

NC



VOTER

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF NORTH CAROLINA

LOBBY DAY APRIL 18, 2001

Peg Chapin

Chair, Campaign Finance Reform

The North Carolina Voter is published four times a year by the League of Women Voters of North Carolina.

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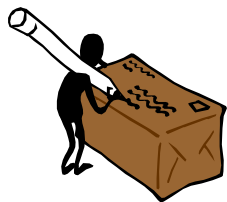
Diana Phillips, LWVNC President, welcomed League members and North Carolina Voters for Clean Elections coalition members who came to Raleigh on April 18th to lobby for Voter-Owned Elections. Participants in Lobby Day brought 115,000 pennies to the General Assembly. The pennies stood for what it would cost to have public financing of all state elections - less than one penny per eligible voter per day. For the yearly cost of \$3.65, we distributed penny pins. Representatives from Common Cause, Citizens for Responsible Government, Democracy South, N.C. Council of Churches, N.C.Pirg, N.C. Alliance for Democracy, N.C. Center for Voter Education and N.C. Baptist Convention spoke of why their organizations support Voter-Owned Elections. The "Clean Elections Law" was passed by voters in a referendum in Maine. Three of the candidates who chose to run for election under the new law spoke about their experiences. Tina Baker, Bill Norbest, and Jolene Lovejoy were brought to North Carolina by the NC Center for Voter Education. Tina Baker, who grew up in Gastonia, is a three-term member of the Maine House of Representatives. She said, "I can't tell you what a liberating experience it was to have public funding."

At 11 o'clock we sat in on the House Election Law and Campaign Finance Reform Committee Meeting. Following the meeting, League members from the mountains to the coast met with their legislators. A press conference was held at 1 o'clock, and pennies were distributed following the press conference. We later learned that 5 new members of the legislature signed on to the bill.

The Voter-Owned Elections Act was officially introduced in the NC House on April 26, 2001. The bill has 50 sponsors, a 50% increase over the 33 who sponsored the "Clean Election Act" in 1999. The main difference between this bill and the Clean Election Act is the phase-in strategy. Public financing of elections would be available only to Council of State candidates in 2002, so as to work out problems. General Assembly candidates would be added in 2004, and Governor and Lt. Governor candidates in 2006. The introduction of this bill has taken the efforts of countless people. There were 2 new signers at the very last minute, Republican Jim Gulley from Mecklenburg and Democrat Tom Wright from New Hanover County. The House Bill has 4 Republican sponsors and the Senate Bill # 1054 also has 4 Republican sponsors to date. Let's all join in and get this legislation passed this year. The momentum is with us, and the time is right. We'll be taking more pennies up on June 14th. Please thank all legislators who signed on to the bill. If you or your League want to be involved - it only takes one person - please write, call or e-mail me. Peg Chapin, 10000 Four Mile Creek Rd., Charlotte, NC 28277, Tel. (704) 846-2540. Email <ehchapin@aol.com>.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Diana Phillips



Thank you for a wonderful two years. I have never had a job, as a volunteer or for pay, that I have enjoyed as much as I have enjoyed being President of the League of

Women Voters of North Carolina. Working with independent thinkers who challenge government when change is needed is at the top of the list of interesting (and important!) things to do.

Campaign Finance Reform has been our State Issue for Emphasis since 1999, and we have had an exciting two years. The state League is now a leader in campaign reform in North Carolina, and we'll stay on the doorstep of the General Assembly for as long as it takes to get public financing of state elections passed by both houses. The League has not done enough to make people realize that campaign reform is the most important environmental legislation, the most important health care legislation, the most important any-kind-of legislation. Money in politics affects every aspect of our lives, and we must take as our challenge the education of citizens to make the link between campaign financing and laws affecting our health, safety, and quality of life.

The right of citizens to have their votes count is an issue at the heart of League. Publicity about the problems in the 2000 election prompted North Carolina Leaguers to question and evaluate election practices in their own counties. Committees formed in local Leagues, and the state League coordinated efforts to formulate questions to ask state and county boards of elections. Local Leagues have sent answers to the state office, and we will compile a report. In response to the heightened interest, we chose North Carolina election practices to be the theme of our state convention. Gary Bartlett, the director of the State Board of Elections, will be our keynote speaker, and we will talk with him about what we can do to help improve the election process.

We were successful in the challenge of starting an endowment fund. We find ourselves at a point in our history where if we do not work for the long-term financial health of the League, then we will be working for eventual disbandment. North Carolina is now 10th in the nation in population, and we can't be a sleepy little League in a state growing apace. Social and work patterns have changed in the last two decades, and League structure needs to respond to these changes. People have less free time because they're working, and we need to pay workers to do what volunteers did in the past. It's difficult to change a paradigm, but change it we must, if we want to survive as a strong organization.

There is much for which to thank the outgoing state board, and you may not be aware of all they've done. You may also not be aware that we've had a tough time with moves of two board members out of state and serious illnesses of a board member and two spouses. We've persevered, however, and the League can be proud of our accomplishments.

After delegates voted at the 1999 LWV-NC Convention to produce a video on voting for schools, Past President Marian Dodd stayed on the state board to bring this project to fruition. Marian worked for two years to fund, produce and distribute our video, "Voting, the Roots of Democracy." Because of the hard work of Marian and Leaguer Ellen Ironside and because of grants and contributions to the Ed Fund, we were able to send 600 videos to middle schools throughout North Carolina. Each local League also received a copy of the video. A lesson plan and links to associated lesson plans are on our web site.

In the year 2000 we made the plunge into cyberspace to produce our first online voters guides on Democracy Network (www.dnet.org). Diane Getz provided the excellent leadership and the good humor to help us get through all the problems of learning how to work in this new medium. She traveled all over the state to conduct workshops for local Leagues, cheerfully returned our phone calls and e-mails, and took vacation days at work to get us all prepared for this experience.

Within a month of our 1999 convention we learned that the newly elected state treasurer had moved to Tennessee. Sally Coughlin, newly arrived in North Carolina and

newly elected to the state board, looked at the accounts and said, "I think I can do this job." She learned how to operate Quick Books and has produced PMP statements, monthly balance sheets, profit and loss reports, and (most important for local Leagues) Ed Fund checks. Sally and past Treasurer Jane Warsaw rewrote the Citizen Education Foundation (Ed Fund) manual, and Sally sent a copy to each local League.

Maethel Shindelman, who has been a faithful board member for four years, came all the way from Franklin to every board meeting (when she wasn't traveling abroad!). In addition to doing double duty as a local League president, Maethel worked as state liaison to members at large in Jackson and Rutherford Counties. Maethel's calm and reason prevailed in the few situations bordering on frantic that the state board had to address.

We are all thankful that Jana has regained her health. Jana is a cancer survivor!! We are pleased that she is well and that she has agreed to be Secretary for another two years.

Peg Chapin recently joined the board as our State Campaign Finance Reform Chair. Peg has worked hard on this issue with her local League. We welcome her leadership at the state level, as we continue to pressure the General Assembly to pass legislation that provides voluntary public financing for state elections.

