Atrium Way. There are fifteen (15) rooms with king beds available on May 4th and May 5th. Five (5) rooms with 2 queen beds are available on May 5th. The rooms, including hot breakfast, cost \$62.95. Please call 615-883-0500 by April 4th to insure this room rate. Looking forward to seeing you there.

Margie Parsley
LWVTN President

KNOW THE 411 ON VOTING WITH LWV'S VOTE411.ORG

A new League web-based tool is available for you to use as a quick and easy reference for information on voting in your district. The National LWV Ed Fund sponsored implementation of *VOTE411.org* that includes links and information about your representatives and your polling location. In addition, it includes a facility that you may use to provide information on local candidates and local issues.

LWVTN encourages the use of the VOTE411 program by your Local League. You may find instructions and webinars for adding the links on your website, developing a voter guide and adding local ballot information through the following link on the national website, <http://www.lwv.org/our-work/educating-voters>. In addition, please contact me (edwardskm@aol.com or fax to 865-483-0620) with specific questions. We all learn from each other's experience and questions.

Submitted by Kathy Edwards, Voter Service Chair

2012 LWVTN Priority Issues

ELECTIONS: ENSURE THAT ALL ELIGIBLE VOTERS ARE ABLE TO VOTE

- Work to repeal the new Photo ID law, work to amend the law to mitigate its discriminatory effects, and educate the public about the law.
- Expand early voting.
- Provide funding for timely implementation of Tennessee Voter Confidence Act.

EDUCATION: PROVIDE QUALITY EDUCATION

- Maintain funding and support for the public school system, including state funded voluntary pre-kindergarten programs.
- Monitor efforts to adopt public school vouchers.
- Maintain appointed school superintendents.
- Monitor ongoing state education policies intended to promote higher levels of student achievement.

OPEN GOVERNMENT: ENSURE CITIZEN ACCESS

- Support open government through access to public records, open meetings, public notice by printed and electronic means, and general government transparency.
- Support transparency in redistricting, ensuring that districts meet criteria regarding compactness, community preservation, population and competitiveness.

RESPONSIBLE BUDGET: PROTECT THE SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE BY MAINTAINING FUNDING OF SAFETY NET SERVICES

- Maintain integrity of safety net services: community based services for child welfare, education, TennCare and other health services, human services, juvenile justice, mental health and disability services systems. These services are interrelated. Reducing resources for one system threatens the viability of all.

HEALTH CARE REFORM: IMPLEMENT THE PATIENT PROTECTION AND AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

- Support timely legislative and administrative implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, consistent with the Tennessee Health Insurance Exchange Guiding Principles.

ENVIRONMENT: PROTECT AND STRENGTHEN STANDARDS TO ENSURE CLEAN AIR, WATER, AND LAND AND ENERGY QUALITY

- Regulate hydraulic fracturing of gas wells to protect Tennessee water, health and infrastructure from contamination.
- Restrict mountain top removal, coal mining and construction or use of any new outlet for discharge of wastes into waters of the state.
- Maintain dedicated funds from real estate transfers for land acquisition and protection.

JUDICIAL SELECTION: RETAIN MERIT-BASED SELECTION AND RETENTION

- Maintain a system that will ensure Tennessee keeps its high standard of quality for appellate judges, free of partisanship.

REVENUES: SUPPORT REVENUES FOR ESSENTIAL HUMAN SERVICES THROUGH AN EQUITABLE AND FAIR SYSTEM OF TAXATION

- Oppose amending the Tennessee Constitution to prohibit adoption of an income tax.
- Close tax loopholes and improve equity by adopting: Out of State Sales Tax Act, Single Article Cap Removal, and Tennessee Small Business Protection Act (requires “combined reporting” of income by multi-state corporations and reduces sales tax on food).

IMMIGRATION: SUPPORT POLICY CHANGES THAT ENSURE IMMIGRANTS ARE TREATED FAIRLY

THE LEGISLATURE, LWVTN LOBBYISTS, AND YOU

The legislature, our lobbyists (Stewart Clifton and Anne Ross) and our action committee have been very active already this winter. We hope everyone is receiving the action alerts and that the e-mail addresses we use from the LWVUS website are current. Please make sure your local league has your updated e-mail address.

LWVTN voted our lobbyists a raise this year. We have been receiving donations but we do need more help. Please send a contribution to the Lobbyist Fund c/o Marian Ott. Even a small sum is much appreciated.

Thank you.

VOTER SERVICE CALLING FOR POLL OBSERVERS

The March 6, 2012 election in Tennessee is fast approaching. This election will be the first to apply the new Tennessee Photo ID bill requiring a government-issued photo id in order to vote. We are interested in any affect the new law will have on the voting process and in order to capture that information, Local Leagues are asked to organize and qualify poll watchers for your polling locations.

