



NC VOTER

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF
NORTH CAROLINA

ELECTION 2008



IN THIS ISSUE

ELECTION 2008

PAGES 1 - 6

***REGISTERING NEW
CITIZENS***

PAGE 2

PROGRAM PLANNING

PAGE 7

***NATIONAL POPULAR
VOTE***

PAGE 7

***STATE BOARD
CALENDAR***

PAGE 7

***SUPPORT THE
LEAGUE***

PAGE 8

Although it seemed at times as if it might never end, it is finally over. And throughout our state and our country, members of the League of Women Voters held candidate forums, worked at the polls, registered new voters, and found new ways to involve the League of Women Voters in the process of electing our officials.

This issue celebrates all the activities of our Leagues in this historic election. We hope you enjoy reading about them and, perhaps, get some ideas for the next one.

Grateful editorial thanks to the Leagues that contributed to this special edition.

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Charlotte/Mecklenburg – Kathleen Balogh
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Dare - Audrey Albrecht
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Macon – Kathleen Balogh
Moore – Louise Romanow
Orange, Durham & Chatham – Kadra Bradford
Piedmont Triad – Betty Ellerbee
Pitt – Betty Ellerbee
Union – Fran Syptak
Wake – Carole Ellis

For telephone numbers and email addresses, please go to lwwnc.org, Members Page, or call the League office.

REGISTERING NEW CITIZENS

Robbie Wilmarth, ODC

I recently had the privilege of helping to staff the LWV table as the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) conducted the ceremony when citizens from many countries gather to become U.S. citizens. Until recently, applicants had to go to Charlotte to become citizens; in April a new facility opened in the Research Triangle to serve Eastern North Carolina.

The process takes place twice a day, sometimes three times a week, for 100 applicants at a time. In un-bureaucratic fashion, officials of CIS typically wait until all seats are occupied before starting. The applicants stand to take the oath of allegiance, then sit to watch a brief video and to hear a *moving* talk from staff. During that talk, the new citizens are encouraged to register to vote at the conclusion of the service.

When the swearing-in concludes, family and friends break out in applause and hug one another as cameras and phones start flashing. Many go to have their pictures made in front of the great Seal of the United States. It is a wonderful moment.

Each newly sworn-in citizen is given a white envelope from "The White House" containing a "Message from the President of the United States." Inside is a booklet, "*The Citizen's Almanac*" with fundamental documents, symbols, and anthems of the U.S., and a letter from the President.

As the new citizens exit the auditorium, LWV members are there to congratulate them, while giving them their register-to-vote application along with a guide to locations for "One Stop Voting." In the week before Election Day, we encouraged them to vote right away. Many were going to do just that.

Speaking personally, this experience was a gift. I was able to witness something akin to an ordination where oaths are taken in complete sincerity. I'm grateful I met some of the leaders of the USCIS: Sharon Kirkham (Supervisory Adjudications Officer) who spoke to the new citizens, Michael Kirkham (Business Interface Representative) who exudes the joy of this task, and Jeffrey Sapko (Field Office Director) who gave a most moving talk to the new citizens regarding their rights, privileges and honors of citizenship.

So as the time winds down to election day, we can each look back to how we've shared in the responsibilities of the League and I can say there isn't much that can measure up to the experience of simply being there to provide new citizens with the means to complete their "sacred duty," as articulated by Jeffrey Sapko.

A “BIT OUT OF THE ORDINARY” ELECTION RELATED EVENTS FOR THE HENDERSON COUNTY LEAGUE 2008

Nancy Glowacki, President

Besides conducting several forums, registering voters, and helping out on the phones on election day, the LWVHC had a few other events of note.

Labor Day weekend is Apple Festival here and we now have our own booth! This year we wore aprons, had serving bowls and pans, apples, and spoons strewn around... and hats that said “Serving up Non-Partisan Information”. The activities were voter-directed . Besides registering them, we also had a “mini” 13-question civics quiz (with answers and web sites for more info on the back) to ready them for knowing more about government offices. Easy basics, but no one passed! But all were intrigued!

To further our goal of utilizing more media this year, we pursued use of our Government Channel 11 through a maze of blocks and challenges and finally arrived at an open door! The Board of Commissioners finally adjusted their perception of League to that of non-partisan and truly interested in education and modified their guidelines to allow us to conduct a forum (on the Sales Tax Referendum to be on the Nov. 4 Ballot) in their Meeting Room, be taped and shown 23 times on Channel 11!