Our Off-Board Directors have also given much time to the League. Margaret Holton has written excellent articles on the environment, Patty Dale has added numerous links to our web site, Pam Hoffman has produced beautiful Voters, and Diane Henderson has tackled the complexities of redistricting based on the complicated questions / answers of the 2000 census.

Betty Ellerbee, a past state board member, past local League president and currently a director of the Wake County League, has worked as a volunteer dealing with the myriad tasks in the state office. Betty has typed the convention workbook, answered queries by phone and by e-mail, sorted out the

office computers, tidied up the work space, and has done all that someone sent from heaven generally does in a state League office.

Regarding our membership, we have 18 local Leagues in North Carolina and approximately 1330 local / state League members. There are an additional 150+ national members in the state, and we need to bring those national members into local and state membership. North Carolina has a high proportion of working women, and if the members coming to us are men and women retirees who finally have the time to devote to League activities, we'll gladly accept them as our most energetic members. We will be proud to be gray, yet we'll continue to look for ways to bring younger people into the League, so they can carry the banner forward. Diversity of membership still eludes us, but we must not give up on our goal of making League membership reflect the ethnic makeup of our society.

An important role of the state League is to make local Leagues feel a part of the whole, connected rather than isolated. E-mail has been a boon to the League as a vehicle for communicating cheaply and for sending information quickly and efficiently. Over the past two years I've

enjoyed having this just-a-click-away contact with local League presidents, committee chairs and convention delegates. I will miss this contact, and I might just send you all an e-mail every once in a while for old time's sake.

I was glad to have the opportunity to go visit our local Leagues. I was always impressed with how much each League was doing to make its community a better place in which to live. We are members of an organization with a fine reputation built over decades, and I commend you all for continuing the League tradition. Over the next few years we'll keep busy working for campaign finance reform, voters' rights, women's rights, and environmental laws. We have immense challenges ahead, but

WE'VE NEVER HAD A BETTER TIME TO DO THINGS LIKE ONLY THE LEAGUE CAN DO!



WELCOMING SPEECH ON LOBBY DAY, 4/18/2001

Diana Phillips

Welcome to Lobby Day. The groups assembled include AARP, Alliance for Democracy / Democracy South, Common Cause, League of Women Voters, NAACP, North Carolina Center for Voter Education, and we have come together for the second time to tell our legislators that we want campaign reform. We met here together last year on Flag Day, June 14th

"Campaign Finance Reform Makes Good 'Cents!'" is the slogan of the penny project spearheaded by the League of Women Voters. The fiscal staff of the General Assembly has estimated that publicly financed state elections in North Carolina would cost each registered voter less than 1 penny per day, or less than \$3.65 a year.

We began last year by sending letters and pennies to legislators. This year we have continued with the letter/penny campaign and have added money from penny pins for collars and lapels at \$3.65 each. Each legislator has been given a pint canning jar to hold the "cents" for campaign finance reform. All money will be collected by the League and deposited in the fund established by the legislature for financing public elections, the NC Candidates Financing Fund or the Democracy Fund, the latter yet to be created by the General Assembly.

We have a goal of putting one million pennies in the fund. By the end of last summer we had sent or brought 6,459 pennies to the legislature. Today the organizations of NC Voters for Clean Elections have brought more than 115,000 pennies to the General Assembly to show that people in North Carolina want campaign finance reform. We will be back again and again until campaign reform legislation is passed.

A Senate bill for reform, the Voter-Owned Election Act (SB 1054), was introduced two weeks ago, and an identical House Bill is in a "jacket." This Act provides a voluntary public funding alternative to privately funded campaigns. The Voter-Owned Election Act harkens back to old-fashioned, grassroots politics. In order to qualify for public funds, the

candidate must get a minimum number of small contributions from registered voters in the county or the district covered by the state office he seeks. This combination of show of trust by constituents and public funding would bring control of the election back to the constituents of the lawmaker, it would help keep campaign costs low, and it would provide more freedom from conflict of interest situations. Former U.S. Senator Robert Morgan (also former N.C. Attorney General) said that a candidate who receives a sizable contribution isn't selling his or her vote, but it's hard not to listen to the contributor's representatives when they come calling. We want elected officials to feel they should be accountable to their constituents, not their donors, and we want control of the election to rest with the constituents of the elected official.

Under the Voter-Owned Election Act, the candidates raise no more money after the qualifying contributions, agree to a total spending limit, use the funds only for campaign purposes, and return any unused funds to the NC Democracy Fund. The candidates receive a competitive amount of public money for the primary and the general election, and up to an additional 200% of the original limit, as needed to match a privately funded opponent.

The costs of running a campaign have tripled in North Carolina since 1992. In the past few years, high campaign costs have pushed candidates into a money hunt and caused many good candidates to be excluded because of a lack of funds. In the 2000 elections, 60% of the General Assembly candidates faced no primary opponent and in the general election, 60 candidates faced no major party opponent, which meant that there was virtually no competition for 35% of the 170 seats in the legislature.

The high cost of election campaigns has a consequence of making donors seem more important than constituents. When people think that "cash constituents" count for more than voting constituents, they feel powerless and cynical about government. That is not healthy for democracy. We need publicly funded elections to maintain a government of the people, by the people, for the people. We support Campaign Finance Reform. It just makes 'cents'!

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

LWV-NC Issue for Emphasis 1999 - 2001

At the 1999 LWV-NC Convention in Greensboro, delegates voted to make Campaign Finance Reform the State Issue for Emphasis for the biennium 1999 - 2001. The following excerpts come from the eight issues of the NC Voter during the past two years and show what the League has done on campaign reform.

"The Clean Election Act will come up in the General Assembly in the year 2000. Rep. Martha Alexander of Charlotte said there is a need for people to let legislators know that voters are concerned about campaign finance reform. We need for Leagues to brainstorm to find ways to reach legislators so we can have as effective a means to promote reform as the cash register receipts idea was in removing the food tax." NC Voter, Summer, 1999, p. 1.

"All state Leagues have recently received from LWV-US a "media board" that shows the link between political/campaign contributions at the national level and legislation regarding the following issues: gun violence, teen smoking, health care, and protection of forests....The display is for the use of local Leagues throughout the state.... Make every event a media event.... The key word is link. Make the link between campaign contributions and the law coming out of legislatures concerning your health, your safety, the quality of life of your surroundings." NC Voter, Fall, 1999, p. 2.

"Betty Stone, from Greensboro, sent this idea to LWV-NC office. Securely tape a penny to a post card and write the following: 'Dear Legislator, As a voter I am concerned about campaign finance reform and see the only objection to the Clean Elections Act as the cost of a penny a day from each voter. Well, here's my first penny.'" NC Voter, Winter, 2000, p. 15.

"Legislative Day this year will be Wednesday, June 14th - Flag Day. The Clean Election Act is our legislative priority. Come with your letters and pennies and those from

kindred spirits. Let's start filling up the pint jars of our legislators."