First, recruit members to be poll observers so you will know how many observers you have and for how long each person may observe the polling location.

Second, determine what poll locations are important or critical to your community and surrounding area. You may decide to observe a mixture of days and hours of Early Voting. On Election Day, you may want to include both active precincts and more rural precincts on Election Day. Early voting observations may provide an early indication of questions or recurring problems. Observing both active and rural precincts will help determine if there were any major differences in distributing information about the photo id requirement to these different populations.

Of most importance is for you to contact your local election commission for information and permission for your poll observers. Tennessee Code allows the presence and activities of poll observers, but they should be known and identified as such to the poll workers.

As you finalize plans for poll observation, think about the demographics of your polling area and your League efforts to distribute information about the new law. These considerations will help you determine what you want to observe about the application of the new law.

The enclosed form includes questions of what LWVTN would like to track. Please use this form and add other observations from your local polls. Please return the completed form back to us by March 10, 2012. You may e-mail it to edwardskm@aol.com or fax to 865-483-0620.

Submitted by Kathy Edwards, Voter Service Chair

LWVTN POLL OBSERVER GUIDE

OBSERVATION DATE:	
POLL LOCATION/ PRECINCT NAME:	
HOURS OBSERVED:	
OBSERVER NAME:	
OBSERVATION	RESPONSE
1. Estimate the number of voters during the observation period.	
2. How many voters had immediately acceptable photo ID? (Estimate percentage of total voters.)	
3. Did voters attempt to present other forms of ID, i.e. a SSN card?	
4. Did voters seem surprised about being asked to present photo ID?	
5. How many voters presented photo ID that was NOT accepted?	
6. How many voters presented a photo ID that required consultation or a call to confirm acceptability?	
7. Was there much discussion between the poll workers about acceptable photo ID that indicated confusion on the law?	
8. Were there many calls made to the Election Commission office regarding photo ID? How many?	
9. How many voters presented no photo ID and completed a Provisional Ballot?	
10. Did any voters leave without voting even a Provisional Ballot?	
11. Of voters completing a Provisional Ballot, were they confused or otherwise unhappy about doing so?	
12. Of voters completing a Provisional Ballot, was the requirement to bring an acceptable photo ID to the Election Commission explained to them?	
13. Did you observe any indication of confusion on the part of the voter? For example did the requirements have to be repeated several times, did they leave complaining to anyone with them, were they leaving to get a photo ID and return?	
OTHER OBSERVATIONS OR COMMENTS:	

Please return by 10 March 2012 by e-mail to edwardskm@aol.com or fax to 865-483-0620.

Open Government: Need for Vigilance

LWVUS Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active participation at all levels of government. The League further believes that governmental bodies must protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible

The League of Women Voters, as shown by the above policy statement adopted in 1984, has a long-standing position in support of open government because transparency is essential to democracy. Current Tennessee "sunshine" laws prohibit two or more public officials from meeting in private to deliberate toward a public policy decision. The law does NOT prohibit socializing or exchanging information. However, when the discussion is deliberating the public's business such as evaluating the pros and cons of various possible policies or decisions, the discussions must be at a properly noticed public meeting. If the deliberations are not public then citizens do not have the opportunity for participation nor the ability to hold public officials accountable for their positions and actions.

Before the legislative session began, the association of county officials proposed that the law be changed to allow private meetings for deliberation so long as there was not a quorum present. The reasoning was to hold county officials to the same standards as the General Assembly. (Since one General Assembly cannot bind a future General Assembly, the current sunshine laws do not apply to the General Assembly.) The proposal was debated by local county commissions with divided results: at least seven counties have turned the proposal down, while at least four have supported it.

The proposal was opposed by the League of Women Voters, Tennessee Coalition for Open Government (LWVTN is a member), and other groups as well as several key state officials, including the Governor and Speaker Harwell. Speaker Harwell was able to persuade sponsor Rep. Glen Casada, R-Franklin, not to introduce the bill this session. LWV members are encouraged to thank Speaker Harwell for her support of the current sunshine laws.

While the private meeting issue has been resolved for now, vigilance is important for all aspects of the sunshine laws. Another proposal that may come up is to allow public meeting notices to be posted exclusively to websites. While the use of websites by public agencies can certainly enhance citizen access to information, such as meeting notices, it is NOT a suitable replacement for the current requirement to post such notices in general circulation newspapers. Not all citizens have regular and easy access to the internet and not all parts of the state have reliable, affordable internet service, especially in rural areas.

Open Government, "Sunshine", is imperative for active, informed citizen participation and the LWVTN remains vigilant about proposed changes to close government!

Submitted by Marian Ott