Our media team also asked for and received a weekly 5” x 1.8” column space we call “The League View”! The purpose is to educate...about League, about the election process, about participating in one’s citizenship responsibilities, etc. As tiny as it is, people are noticing it and we enjoyed responding to the needs as the political election process unfolded.

About 3 weeks before the election, our performing troupe “A Little Bit of Sunshine” was hired to perform at a GM Alumni Luncheon....our first paying “gig”! GM, as everyone knows is in the jaws of fate at the moment re: their future and funds. At this meeting, they were to discuss losing their medical coverage. Our songs, jokes, and wisdoms shared apparently “hit the right chord”. I spoke about “finding your voice” and taking responsibility for your own outcomes as much as possible...and in a participative song, they also found that closer bonding with each other helped too! Their thank you note said, “we left uplifted and lighter”! As I said, League is a “little bit of sunshine”!



ELECTION 2008 LWV OF NORTH CAROLINA

VOTER SERVICE ACTIVITIES – LOWER CAPE FEAR

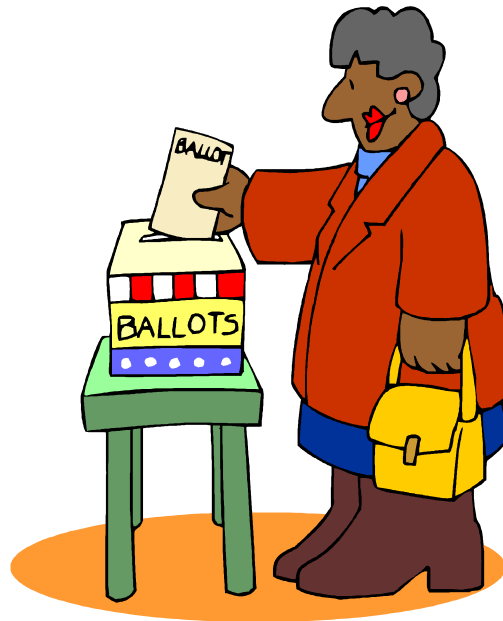
Audrey Albrecht

Major efforts during the election season included a candidate forum for local New Hanover County candidates co-sponsored with UNCW, The Star News, WAAV Radio and WWAY TV, and the Council of Neighborhood Organizations. Scheduled live and rebroadcast several times later and streamed on UNCW website, the event was well attended and allowed audience participation as well as a panel of local news anchors and a League representative. Several other forums were moderated in the three counties for other candidates.

All local candidates for County Commissioner, Board of Education, and candidates for state senators and representatives from Brunswick, New Hanover, and Pender counties were sent a short list of questions for their responses on issues. The responses (or lack of) were placed on the League website:

www.bettergov.nc.lwvnet.org where the public could read how the candidates stood on the issues. We did not try to print a booklet and, though this was still time-consuming, it was far less so than printing and distributing booklets, not to mention the cost.

A number of members worked at the polls during early voting and as judges on election day.



DARE COUNTY

Audrey Albrecht

As reported by co-presidents Carole Burchette and Jeannette Anderson, LWV-Dare again produced an extensive Voter Guide this year, printed and supported by many local businesses. The Dare League has funded the Voter Guide with a variety of fund-raising projects and citizens of Dare County look forward to receiving the booklet at election time.

There was only one contested office and a reception was held for the public to talk to the candidates for that office.

Members also worked at the polls and on Election Day at the Board of Elections.

Dare expects to organize a number of forums next year with municipal elections – there are five municipalities in their area.

ORANGE, DURHAM AND CHATHAM COUNTIES

Beverly Hanly

We are a three county League and there were forums and voter registration activities in all three of the counties.

In Chatham County, the League promoted the Student Election Assistant Program offered by the NC Board of Elections. Working with the three high schools' principals and teachers in Chatham County, the League reached twenty-five students (17 years and older) who volunteered to serve as Election Assistants on Election Day. They were in all eighteen precincts. In that capacity, and after training by the Chatham County Board of Elections, they worked inside the polling places assisting the poll workers.

Dawn Stumpf, Executive Director of the Chatham County Board of Elections said: "Things worked very well with the students. Everybody enjoyed having them there and they got to do everything at the precincts. They had to come to training and they got paid the same as other Election Day assistants. I understand that all the Election Officials thought that most of the students were quite an asset to Election Day and several of the students are interested in working in the future."

