



Tennessee Voter

League of Women Voters of Tennessee, P.O. Box 158369
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Spring 2012

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Brief Calendar for 2012:

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

It is spring! Time to reflect on the year's activities. Your State Action Committee has been very busy and so has the rest of your State League. Your State League took the **lead in commenting** to public officials **on the new federal health care regulations on the national level**. LWVUS liked our comments enough to **sign on** with us.

In November, we **co-sponsored** one of the series of **meetings** the **Tennessee Health Care Campaign** was holding **across** the state. That meeting was held in Hendersonville. I want to thank the Hendersonville and Nashville Leagues for their strong support in helping to set up the meeting.

Fall continued to be a busy season: The League sponsored a fully funded redistricting contest, **Map It Out!** There were several categories, and students were invited to try their hand at making a balanced district using the new Census information. We were able to keep the web page up and running for a while afterward so that the public could compare what was done to what the Legislature did.

The Tennessee PTA asked us to be the judges for this year's student essay contest on the subject "***I am a good citizen because....***" Children from across the state from kindergarten to high school submitted some very interesting and thoughtful essays

The League also has been involved in the **Tennessee Women's project**. It is a project to create a book about women in Tennessee history for Tennessee high school students. League member Carole Bucy wrote a teachers' guide in 1993 for the League of Women Voters. She has agreed to write the short biography of Nashville League founder Molly Todd, if Molly Todd is chosen for the book.

(continued on next page)

President's Corner (continued from front page)

Beginning with a **summer reading retreat on voting issues** graciously hosted and led by Mary Headrick, LWVTN took action concerning the new law requiring **photo ID to vote**. State Director of Elections Mark Goins attended and shared information. We, then, observed and reported to the state and local election commissions on effectiveness of their outreach to the public and training of poll workers, and had an active poll watching presence at the first elections in March. Many of you participated in this effort. We did not stop there, though. The League supported the bills that would have repealed the law. We will **continue to support the repeal** of this law. We will deal more with this issue next year.

We continued working on getting **effective regulations for fracking**. Mary Headrick, Barbara Devaney and Judy Raines were very involved with the League's fracking regulation push: 1) supplying factual information about the process; 2) bringing the need for regulation of this new industry for the safety of the environment to the attention of **TDEC**. This is an ongoing struggle in all states that have mining or oil industries and many Leagues are joined in this effort.

The State League **nominated Ruby Miller of Oak Ridge** to be on the **slate** of 3 names **provided to the Governor** to serve on the **Tennessee Economic Council on Women**.

I want to remind local Leagues that the **State League** will pay the fee to use LWVUS's **Vote 411.org** this year for a Voter Guide. The Nashville League has decided to use **Vote 411** this year. If your League is considering **Vote 411**, there are webinars provided by LWVUS on their website.

Margie Parsley
LWVTN President

For more of what your State League is doing just keep reading!

LWV State Action Committee Report

April 26, 2012

The League of Women Voters of Tennessee State Action Committee met eight times this legislative session. We met in December to organize an action subcommittee for each of the League's nine priority issues:

Open Government – Marian Ott
Environment – Judy Raines
Education – Debby Gould
Revenue – Karen Weeks
Health Care Implementation – Pat Post and Sue Bredensteiner
Appropriations – Carol Westlake and Sita Diehl
Elections – Lynn Williams
Immigration – Lynda Burman

The chair of each group then invited members across the state to join her in following bills and contacting legislators regarding them. It might be helpful to post these subcommittees and their letters on our website.

The State Action Committee would like to improve our communication with members and increase our membership participation in the State Action Committee meetings. We discovered that the conference call system we have been using is free of charge to the League, but may cost call-in members up to \$20 or \$25 a meeting., depending on their phone service contract. We are exploring the possibility of finding a different system that will make our work more available to members without the onerous cost.

The State Action Committee would also like to devise a more efficient system to send out action alerts to all our members. It is important to make it easier for our members to contact their state legislators and entire legislative committees as they discuss bills that we follow.

The State Action Committee plans to meet in June to address these issues to improve our communication and make plans for next year. We would like to have our subcommittees and their chairs in place when the next legislative session begins. If you have ideas on how we can improve our effectiveness, please contact Barbara Devaney, Chair - State Action Committee, or Margie Parsley, President - LWVTN.

Health Care

BY PATRICIA STOKES

In October, Pat Post and Sue Bredensteiner acting for the LWVN Health Care Committee authored comments addressed to the Department of Health and Human Services on the Proposed Rule on the Affordable Care Act to establish exchanges and qualified health plans that were sent as a joint submission by the LWVTN and the LWVUS.

On November 7, 2011 the Leagues of Women Voters of Tennessee through the work of Hendersonville and Nashville Leagues joined with the United Chambers of Sumner County, and the Tennessee Health Care Campaign in sponsoring a Community Forum about Tennessee's New Health Insurance Marketplace. The program focused on residents and small businesses in north Davidson, Sumner and the surrounding counties. It was moderated by LWVN Health Care Director Patricia Stokes, president and CEO of the Urban League of Middle Tennessee and also featured LWVN member Craig Anne Heflinger, a professor at Vanderbilt whose report, "American Health Care Reform: Serious Business for Tennessee's Small Businesses," shows that only half of Tennessee small businesses offer health insurance to their employees, but nearly all agree it is time to pay attention to health care reform and want to be involved in the process. Mr. Haile requested comments on his White Paper and presentation, which Pat Post prepared and submitted, meeting a pre-Thanksgiving deadline.