NC Voter, Spring, 2000, p. 4.

"Opening Remarks: LWV-NC

Legislative Day: We have come here [to the General Assembly] today because we know there is something very wrong with our election system, and we have taken the time to come talk about it with the people who govern us. Americans are good at fixing things. It may take some time but we will fix our campaign financing system. We must; we cannot let our democracy slip away."

NC Voter, Summer, 2000, p. 3.

"Testimony at the SBOE hearing [on 9/29/00]: ... "We ask the State Board of Elections to investigate the alleged violations of the national and state party committees and to take regulatory and enforcement action as needed, since the federal government leaves it up to the states to regulate or ban non-federal soft money in state elections."

NC Voter, Fall, 2000, p. 7.

"The League of Women Voters is spearheading a campaign to send a million pennies to the state legislature in support of the Clean Election Act. A penny a day from each eligible voter would fund clean elections. That means that \$3.65 would pay for your yearly support - that's the cost of a Quarter Pounder with cheese and fries.... Let's make April 18th a great day! Penny pins will be distributed at \$3.65 each, the yearly amount it would cost each voter to publicly finance all elections at the state level."

NC Voter, Winter, 2001, p. 1

"Welcoming Speech on Lobby Day, 4/18/2001: ...The groups assembled include AARP, Alliance for Democracy / Democracy South, Common Cause, League of Women Voters, NAACP, North Carolina Center for Voter Education, and we have come together for the second time to tell our legislators that we want campaign reform. We met here together last year on Flag Day, June 14th.... We will be back again and again until campaign reform legislation is passed.... A Senate bill for reform, the Voter-Owned Election Act (SB 1054), was introduced two weeks ago, and an identical House Bill is in a "jacket." This Act provides a voluntary public funding alternative to privately funded campaigns."

NC Voter, Spring, 2001, p. 4.

ENVIRONMENT

The Good Earth...North Carolina

Margaret U. Holton
Off-Board Director, Environment

If there is any doubt that our state's Land Trusts deserve our support, consider the realities. More than one-third of NC's wetlands no longer function normally. We lost nearly 160 acres of farms, forests and rural lands to urban development each year in the five year period ending in 1997, up 67% from the previous ten years according to a State Magazine article.

Rapid growth poses serious challenges to our state's air, water, and open spaces. The stunning growth and urban sprawl that came to North Carolina in the last twenty years of the last century reflect every major and minor environmental problem we face - air and water quality, coastal over development, loss of wetlands and natural species. More than half of our natural areas remain unprotected. By the year 2020 our population is expected to grow by 25% to nearly 10 million. Today less than 9% of our land base is protected and nearly 20% of the State's plant and animal species have been designated as rare.

If there is a unifying theme to what land trusts do, it is this: no matter where you live, economic growth does not come without an ecological cost. Open space can no longer be taken for granted and if we want to hold on to clean air, clean water, native wildlife, and local history, then we must be dedicated "to the proposition that it is possible for nature and economic prosperity to coexist, but only with planning, research, and cooperative effort," says Vickie Bowman of the Carolinas' Land Conservation Network. Land trusts work to include preservation as an integral part of community and regional planning.

THE ENDOWMENT FUND

Diana Phillips

Starting the Endowment Fund has been a wonderful challenge. An endowment must have the support of the organization's membership, and your response to the call for contributions exceeded all expectations. The State Board had the valid concern that our

members might not support a fund which would take such a long time to build. A goal of \$10,000 was set as a minimum amount to start the fund, and this was a lot by our standards, since Leaguers typically give more freely of their time than of their money. You opened your checkbooks, however, and sent a total of \$11,900! With such overwhelming support, the State Board voted on 4/7/01 to establish the Fund.

After finishing my tenure as President, I'm looking forward to continuing on the State Board with the Endowment Fund as my portfolio. Helen Martikainen (LWV-ODC) said that the Orange County Women's Center began such a fund 20 years ago, and now they're up to \$850,000, that in the beginning the money accumulated slowly, then the fund seemed to mushroom. This is hopefully what will happen with our Endowment Fund!

We believe that the League is too valuable an organization to let slip away into history. Our contributions to the Endowment Fund show that we want to ensure that in the decades to come, a healthy League of Women Voters of North Carolina will still be questioning government decisions and practices and working for laws and regulations that promote the general welfare. I look forward to building the Fund with you.

THANK YOU TO OUR CHARTER CONTRIBUTORS TO THE ENDOWMENT FUND!

DONORS

Mary Alsentzer, Pitt
Virginia Hamman, Catawba
Vivian Hannon, Moore
Amey Miller, ODC
Grace Poli, Henderson



SUPPORTERS (\$100 - \$499)

Carolyn Allen, Triad
Martha Alexander, Char/Meck
Else Bolotin, ODC
Vicki Boyer, ODC
Susan Brewer, ODC
Diane Brown, ODC
Joyce Clayton, Catawba
Lura Cook, ODC
Jean Cooper, Wake

Supporters, continued

Bonnie Covey, Triad
Patty Dale, Watauga
Cama Duke, Watauga
Ruth Easterling, Char/Meck
Gay Eddy, ODC
Lee Evans, Moore
Sharon Everhart, Carteret
John & Helen Fobes, Ash/Bun
Rhoda Gaba, ODC
Alice Greenlaw, Wake
Mary Ann Gross, ODC
Lois Grossen, Henderson
Sarah Hamilton, Carteret
Mary Ellen Hawthorne, Dare
Sue Hayes, New Hanover
Mary Helen Hayman, ODC
Billie Hayward, ODC
Eunice Heilig, Triad
Diane Henderson, ODC
Emily Herman, Pitt
Barbara Hiestand, Char/Meck
Jean Hinson, Catawba
Katherine Hodge, Moore
Pam Hoffman, Watauga
Mary Ellen Holland, Pitt
Kathryn Hooper, Carteret
Sarah Huffman, Catawba
Bea Hughes, ODC
Kani Hurow, ODC
Ellen Ironside, ODC
Marguerite Jones, Henderson
Mary Klenz, Char/Meck
Joan Lamson, Carteret
Marian Lowry, Henderson
Rhea Markello, Pitt
Marlyn Miller, Wake
Gayle Mitchner, Carteret
Nancy Mueller, ODC
Janie McKnight, sister of Diana Phillips
Barbara Nettesheim, ODC
Sarah Palmer, Union

Bernadette Parker, Union
Gretchen Peed, Catawba
Diana Phillips, ODC
Francella Poston, Ash/Bun
Helen Pratt, ODC
Mary Pratt, Charl/Meck
Marlene Pratto, Triad
Phyllis Rogers, Henderson
Sylvia Ruby, Wake
Anne Rumsey-Weston, ODC
Nancy Salmon, ODC
Elaine Schaal, Triad
Frances Schneider, Henderson
Carol Schiller, Wake
Gladys Scott, Char/Meck
Gail Scullion, Triad
Terry Shank, Pitt
Maethel Shindelman, Macon
Nancy Sommer, Triad
Katherine Taylor, Henderson
Ruth Van Lehn, Moore
Eric Vander Elst, National
Gertrude Whitacre, Triad
Gaynelle White, Macon
Gertrude Willis, ODC
Betty Wiser, Wake
Anne Yudell, Char-Meck

