

The Mississippi Voter League of Women Voters of Mississippi

Fran Leber, President

January 2009
<http://www.lwv-ms.org>

Ellen Russak, Editor



President's Corner

Wow, what an exciting season! I want to commend each of you who took part in registering voters, presenting debates, and providing help to those who needed voter information on Election Day. Be sure to read the Local League activities on page 2.

I spoke at the "Women in Politics" program at Ole Miss, presenting the LWVMS history of presidential debates and candidate guides. This was one of the programs provided for citizens and students preceding the first presidential debate. The program spotlighted a display depicting women in politics which included LWVMS material from our archives which are housed at Ole Miss. I also testified at the Secretary of State's election hearings throughout the state (see my statement on page 9).

At our request, **LWVUS President Mary Wilson** sent out a statement encouraging Senator McCain to participate in the Oxford presidential debate.

The State League helped the Jackson Area League register voters at Jackson State and also Ole Miss during the Presidential Debate. We anticipated a big turn out because of the large number of phone calls and web site hits we received. Thanks to **Mary Margaret Bollinger, Amy Griggs, Natalie Maynor, Judy Williams, and Harriet Tanzman** for making the Ole Miss trip. We all proudly wore tee shirts stating, "If you don't vote, don't complain." They also had the League logo printed front and back. Our League got a lot of PR during the election. We even had a photo of our voter registration booth at Ole Miss included in a Guardian London blog (London, England, that is)!

During this time we worked with Rep. Reynolds and the Attorney General's office to

determine the correct address that college students should use on their voter registration forms. We also had a request from the MS Veteran's Hospital to help clarify the congressional directive to help their patients and clients register and vote. The Attorney General's office and the Department of Justice helped with that.

Once again the Clarion Ledger and LWVMS produced a Candidate's Guide that was printed the Sunday before the elections. A special thanks to **Mary Margaret Bollinger** for helping to gather the information.

During this busy election year the League was able to present three programs on **Judicial Elections: the pros and cons of electing judges versus merit selection.** While Mary Margaret Bollinger was State League President, she applied for and received a grant for these programs and Common Cause came on as co-sponsor. On September 4th, Common Cause planned the program at Ole Miss and **LWV-JA President Barbara Powell**, moderated the panel. Speakers were Andrew Howorth, District 3 Circuit Judge, and John Hailman, retired US Atty.

On November 18, Mary Margaret Bollinger and I presented, and GC League member **Atty. Karen Sawyer** chaired, a program featuring the pros and cons of the merit selection of judges vs their election, at the regular meeting of the American Inns of the Court. Other participants were Atty. Tim Holiman and Atty. Tom Carpenter.

The LWV-Jackson Area held the third meeting. It was co-sponsored with Common Cause and moderated by **Pres. Barbara Powell**. Speakers were Supreme Court Justice James Graves, Jr, and Carlton Reeves a Jackson Attorney and member of the Magnolia Bar Association. ...Fran...

Jackson Area League Report

Barbara Powell, LWVJA President

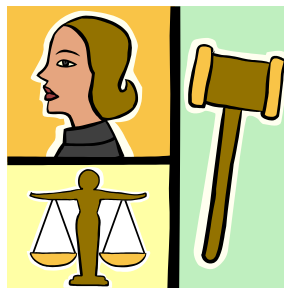
The Jackson Area League has made important contributions to our community during this election season. Members helped over 200 people register to vote in Jackson. Some of our members helped the State League manage a booth and register voters at the Presidential Debate in Oxford while local members and friends watched the debate on a big screen in the Public Broadcasting System Auditorium. Our Election Hot-line answered over 300 calls with questions about the election.

Oct. 21st, we had a forum for candidates for the Supreme Court in District 1. It was a big success! All three candidates participated and a number of people from the press and community attended. **Kay Brodbeck** did a very effective job of organizing and moderating the program. The forum helped all of us become familiar with the candidates before casting our votes on Election Day.

At the November meeting, **Dr. Kris Kaase**, Deputy Superintendent of the MS Dept. of Education, discussed the status of education in the state. Tests and curriculum are being upgraded so that they are more comparable to those in other states. **Suzie Rosser** organized both the program and refreshments.