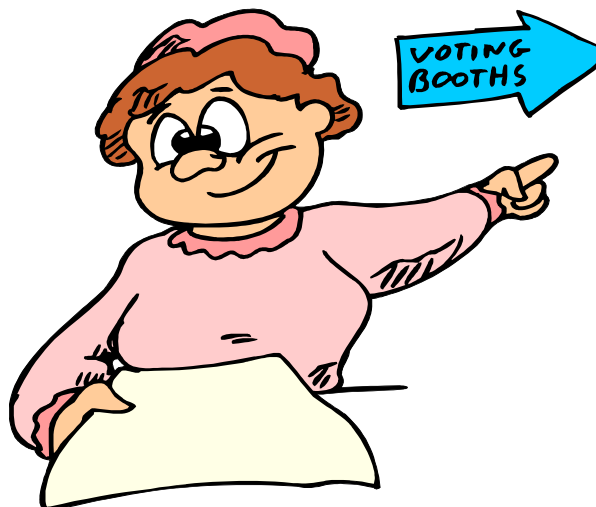
Joyce Colaiace and Beverly Hanly initiated the program for the League and ODC plans to present certificates of achievement to the students and copies of the U.S. Constitution for their participation in the election.

WAKE COUNTY

Betty Ellerbee

Wake County League aided the local Board of Elections during the election period. Members volunteered to help process the 27,000 absentee ballots and helped on election day. They also held a forum for candidates running for Wake County Board of Commissioners on September 17 and posted on their web site a helpful guide to the responsibilities of Supervisors of the Soil and Water Conservation District and interviewed each candidate for their views on issues and responsibilities of the members. This web site generated an enormous amount of interest as most folks do not know what are the responsibilities of this group.

Many League members worked for political candidates during the election season. That was League and League members in action.



PIEDMONT TRIAD

Betty Ellerbee

The Piedmont Triad League was very, very busy with election activities.

- On October 3rd, twenty Leaguers helped register several hundred newly sworn citizens.
- Several leaguers went to the Guilford County jail and helped register incarcerated citizens.
- More than two dozen of us answered phones at the Board of Elections on November 4th.

On October 21st, the League sponsored a forum for US House District 6 candidates, Howard Coble and Teresa Sue Bratton. Over 100 people attended this midday event.



Working With American Express

(Left) Whitney Vanderwerff, President, League of Women Voters of the Piedmont Triad) and Kim Venerable, Program Officer, American Express Headquarters, Greensboro NC on October 1.

The most unusual event was the opportunity afforded by obtaining a grant from the LWVUS Education Fund in partnership with the American Express Partnership. As related by Whitney Vanerwerff, LWVPT president, "This is a grant to support our voter service and voter education activities. B.J. Weatherby

designed and published a beautiful Election Extra with all the bells and whistles. We had better equipment for our forums, materials, and new badges to identify us as we registered voters. We could draw down the money to pay for a venue for a Hagan/Dole forum had that had materialized..." At several points LWVPT members were asked to sign on for October 1, the big day at American Express headquarters, for voter registration for employees and to present all of the other opportunities for citizen participation. Leaguers signed on for shifts beginning at 6:45 a.m. and continuing until the final shift from 6:30-8:30 p.m.



CATAWBA VALLEY LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS WORKS WITH MANY AGENICES

Fran Syptak

Last September, the League of Women Voters of Catawba Valley participated in an event that touched the entire Exodus Homes Community as described in the highlights below from their local paper.

Exodus Homes, a United Way agency, has a long standing commitment to community outreach which continued last September with an extravaganza event for the whole family. It featured a voter registration drive by the League of Women Voters and free HIV testing courtesy of Fairgrove Primary Health Care. . The Hickory Police Department participated with information on crime prevention, community outreach, and recruitment. Habitat for Humanity had information there for those interested in applying for one of their homes. The Let's Talk About it, a prostate cancer prevention initiative, was present with information about free prostate cancer screenings coming up soon in the area.

Exodus Homes gave away free hot dogs and hamburgers, clothes, groceries, furniture, Bibles, information and provided referrals from local service agencies, and featured testimonies of people who have overcome incredible odds to recover from drug addiction, incarceration, and other traumatic life experiences.

STATE PROGRAM PLANNING

Which issues would your local League like the State League to focus on for study and action in the next two years?

Although the official request won't be made until January 15, 2009, this is an early notification that the State Board will be asking local Leagues for suggestions for the 2009-2011 State Program by March 1, 2009. The State Board will consider all suggestions and recommend a proposed Program to be voted on by the delegates to State Convention in June. Each League's agreed upon proposed Program should be forwarded to Beverly Kawalec, Advocacy Chair, LWVNC (bevkawalec@bellsouth.net).