SPONSORS (\$500 - \$999)

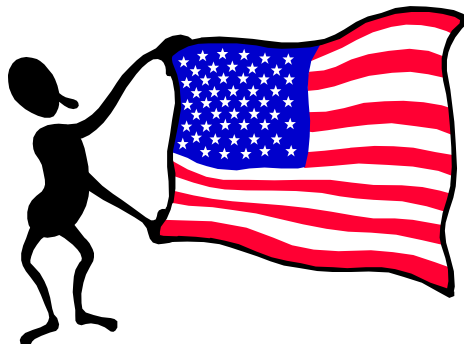
Eliska Chanlett, ODC
Elizabeth Grant, ODC
Margaret Holton, ODC
Claudia Kadis, Member At Large

BENEFACTORS (\$1000 and over)

Geraldine Guess, Chapel Hill Area

The contribution of Cama Duke is in honor of her mother, Donna Duke, of LWV Watauga County.

Note: ODC refers to LWV of Orange, Durham, Chatham Counties, formerly the Chapel Hill Area League.



FINAL CALL TO CONVENTION

Join us at the 27th Biennial Convention of the League of Women Voters of North Carolina
June 2 - 3, 2000!

Our host League will be LWV of Orange, Durham and Chatham Counties (formerly LWV Chapel Hill Area). We will meet at the Unitarian Fellowship in Durham on Saturday, June 2nd and at the Holiday Inn in Chapel Hill (just a few miles down Hwy 15-5-1) on Sunday, June 3rd (see below for directions). The schedule is as follows:

Saturday, June 2nd, Unitarian Church Fellowship Hall, Durham

- 8:30 a.m. Registration and coffee/tea
- 9:00 a.m. 1st Plenary Session
- 1:00 p.m. Lunch and Address by Gary Bartlett, Director of NC SBOE
- 2:00 p.m. Workshops: Redistricting, Election Practices
- 3:00 p.m. Workshops: Local League Fundraising, Coalition Building
- 4:00 p.m. Break to settle in at hotel
- 6:00 p.m. Wine and hors d'oeuvres
- 7:00 p.m. Dinner
- 8:00 p.m. "Local and State Politics - Song and Satire" by local Leagues (piano is in tune!)
- 9:30 p.m. Caucuses at Holiday Inn

Sunday, June 3rd Holiday Inn, Chapel Hill

- 7:30 a.m. Breakfast and "Successes and Challenges" by local League presidents
- 9:00 a.m. 2nd Plenary Session
- 1:00 p.m. Lunch and Question/Answer Session with Mary Ann Burt, our LWV-US board liaison
- 2:00 p.m. Adjourn

*Directions to the Eno River Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship
4907 Garrett Rd., Durham*

From I-40 take exit ramp 270 and go north on 15-501 for about 1.4 miles to 2nd stop light (Garrett Rd.). Turn right on Garrett Rd.

(landmark: Darryl's Restaurant on right corner). Go 0.7 mile and turn left into driveway of Unitarian Church. Convention is in the Fellowship Hall, the first building on your right. Parking is to the right of the Hall or farther down the driveway to the left of the Fellowship Hall.

Directions to Holiday Inn, 1301 N. Fordham Blvd., Chapel Hill

From I-40 take exit ramp 270 and go south on Hwy 15-501. Bear left (instead of taking Franklin St. into Chapel Hill), and US 15-501 becomes Fordham Blvd. Turn left on Ephesus Church Rd. at the next stop light - the Holiday Inn is on the corner.

SILENT AUCTION of items "Made in North Carolina" will conclude on Saturday at 7 p.m.

Past state presidents and board members will be honored at dinner on Saturday.

PROPOSED 2001 - 2003 SLATE OF LWV-NC BOARD MEMBERS

Nancy Salmon, Chair, LWV-NC Nominating Committee

I am pleased to announce that three of the Board nominees have agreed to provide leadership for the State League by working together as a "Management Team" in lieu of the traditional President and Vice Presidents. The nominees are as follows:

Management Team:

Peg Chapin (Charlotte-Mecklenburg)
Mary Klens (Charlotte-Mecklenburg)
and
Marie McFarland (Gaston County)

Treasurer:

Ellen Olson (Piedmont Triad)

Secretary:

Jana Albritton (New Hanover)

Directors:

Patty Dale (Watauga)
Shirley Hassell (Dare)
Doris Naumann (Onslow)
Diana Phillips (Orange/Durham/Chatham)
Eva Rogers (Pitt)

Nominating Committee for 2003: Mary Lou Langdon (Carteret), Carolyn Mealing (Moore)



CHARTER SCHOOLS IN NORTH CAROLINA

From message of 1/23/2001 from Mary Ann Gross and Vicki Boyer to all NC Local League Presidents (please see letter to your local League for full text)

At the state convention in 1997, LWVNC adopted a study program that included a "study of sorts" on the impact of charter schools on the traditional public schools. During the last 3+ years, Vicki Boyer and I (Mary Ann Gross) have attempted to follow the progress of the charter schools in NC as they have developed.

Neither of us would claim that this study has been done in a way that would pass muster among many League members from years past. However, we do have a body of good information that we intend to pass along to all local Leagues.

Charter schools are going to be part of our public schools for the foreseeable future, and there is an important role for the League to play. With our present state education position, there is no way the League could testify or even write meaningful letters about charter schools, since we have no position.

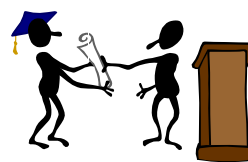
In addition to information on charter schools, we will be sending to all Local Leagues a concurrence statement. At the convention in 2001, we would like to conclude this "study of sorts" by adding a position on charter schools to our present Education statements. (See LWV-NC Positions for Action, last updated in 1997.) It will be up to your Local League Board as to how you concur or don't concur with the statement. Please get it back to us by 5/15/2001 to be part of the State Convention in June, 2001. (Note: the position adopted by LWV-NC Convention will be published in the Summer NC Voter.)

CHARTER SCHOOLS: FACTS AND ISSUES

League of Women Voters of North Carolina
March 2001

Charter Schools. Charter Schools are defined as public schools, organized by groups of people who apply for and receive a Charter

from the state or another governing body. The Charter spells out the goals of the school. Charter Schools receive funds from all sources of income (local, state and federal) on a per student basis. The schools are free from much of the oversight and regulations that exist in the traditional public schools. In exchange, the charter schools are expected to achieve the goals stated in the charter before the charter can be renewed. It is often stated that Charter Schools are publicly funded, privately led alternatives to conventional schools.