If you noticed the large amounts of money going into judicial campaigns lately or listened to attack ads, you know why our December meeting was important. A distinguished panel (Supreme Court Justice James Graves and attorneys Alex Alston and Carlton Reeves) discussed the topic, "*Is there a better way to select judges?*" The program was sponsored jointly by the **League of Women Voters MS** and **Common Cause of MS**. This project has been supported in part by a grant secured by the LWVUS

Education Fund and LWVMS from the Program on Constitutional and Legal Policy of the Open Society Institute.



Gulf Coast League Has Been Busy!

Alma Lindsey, President of the LWV-GC and LWVMS Secretary

Attorney Karen Sawyer, a Gulf Coast member, hosted the League's panel discussion of the merit selection of judges at one of her professional organization meetings. Karen is also a good friend of State Senator Debbie Dawkins of Pass Christian so I addressed and stamped the invites to local legislators for that meeting.

The Ocean Springs members, including a new member, did voter Registration that garnered about 300 new voters! These were done at the Jackson County Junior College, the Telephone Company, and at local stores. They used the Gulf Coast League's banner and helped promote the League in Jackson County. My husband Bill (LWVMS 1st VP, Membership) and I assisted at Poll Workers Classes and did poll watching on Election Day.

On December 15, 2008 the LWVMGC had a Holiday Party at the Ocean Springs Library. **Jim Wilson**, candidate in the 2008 general election, gave insights on debates and running a campaign. We also discussed the Bill of Rights and the mayoral debates.



First Call to LWVMS Convention

SAVE THE DATE!!!

Saturday May 16, 2009

**At the MSU School of Architecture
Jackson Center**

The LWVMS Convention is held every-other-year on the odd numbered years. Agenda items include: adopting program items and action priorities, the election of officers, approving a budget for 2009-10 (including dues), bylaw changes if any, and presenting awards. As a grassroots organization, Local Leagues and Members at Large send suggestions for all the above (except suggestions for the Nominating Committee) to **LWV-MS P.O. Box 55505, Jackson, MS 39296**. The submission deadline is March 1, 2009.

- **Nomination of members for the State Board** – State Board officers and elected directors are elected for two years and can be elected for a second term of two years. The positions to be filled are president, first and second vice presidents, treasurer, secretary, five other directors, plus the nominating committee. Individuals and Local Leagues can suggest nominations. Send suggestions to, **Kay Brodbeck, Chair, Nominating Committee, 145 Berry Rd., Jackson, MS 39056** or e-mail: khbrodbeck@aol.com
- **Program Planning** – In January or February each year, the State League and Local Leagues gather to discuss and determine what topic or topics to study for the next one or two years at the State and Local levels. These meetings are often called **Lively Issues meetings** (see the Local Program article on page 5). The proposed program(s) for the LWVMS will be presented in the next *MS Voter* and then will be presented for membership approval at Convention.

- **Action Priorities** – The State League’s proposed action priorities for the next two years are listed on page 6 and will be presented at Convention for member approval.
- **Budget Planning** – Because LWVUS dues have gone up, it is important that State and Local Leagues consider raising their membership dues. The portion of your dues that is sent to support LWVUS will be increased to \$26.80 for FY 2008-2009 and \$29.20 for FY 2009-2010. Part of this increase is because general expenses have gone up and part is to fund the studies.
- **Awards:** the following awards will be presented: **The Thelma Workman Award, The Fran Leber Leadership Award, and The Katherine Rea Membership Award**. Forms for nominations will be sent in the next *Voter* or you can make copies from our web site: www.lwv-ms.org

We Contact New President

When **Barack Obama** was elected the 44th president of the United States, **LWVUS President**

Nancy Wilson sent a letter urging transparency in government...

“...the most important message I want to send to you now is that none of the issues can truly be resolved by the officials in your

administration without the full and active participation of multiple voices. Nor can problems be solved if they are discussed behind closed doors. Please encourage each of your Cabinet nominees to commit now to explore new ways to bring all Americans into the policymaking efforts of their departments. We see your health care policy team’s current efforts as an excellent start in that direction...”