The Board is also working on an update of *Positions for Action: Impact on Issues*. We will send the suggested changes to that document to local Leagues in January. Bev Kawalec, Advocacy Chair

ABOUT THE NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE

Judie Burke, President

The current League position on the Selection of the President (updated in 2004) is the LWVUS believes that the direct-popular-vote method of selecting the President and Vice-President is essential to representative government. **The League of Women Voters believes, therefore, that the Electoral College should be abolished.**

At Convention 2008, it was moved and approved to study the National Popular Vote Compact among the states as a method for electing the President. This study is on a fast track, and the proposed deadline for consensus is May 1, 2009. Until that time, we are bound by the present League position, which does not support the National Popular Vote, and we cannot therefore speak in the name of the League to support anything other than the present position, the abolition of the Electoral College.

THE LEAGUE SPEAKS WITH ONE VOICE - it's the mantra that is the core of the League's credibility.

2009 CALENDAR

January 10	Board meeting
January 17	Due date for articles for 1st Quarter Issue of NC Voter
January 27	E-NC Voter released; paper copy to printer
February 13	Receive input from local Leagues on program
March 14	Board meeting—Nominating Committee, By-Laws, Budget, and Program Planning Committee reports reviewed and acted upon
March 21	Due date for articles for 2nd Quarter Issue of NC Voter
March 31	E-NC Voter released; paper copy to printer
April 1	Convention materials mailed to local Leagues
June 5-7	LWVNC Convention, Greensboro, NC
June 13-15	LWVUS Council, Washington, DC

A MESSAGE FROM LWV US PRESIDENT

Following is an excerpt of a message from Mary Wilson, President LWVUS, to League leaders around the nation on November 6, 2008.

Election Day has now come and gone. As American citizens and League members, we have been truly blessed to be active participants in such an exciting, history-making presidential election.

As I have said during all my travels this fall on your behalf, the voters are the heart and soul of any election process. And it is indeed with heartfelt emotion that I ask you to join me in saluting the voters, the real heroes of this Election, who showed such deep commitment and passion for voting this year that they showed up in staggering numbers. They showed real dedication by voting early, standing in long lines when necessary, and making sure their voices were heard. (My 92-year-old mother and I were dedicated voters Tuesday even though we did not have to stand in line at the polls in our little town of Mountainair, NM.)

This election was truly a triumph for voter participation. But, as President-elect Barack Obama noted in his acceptance speech on election night, now the work begins for all of us. And I know that as League members, we all look forward to working together with renewed vigor to advocate to make "change" mirror our deeply held positions on public policy issues.

But, first, let's revel in the League's immediate accomplishments! Our message was loud and clear: "The best thing we can all do is urge Americans to prepare by visiting www.VOTE411.org and, of course, remind everyone that every single vote does make a difference." And that message was heard by so many, including *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, C-SPAN and CNN, all of which helped to spread it further on November 3 and 4. VOTE411.org was visited by almost three million voters who looked at more than 10 million pages of information in 2008!

In all, the LWVUS received about 200 major news media and blog mentions in the six weeks leading up to Election Day alone... I'd like to share with you just a couple of the many post-election messages we received from League members:

The phone line 866-OUR-VOTE is, as most of you are aware, a non-partisan, national hot line dealing with voting problems. I volunteered there last night, and at my location, we were told that for registration questions, it was best to go to the LWV site (VOTE411) rather than depend on the Election Protection data base because the League's site was better, more comprehensive and more dependable. Way to go League! - Carol Mellor, President, LWV of the Hamptons

YEA!!!!!! And as one of the many volunteers answering the LWV of New Jersey's 1-800-792 VOTE hotline before and on Election Day, I was awfully glad to have the VOTE411.org resource. We looked up and FOUND the polling places for hundreds of people who had registered just in time, hadn't gotten their sample ballot yet, and needed our help. The NJ Division of Elections had a similar resource, but the VOTE411 system was easier to use and more effective as we raced to answer all the calls and give people the information they needed. Thank you! - Anne Maiese, President, LWV of New Jersey

SUPPORT THE LEAGUE

In this year of increased visibility, please consider making a contribution to LWVNC.

- A gift to **LWVNC** (non-tax deductible) supports all of the activities of the League and should be sent to LWVNC, 3509 Haworth Dr., #404, Raleigh, NC , 27609

- A gift to **CEF** (tax deductible) supports the Education activities of the League and should be sent to LWVNC, 3509 Haworth Dr., #404, Raleigh, NC 27609

- A gift to the **Endowment Fund** (tax deductible) also supports the Education activities of the League and should be sent to NC Community Foundation, 4601 Six Forks Rd., #524, Raleigh, NC 27609. Checks should be made to LWVNC-CEF.