Charter Schools in North Carolina. The Charter Schools in North Carolina are defined by the above statement. However, the schools do not receive capital funds (usually local) nor can they use any public funds to purchase land or build facilities. Most charter schools in NC lease space. Charter schools can apply for grants from private sources to be used for facilities. According to experts, the NC legislation is considered good legislation as it is extremely flexible. For instance, not all teachers have to be certified, and the pay scale is determined by the Board of Directors at each school. Present public schools and private schools can be converted to a charter school. Charter Schools are not required to provide transportation, but they can, and many do. If the mission statement of the school has limiting factors, the school can choose its students. An example could be a school for the Fine Arts, a school for at risk students, a school for American Indians.

The History of Charter Schools. The Charter School movement in the US can be traced to the late 1960's. However, the legislation as it is today first started in Minnesota in 1991. Thirty-six states in the US now have some form of enabling legislation that allows for the establishment of Charter Schools. Some legislation is quite restrictive, some quite liberal. Most of the remaining states have legislation pending. The Charter School movement goes beyond the US borders. The Charter Schools in Great Britain are often cited

as examples of successful schools. These schools first developed in the 1980's.

North Carolina Charter School History. The Charter School enabling legislation was passed in 1996. The original legislation was amended in the 1997 and 1998 sessions. The first 33 charters were granted in 1997. The NC Legislation is considered a very good charter school law that allows for considerable flexibility. The original legislation was capped at 100 schools with the understanding that a full report would be available before the cap was lifted. School year 2000-2001 is the fourth year any school could be in operation. Those schools apply to renew their charters during the 2000-2001 school year. The school year 2001-2002 will be the first year there will be 100 charter schools in NC, serving approximately 18,000 students state wide. Legislation to remove the 100 cap has been introduced for the 2001 legislative session. Senate Bill 23 and House Bill 26 are the companion bills. A full Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the Charter School Evaluation Report, December 1998 was published and made available to the general public in 1998. There has not been a comprehensive follow up report. The 1998 report followed the progress of the first 33 schools for one year only.

Why Charter Schools? Charter Schools are part of the evolution of public schools in the US. Many educators, parents and students want something different from what is offered in a particular community. Some public school systems have attempted special schools, often called alternative or magnet schools, that are within the traditional public school system. Many parents have opted for Home Schooling or, if it is affordable, private schools. Of the 1.2 million North Carolina children grades K-12 in school year 1999-2000, 80,000 attended private schools, 25,000 were home schoolers, and 12,000 attended charter schools.

Racial Mix. Charter Schools accept applications from all children unless the admissions is limited by the original charter as granted (see paragraph on Charter Schools in NC). No student can be rejected because of ethnicity, national origin, gender or disability.

Within a year after the school is in operation, the school should reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the population that the school seeks to serve. If a school does not reflect the racial and ethnic population after a full year, the school is required to show they made a good faith effort to reflect the community it serves.

Some Problems as Noted by the Local Educational Authority (LEA). Students formally either home schooled or in private schools transfer to a charter school. These students did not cost the LEA's before, but do in the charter schools. Since charter school students can come from any LEA, not necessarily the location of the school, the billing to the various school systems have to be carefully checked, especially when the student transfers either to the charter or out. Record keeping is difficult at best, and getting the records sent on to the next school is often late or not forthcoming. All of these concerns are legal and "normal", but time consuming for the LEA and take considerable staff time in the central office.

Some Problems as Noted by the Charter Schools. Most charter schools have difficulty locating good space at affordable prices especially in areas where real estate is at a premium. Lack of start up funding is still a serious concern, though less than the first years of operation. More federal funds have been made available. Although many regulations have been waived for the charter schools, some schools still feel too much time is used to report to DPI and other regulatory agencies.

Funding from local sources is slow to come in and often does not reflect all the students from that county. Many charter schools have students from several counties. Transportation is not required, so that can limit who can attend.

How do charter Schools Differ? There are very few charter schools that are alike. Most are smaller in enrollment size and class size. Many schools expect parents to give considerable volunteer time in a variety of tasks. Some schools require uniforms. Unless some group is sponsoring the school through

private grants, most charter schools lack special equipment commonly found in the traditional schools. Gyms are few and far between, as are cafeterias. Since many of the schools have a relatively small enrollment, many parents and students like being in the small setting and do not miss the extras. Parents feel they have more say in how the school is run and the priorities set. Most charter schools in NC are in urban areas. The percentage of minority students in charter schools is larger than in the traditional schools (47% charter and 32% traditional public). Charter school students qualify for free or reduced lunch at the same rate as students in the traditional schools (about 35%).

Oversight. The school's board of directors has the responsibility of oversight. The board of directors is accountable to the local board of education if the charter group applied and received approval from that local school board. Schools that applied and received approval through the State Board of Education, bypassing the local school board, are accountable only to the State Board of Education. It is the responsibility of DPI through the financial auditors and DPI personnel to monitor the individual school and ultimately report to the State Board of Education. All final decisions for all charter schools are made by the State Board of Education.

Accountability. All charter schools are held accountable for the achievement of their students. The NC Charter School law requires three areas of accountability: financial, Uniform Education Reporting System as established by the State Board of Education (ABC Testing, see glossary), and an annual report as outlined under "oversight". As stated in the law authorizing charter schools, to improve student learning is the first goal of all charter schools. At least from test scores that have been made public, there appears to be little difference between the charter and traditional schools; in fact some of the charter schools have the lowest scores in the state. In general, it is too early to draw many conclusions. Some schools

measure "parent satisfaction". That could be misleading, as a dissatisfied parent has the option to remove the child to another setting. Some special schools score very well, but those students would score well in almost any setting. The word "happy" or "content" as a goal is not used as a goal or mission in any school. There is no doubt that that happiness or contentment is extremely important to the child, the parent and the teacher. Most charter school parents are "satisfied" with the charter school.



Summary. The most important and appealing aspects to the charter school movement are choice and vision. Parents make decisions for their children during the early years, and clearly there are parents who want and deserve something different for their children, not only shown by

charter schools, but also private and home schooling choice. A charter school is often someone's vision of a better education. Be it parents, educators or another group, the vision is again a different approach to the public education process. At the present time in NC, less than 1% of K-12 students attend charter schools. If the schools prove successful and fulfill the goals and mission statements, the 100 cap will be removed. However, it should be noted that wanting a charter school and actually getting one successfully started and proving to be a better school setting is not easily accomplished. The schools need constant monitoring and care by the individual boards, DPI and citizen groups. The major advantage of a charter school is that a school not fulfilling its mission or being mismanaged can easily be "disbanded", not easily accomplished with a traditional public school. Thought that the charter schools would provide new ideas for teaching has so far not been forthcoming. However, the small classes and total size of school seem to be appealing. Parents feel they have more control of the child's education. Many charter school advocates were very sure that a charter school could be run much better and more efficiently than traditional schools. This has proven not to be so. All schools, charter or traditional,

continue to request more funds to accomplish the goals. Good education is more costly than tax payers are willing to admit or support.