In January, Sue Bredensteiner and Pat Post wrote comments responding to the HHS Essential Health Benefits Bulletin: Center for Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight, which had been issued in December as the next step in formulating the state Exchanges. The comments were submitted on January 31, 2012 with support from the LWVUS.

On March 27, 2012, League members Sita Diehl, Tennessee director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and Patricia Stokes, president and CEO of the Urban League of Middle Tennessee participated with other health care advocates in a meeting with Tennessee Commissioner of Commerce and Insurance Julie McPeak. Commissioner McPeak suggested that she is open to and will welcome consumer input. She reemphasized that the department's process is just beginning. She will be meeting with the Governor to determine next steps. She reiterated that Tennessee will be working prudently in order to meet current deadlines and agreed that a roundtable with all sides represented is a good consideration but gave no specific timeline.

OLD POLL WATCHING IS NEW AGAIN

Poll Watching, the League has been doing it for years. It is the best way to determine the fairness and equality of our voting process and to learn of areas that could be improved.

Other groups also poll watch. It is common for candidate representatives to observe the voting process to make sure their candidate is not disadvantaged in any way. Poll watching is also done by focus groups for a particular purpose. For example, to ensure that Americans with disabilities have ease of access for voting. If a candidate representative determines an impropriety, you can predict a lawsuit or a lot of publicity at minimum. Likewise, if the ADA is violated, it is appropriate for that to be recognized and enforced. So, what is the focus or purpose of the League's observations and what do we do with the information? Maybe it is time to take a new look at this old practice.

The national LWV will be doing just that at a caucus at the upcoming convention in June 2012. There will be information on how to organize and properly conduct poll watching. In addition, there will be a discussion on defining a purpose for our observations and collected data.

This past March, Tennessee's Local Leagues observed voting procedure under the newly enacted Photo ID law for the Presidential primary election. On the LWVTN website <http://www.lwvtn.org/files/2012MarPollObs.pdf> is a copy of the observation questions and the results as reported. Look at the percentages of each observation item to the number of total voters. Regarding question 10, voters leaving without even casting a Provisional Ballot, are 3 or 4 non-cast votes considered only a few of the several hundred votes cast OR is that a significant enough number to suggest a call to action? In addition, how does this specific number compare to a response of "yes" or "no"? My personal opinion is that there is strength in statistics.

In August, TN's Photo ID law will be tested more broadly during the General election and poll workers will be further taxed with the effects of new Redistricting at both the state and local levels. We have an opportunity to make a difference with a new focus and purpose to an old practice. Ask yourself: 1) WHY does the League conduct Poll Watching; and 2) WHAT do we intend to do with the observations. Your Local League President and VS Chair will be interested in your thoughts. Poll Watching is an interesting, fun and useful League activity. I encourage you to volunteer this August.

Carbon Pollution Standard for New Power Plants

EPA is proposing to take common-sense steps under the Clean Air Act to limit carbon pollution from new power plants. EPA’s proposed standard reflects the ongoing trend in the power sector to build cleaner plants that take advantage of American-made technologies. The agency’s proposal, which does not apply to plants currently operating or new permitted plants that begin construction over the next 12 months, is flexible and would help minimize carbon pollution through the deployment of the same types of modern technologies and steps that power companies are already taking to build the next generation of power plants. EPA’s proposal would ensure that this progress toward a cleaner, safer and more modern power sector continues.

Power plants are the largest individual sources of carbon pollution in the United States and currently there are no uniform national limits on the amount of carbon pollution that future power plants will be able to emit. Consistent with the US Supreme Court’s decision, in 2009, EPA determined that greenhouse gas pollution threatens Americans' health and welfare by leading to long lasting changes in our climate that can have a range of negative effects on human health and the environment.

The LWV is 100% behind this action, and urges all members to monitor and advocate for it. To quote LWVUS President Elisabeth MacNamara: “Public opinion is clear - voters want the EPA to hold corporate polluters responsible for dirty air and threats to public health. The science is clear - new clean air standards are essential to protect people’s health. The League of Women Voters is pleased that the Administration has chosen the health of children and families instead of giving in to the lobbying of big polluters, coal companies and power plants.”

From LWVUS web site and links to EPA web site

OUR NEW WEBSITE

The League of Women Voters of Tennessee has a new website.

You will find important links, information about events, activities, and action.

Check it out at lwvtn.org and especially check that we have correct and up-to-date information about your local League www.lwvtn.org/LocalLeagues.html.

Please provide corrections and updates to alan@lwvtn.org .

DONORS TO LWVTN FUNDS

(November 1, 2011 through April 30, 2012)

Thanks to the following contributors for supporting LWVTN Funds:

LOBBYIST FUND	OPERATING FUND	EDUCATION FUND (LWVTNEF)
Marion Burger	Sarah Faulkner	Ann Fair
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Elizabeth Walkup		
Lynn Williams		

Contributions, made payable to LWVTN, can be sent to:

LWVTN Treasurer Marian Ott
110 31st Ave N Apt 1001
Nashville, TN s 37203

Notes:

- The LWVTN lobbyist continues to be an essential component of LWVTN efforts on our issues at the state level. In addition to working with the state action committee, the LWVTN lobbyist's weekly legislative reports enable each of us to be more effective in our individual outreach to elected officials. There is strength in numbers...including the number of donors to the LWVTN lobbyist fund.
- The Operating Fund is crucial in keeping LWVTN functioning on a daily basis to keep all Local Leagues and MALs informed on what is happening on important issues.
- The LWVTN Education Fund supports the LWVTN's voter registration and voter education efforts such as candidate and public issue forums. Donations to LWVTNEF are tax deductible.

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