Glossary of Terms

ABC: An education plan adopted in 1996 to promote Accountability, curriculum Basics and local Control. The ABC testing program is part of this overall program and used to measure the success or lack of success for all public schools. The Charter Schools have the option to use this test or another test of the school's choice.

Alternative Schools: Traditional public schools which are set up by states or school districts to serve populations of students who are not succeeding in the traditional public school environment. They are often characterized by their flexible schedule, smaller student teacher ratios and modified curricula.

DPI : Department of Public Instruction in North Carolina. The Office of Charter Schools are in that department.

LEA : Local Education Agency. The local School Board in a community.

Magnet Schools: Traditional public schools that place an emphasis on academic achievement or on a particular area of study such as science or the arts; designed to attract students from elsewhere in the district.

Privatization For Profit Management: Transfer of the management of the school to a private for profit organization. Privatization emphasizes typical business oriented concepts as customer satisfaction and managerial autonomy in running schools.

School based management: The shift of decision making authority from school districts to the individual school. Such proposals vary, but usually they give control of the school's operation to a school council composed of teachers, parents and administrators.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction: An elected 4-year position and part of the Council of State. Mike Ward (elected in 2000) is the present superintendent.

Vouchers: A document usually issued by the State that can be used by parents to attend an out of district public school or a private school. The term is also more broadly used to describe school choice proposals in which states would help pay tuition for children attending private or religious schools.

Suggested Further Reading

Nathan, Joe: *Charter Schools, Creating Hope and Opportunity for American Education*. 1996 Jossey-Bass Inc.

The State of Charter Schools, 2000. Fourth Year Report. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.

Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the Charter Schools, Public Schools of NC, December, 1998

NC Charter School Web Site

http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/charter_schools/maincharter.html

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THE FUTURE OF THE LEAGUE Reinventing the Asheville- Buncombe League, Part II

Nelda Holder, President

In Part I (NC Voter, Winter, 2001) the League of Women Voters in Asheville/Buncombe County had completed Phase I of reinventing themselves. A January board retreat had been held with reference to the League banned from the meeting, in order to more objectively assess the civic needs of the community and to discuss whether the people participating thought there should be an organization devoted to serving those needs.

The following community needs were identified: (1) A trusted forum for issues; (2) Unbiased, in-depth information; (3) Education for and about community; (4) Awareness of interrelationships to civic life/action and why it matters; (5) Coalition building; (6) Government monitoring.

We decided we wanted to explore in detail the kind of organization we would be willing to convene to tackle these community needs. Our loose frame included direct

engagement with government, including advocacy; citizenship education for the public; and serving as a resource for the community (while not necessarily involved in an issue). We agreed to meet for Phase II, with the task before that meeting to come up with a statement of purpose for our new organization.

Phase II was a round table meeting on February 7, with the first order of business being the selection of our new statement of purpose, which became "Citizenship in Action." The bulk of this meeting was spent comparing the community needs we had identified (three categories: education, enfranchisement, and monitoring) with the current framework the League.

We had great fun with an idea from our Voter editor, Andy Reed, who suggested we think about our members and their potential contributions by identifying people as "monks, scribes, or evangelists"--the solitary workers, the detail/word people, and the public persona folks. So we paired up needs, service areas, and membership types. For example, the traditional LWV Voter Guide serves the community need for education, and is prepared by monks and promoted by evangelists. Or, our League support for public access television falls under monitoring and is led by pure evangelists.

As we moved through the traditional League structure and tried to tailor it to the direction we wanted to take, we settled on a plan to change our board structure in an experimental way. Our board required many volunteers to fill slots which had, we felt, atrophied. So we proposed to cut a number of positions and run with a leaner board (and shorter board meetings!), shifting a good deal of the work on issues and projects to a new, committee-centered locus of energy. We had not been utilizing committees more than cursorily, and we felt that decentralizing activities could both provide for better focus on categories as well as offer more personal interaction with member volunteers.

Specifically, we decided to recommend a one-year trial period under which we will move from seven to four executive officers; select six directors for organizational support; and establish three divisions of action through new oversight committees, with chairs joining the board.

More talk about the scope of the oversight committees was necessary, and this stalwart board has now held several more meetings to refine these ideas. What we will be presenting to our membership at Annual Meeting will be the scaled-back board configuration and these mega-committees: Voter Enfranchisement (includes Voter Registration, Election Monitoring, Redistricting); Civic Education (includes Voters Guide, Facts for Voters, Candidate/Issue Forums); Government Accountability (includes Observers; Government Functions, Election Reform).

We have our chairs lined up now for these committees, with a clear understanding that this is an experiment and that, in particular areas where interest does not produce workers, the job does NOT fall to the chair. We will do what we can do with the energy that is available to us - not spend our energy trying to plug holes.

Now, the best part. What we have kept in mind throughout this process is how to give our own members more of a sense of belonging, a sense of allegiance, a sense of relevancy. We believe that an efficient, effective organization will encourage this, but we see the new committee structure as a way to create room for a new form of "membership."

We are going to try to get every one of our members to identify the sphere of activity they find personally most important or attractive. They will then, in actuality, become a mega-committee member. They will be notified of committee meetings when they take place for general membership, and they will be invited to participate more concretely as one of those "monks, scribes, or evangelists."

For example, if people identify with government accountability, they will have the opportunity to fill roles defined by this committee. Monks may do background research; scribes may write letters and make phone calls, or perhaps serve as observer/reporters; evangelists will be the more visible members who take public leadership roles. Somewhere in this mix of activity, what we hope will happen is the development of a new way of bringing our members both personal satisfaction and interpersonal relationships. The social side of

the League has lagged, we feel, since the days of unit meetings in individual homes. We are hoping that as our new committees strategize and invite participation, a new way of building personal League alliances is going to evolve.

So we will begin at Annual Meeting by having all in attendance pick an identity. We plan to have cartoon cutouts of monks, scribes, and evangelists, and as members arrive they will be asked to choose one (or more!) to wear as an ice-breaker. Our new committee chairs will have registration tables and will also be a major part of our program, explaining their missions to the membership and asking each person to determine which focus area they are most interested in.

From there, we are going to be winging it! Wish us luck. We plan to report success--we just aren't quite sure yet what it will look like.

ENVIRONMENT

NC Mountain Lawmakers Fight SMOG

Margaret Holton, Off-Board Director,
Environment

The news early this month is that outrage over the unhealthy smog shrouding North Carolina's mountains could lead to far reaching restrictions on coal-burning electric power plants, the state's biggest air polluters. This state bill would impose the nation's toughest rules on coal-burning plants, but utilities could share the cost with customers. So-called "clean smokestacks" bills introduced this month by mountain area lawmakers would force Carolina Power and Light and Duke Power to install state of the art scrubbers and chemical filters on their 14 coal-fired plants.

This is good news for NC citizens, as well as those of surrounding states. Spokesmen for the two utilities say that they won't oppose this bill, because it will allow them to shift the estimated \$2.2 billion cost to electricity customers. The bill sponsors, Senator Bill Metcalf and Representative Martin Nesbit, said the benefits far outweigh the extra \$3 to \$5 each month an average household would pay for electricity.

The regulations would sharply reduce the smog and soot blamed for premature deaths, asthma attacks and sickly forests, they

say, while putting North Carolina in a position to pressure surrounding states to take similar action for their own dirty power plants.

For almost a quarter of a century a special provision in the federal Clean Air Act has allowed the plants to burn millions of tons of coal without the most modern pollution controls. State officials estimate that coal-fired plants contribute nearly half of the nitrogen oxide gases that blanket cities and mountain smog. Last summer, the state announced that so much ozone smog was choking 40 counties - including Wake, Durham, Orange, and Harnett - that they would fail to meet the federal health standard.

Several environmental groups released a "Clean Smokestack Plan" last month and found a willing audience in Metcalf and Nesbitt, both Democrats from Asheville. Over the past month the lawmakers convened private meetings with lobbyists for environmental groups, Duke Power and CP&L and told them a bill was on the way.

The bill would impose what environmentalists called the nation's toughest regulations on coal-burning power plants. It would go beyond existing state and federal regulations by requiring a 78% cut in nitrogen oxide emissions by 2009 and a 73% reduction in sulfur dioxide emissions by 2013. The bill recognized out-of-state sources of pollution by directing the state to use interstate agreements and even lawsuits to force similar controls for the federal TVA and other utilities. Metcalf and Nesbitt are optimistic about the bill's chances. The spokeswoman for Governor Mike Easley said that he would sign it in its current form.

Fighting Mud in North Carolina

Margaret Holton, Off-Board Director,
Environment

Silt puts North Carolina water at risk. As bulldozers clear land for development, creeks are clouded with mud. Construction sites outnumber inspectors, and control measures still allow pollution to occur. For years in North Carolina, plain old dirt got scant notice compared to highly publicized pollution from sewage plants and pig farms. But a review of sedimentation records and visits to construction sites reveal how this spring mud has become the number one threat to water in

the Triangle. The onslaught of mud has worsened flooding and forced costly dredging of silted lakes. It fills creeks so full of cloudy muck that fish can't live in them any more. Secondly, contractors routinely violate sedimentation and erosion control regulations during land clearing and grading. In the third place, muddy run-off continues even when contractors comply with the regulations because silt fences, sediment ponds, and other government-approved measures still allow illegal levels of pollution.

It is not hard to find the sources of the problem. They are everywhere people work, drive, shop, park, learn, and play. Silt was the price of new schools in Wake, Durham, Orange, and Chatham counties. Last year alone, 180 projects in Wake and Durham counties were cited for serious violations. The standard measures used to control mud or sediment have changed little in the past twenty-five years. Still, research shows the methods used to keep sediment out of water are effective if they are carefully maintained. Here are a few of the methods used:

- **SILT FENCE:** The mesh fabric wire-backed fence, is the most common way to control sediment. The fence filters out larger soil particles as the water flows through it, but it frequently fails in heavy rain, because of poor maintenance.
- **SEDIMENT BASIN:** An artificial pond collects runoff from the construction site and releases it slowly through riprap, a pile of irregularly shaped stones. Basins must be dredged regularly to seep them functional.
- **RISER BASIN:** common on large sites, riser basins use gravel and riprap to slow water flow and filter out larger particles before the water discharges through a pipe. Riprap is also placed at the end of the pipe.
- **CHECK DAMS:** small rock dams slow the movement of water down a slope. We seem to be in a dry spell at the present time, but rains will come. The cause of the continuing mud problem is construction and rain without enough mud police, or inspectors. A study of construction in the Triangle found that when inspectors visited construction sites more frequently the streams ran cleaner.

Thought for the Quarter:

Legislators don't always see the light, but they always feel the heat.



NEED TO RAISE STATE PMP

LWV-NC BOARD

The LWV-NC Board recommends an increase in the State Per Member Payment (PMP) for the fiscal year 2002-2003 (which would reflect the membership count on January 1, 2002). Delegates to convention will be asked to choose between \$16 and \$18.

Sally Coughlin asked Diana Phillips to canvas the state Leagues at the 2000 LWV-US Convention to find out what state PMPs were. Diana learned that LWV-NC PMP of \$12 was one of the lowest of the Leagues. The range of state PMPs in 2000 generally ranged from \$15 to \$21.

League members should know the reasons for the need of this increase.

- LWV-NC has not increased PMP for about 10 years. We know well the problems that local Leagues have with raising money. We should have raised state dues in the 1990's, but because of increases in national PMP, the state board decided to try to raise the funds by other means.
- Going to corporations for contributions puts the state League in competition with local Leagues for money that is already scarce.
- We have over 150 national members in North Carolina. The national League does not pay PMP to the state League for these members. We "absorb" the costs to carry them.
- Most state board members donate their expenses, but this is changing, and it must change if we're going to ask people on fixed incomes to work on the state board. Reimbursement for mileage is at 15 cents per mile, about half the actual cost.
- A volunteer now manages the membership data base and keeps up with phone calls and emails to the League. A full time staff member is needed for the office for data management, Dnet, etc.

- The budgeted amount for next year is approximately \$20,000 and provides only \$4000 for part time staff.
- Most Leaguers around the state are in favor of maintaining a state office in Raleigh. Local presidents know the difficulty of keeping up with local League material when it gets passed around from president to president. The state League has that problem compounded.
- Fundraising projects that take a lot of volunteers (like a golf tournament) are do-able by a local League, but not feasible at the state level.
- League members are in general more generous to their local Leagues than to the state League.



What does LWV-NC do for local Leagues?

The state League...

- compiles data for the Council of State voters service project,
- provides Dnet training,
- works for legislation at the state level (campaign finance reform),
- compiles information for programs that cover an issue in many counties or throughout the state (charter school study, election practices),
- gives information about links for web sites,
- gives workshops to members of local Leagues,
- maintains constant contact with local League presidents in order to give help when needed,
- sends information out to local Leagues by way of the presidents' e-mail address list,
- administers local League Ed Fund monies.

We ask for your support in raising the state PMP!

LOCAL LEAGUES AROUND NORTH CAROLINA

Asheville-Buncombe: Hosted first ever State of the City / State of the County public meeting; Held jointly with LWV Henderson County a panel discussion on the Regional Water Authority.

Carteret County: Held Town Meeting with County Board of Elections to discuss ways to make elections more efficient and accessible; Participated, along with other organizations, in Campaign Finance Reform Breakfast with Craven and Carteret NC legislators and 30 civic leaders from both counties, made the presentation and facilitated discussion; Held forum on "Beaufort Form of Management," with discussions on upcoming referendum on whether the town of Beaufort should have a manager or board-directed form of government.

Catawba County: Sponsored a public forum on a school bond referendum.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg: Held Civics 101 classes; Developed and administered a survey on public perception of fairness and accessibility of the courts in Mecklenburg County.

Craven County: Participated, along with other organizations, in Campaign Finance Reform Breakfast with Craven and Carteret NC legislators and 30 civic leaders from both counties.

Henderson County: Conducted a public forum/debate on campaign finance reform; Held jointly with LWV Asheville-Buncombe a panel discussion on the Regional Water Authority.

Macon County: Held cooperative meeting with American Rivers, N.C. Watershed Coalition, W.N.C. Alliance on the Little Tennessee River Basin.

Moore County: Launched Civics 101.

New Hanover County: Held Local Government 101 classes.

Piedmont Triad: Held Civics 101 classes.

Union County: Held Civics 101 classes.

Wake County: Involvement of over 700 people in Study Circles project.

STATE PRESIDENT'S VISITS TO LOCAL LEAGUES 1999 - 2001

Asheville-Buncombe	11-01-00
Carteret	05-10-01
Catawba	03-09-01
Chapel Hill Area	12-06-00
Charlotte-Mecklenburg	03-02-00
Craven	11-13-00
Dare	02-12-01
Henderson	11-02-00
Macon	11-02-00
Madison	05-12-00
Moore	12-05-00
New Hanover	05-11-01
Onslow-Pender	05-10-01
Piedmont Triad	09-28-00
Pitt	02-13-01
Union	03-10-01
Wake	08-28-00
Watauga	09-07-00

Many Thanks to LWV Gaston County, LWV Carteret County and LWV Onslow/Pender Counties for hosting League Days during the past two years

and

Many Thanks to LWV Orange, Durham, Chatham Counties for hosting the 2001 State Convention!



MEMBERSHIP IDEAS

This idea from **LWV-Wake County**: Every August the Wake County League hosts a reception around Women's Equality Day (August 25th) for League members, guests, and candidates for public office. This popular event gives people the opportunity to talk one-on-one with candidates.

From **Sue Craig, Chair Member Services, LWV Ohio** on the LWV Outreach listserv:

I wish every League would plan a "Meet the League" meeting as its first meeting of a new year. However, I would suggest that you focus on making it a "fun" meeting--one where newcomers will get to meet Leaguers and realize that this is an "interesting & interested" group of individuals that they would like to join. I think there's plenty of opportunity later on during a new member orientation to explain all the details about League. Consider the following:

- Get your most creative members together to come up with a "catchy" slogan to use in your promotional material, such as "Don't be caught out of your league, the League of Women Voters, that is!"
- Advertise, advertise, advertise. Send personal invitations to every person on your prospective member list; write an article for local newspaper (if you have a small weekly paper-include a picture).
- Provide League members with invitations and have them mail to their friends, adding a personalized note.
- Dinner meeting (or at least have refreshments).
- Welcome all newcomers--name tags with small flower attached.
- Sign-up sheet for guests.
- Have available packets of information for guests (not too much to overwhelm) - a 1-page fact sheet about recent League accomplishments, plus a membership form.

- Provide a guest sign up sheet to get names/addresses for follow-up.

- Make sure Leaguers are seated with newcomers.



- Play some kind of "getting to know you" game and have people introduce each other.

- As far as program, ask 2 or 3 of your League members to tell why they joined the League - their stories might surprise you. Or you might perform a skit. Remember the purpose is to let the newcomers know that although League is serious business, we do know how to have fun.

From **Joyce Nielsen, Membership Chair, then President, LWV-Cedar Rapids/Marion, Iowa. "How One League Turned Itself Around: A Membership Success Story"**

(summary)

LWV-US Member News and Views, March/April 2001: In July, 1999 we formed a Membership Committee, and one year later we had 34 new members. We decided to make a great recruitment effort in the fall and coast the rest of the year.

- We contacted past members who we thought were still interested, just neglected sending dues for a year or two.
- We called members to ask for referrals.
- We decided to hold monthly Saturday brunches from 10 a.m. to 11:30 for our prospects. We asked people who were not active if they would host the event and prepare a simple brunch.
- In October and November we held an evening meeting. We asked hosts to serve a dessert and coffee.
- We called prospects and invited them to a brunch or a coffee. We gave them the dates. They chose the one they could attend. At the brunches we limited the

attendance to 5 prospects, 2 committee members who shared the presentation, and the hostess. We did not limit attendance at the evening meetings

- I scheduled meetings at the League office at noon or after work for working women. I served a “make your own sandwich” at noon meetings and brought light snacks after work. I gave the usual presentation on the League and all the people who attended a meeting were given a League brochure, a one-page history of the League, Directory of Elected Officials, and a letter from the President.
- I called lapsed members to ask them to help with candidates forums.
- Follow up: we will follow up on all prospects, add them to mailing list, schedule presentation at someone’s home or the League office. We are creating our own brochure. We will make a stronger appeal to our members for names of people who are interested.

POINTERS FOR EFFECTIVE E-MAIL TO LEGISLATORS

H. D. MARLOWE & CO.

Adapted from article in The Roadrunner, LWV Metropolitan Phoenix

Keep the following points in mind when composing e-mail to legislators:

- Make it clear in the beginning of the message that you are a constituent. If possible, put this information in the subject line of your message. Ex: Constituent from Durham, NC re: Campaign Finance Reform.
- Include your U.S. mail address at the end of the letter.
- Keep message short. Long messages are ineffective. State your point near the beginning. Try to keep the message to one screen (never more than two).
- If sending message to Congress, time your e-mail so that it arrives on Wednesday or Thursday, since most Congressional mail arrives on Monday, Tuesday or Friday.

- Use gender-neutral words, such as “Representative” or “Member of Congress,” rather than “Congressman” or “Congresswoman.”
- If you know the Member or a staff aide, say so at the start of your message to alert the aide to give your message special attention.
- Show an understanding of both the issue and the legislative process. Use bill numbers, state the bill’s current status, name the bill’s sponsoring Members, and whether the bill is supported by the governor (or president).
- Be both specific and practical. Relate the points of your message to your experience, the Member’s committee assignments, or the constituents’ interests.
- Be polite. Abusive communication simply doesn’t work.
- Ask for a response that clearly states the member’s position on the issue.
- Follow-up. If the Member does what you want, say thanks. If s/he doesn’t, e-mail your message of disappointment.

LWV. . . .

SINGLE-ISSUE OR MULTI-ISSUE ORGANIZATION?

We often hear it said that the League should have a single issue and focus on government process, not focus on many issues. Sue Hayes, of LWV New Hanover County, takes another view:

“The reason I’ve stayed a League member for so long is that the League is a multi-issue organization. My main interests are in the environment, but along with the environment come issues of good government. Campaign Finance Reform is the most important environmental legislation there can be. I like being in League because I can be informed and active in a multitude of issues, and I trust League’s impartiality in reaching positions.”

League of Women Voters of North Carolina
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Just Ask!

Spring, 2001 Issue:

Lobby Day
Environment
Charter Schools
LWV-NC Convention
Campaign Finance Reform
Endowment Fund
Reinventing League
Membership Ideas

Mission Statement

The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization for men and women, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Printed on recycled paper.