National Issues

Deloris Lee, National Issues Director

The 2008 election was groundbreaking and historic for many reasons. One being the vast amount of information available for voters on the Internet; voters continued to rely on the League's VOTE411.org web site to help them get educated and prepared for voting.

Millions of voters were assisted online throughout the long primary and general election season. This site was featured prominently as a voter resource by many media organizations, including "The Washington Post," "The NY Times," C-SPAN, and CNN. "The Washington Post" stated, *"We like the attitude of Mary G. Wilson, president of the League of Women Voters. She is more pleased than worried by predictions of a massive turnout, and she aptly observed that the willingness of people to wait in line for this historic vote – already evident in places where there is early balloting – is an affirmation that our democracy is alive and well."*



- **Stimulus Bill**

The League and Partners urged Congressional Leaders to include green infrastructure in any stimulus bill. This should include green jobs development that immediately puts people to work and reinvigorates the economy. Any automaker aid package should include a guarantee of improved greenhouse gas emissions and fuel economy.

- **Reform Agenda for 111th Congress**

The League continues its quest for campaign reform. On Nov. 6 the LWV and several other groups issued a statement to Congress requesting the presidential public financing system be repaired & a new public financing system be created for congressional races.

Supporting statement: *"The key role that influence-money played in creating the national financial crisis provides just one more example of the enormous costs to citizens and taxpayers that come from federal candidates being dependent on special interest groups, lobbyists, bundlers and large contributions for their campaign funds."*

- **League Calls for Reform**

The League has been asked by voters to continue efforts to improve the election system. The League agrees, and has called for passage of universal permanent voter registration, adequate and equitable distribution of election resources, and improved management of statewide voter registration lists.



National Popular Vote Study

Delegates at LWVUS Convention 2008 voted to study the advisability of using the **National Popular Vote (NPV) Compact** among the states as a method for electing the U.S. President. For information on this study go to www.lwv.org/, click on "members" and then "projects and programs." On the left you will see "National Popular Vote Compact." Two other organizations with information are www.fairvote.org (pull down "issue menu" and click on "National Popular Vote") and www.nationalpopularvote.com/ Common Cause has already decided to support NPV.

The League has a long held position supporting the elimination of the Electoral College and institution of direct election of the president but this would require a U.S. constitutional amendment. The NPV Compact is passed at the state level and does not require an amendment to the U.S. Constitution.



LWVMS Board Finds a “Home”

We have been offered and have accepted the use of The Public Policy Center for our board meetings. This includes a closet in which to keep some of our things. We have been meeting in board members’ homes but that doesn’t allow a permanent place to leave supplies and records. The house is at 736 North Congress St., Jackson, and members are always welcome to attend board meetings or to send their input to the Board.

Lively Issues: How We Decide to Study an Issue and Then Lobby for It



The primary purpose of a League study is to reach member agreement on a SOLUTION to an issue and prepare the League to take ACTION to remedy the problem.

Program Planning is the process by which the local and state Leagues decide what issue(s) to study (if any) and what issue(s) that we already have positions on that will get top priority for action in the coming year. On even numbered years, LWVUS and local program items are reviewed. On the odd numbered years it will be State and local program items. This year it will be State and local issues.

Local Leagues hold annual Program Planning meetings, called **Lively Issues**, in January or February to discuss local and LWVMS program issues. Examples of local topics are school bond issues, land use, etc. **The topics that get the most support at Lively Issues go before the local board which assesses**

timeliness, interest to members and the community, and the potential for the League to take effective action.

The board recommends one (or none) of the proposals and then the proposed studies go for a vote of the entire local League membership at their Annual Meeting: usually in May. The top vote-getter will be the topic studied. Local League suggestions for State issues are sent to the LWVMS and LWVMS pursues the same process and their recommendation(s) will be presented to the membership at convention.

Now the work begins. The local board names a study chair who recruits other members for the committee. The committee convenes to begin researching the issue in summer or fall. As they gather more information, they share it via newsletter articles, meetings, and guest speaker events. Towards the end of this process, the committee formulates a set of “*consensus questions*” to draw out member agreement on the wording for a new position on the issue. These questions are posed at a single meeting, and then the committee compiles members’ responses in order to draft a position, known as a “consensus.” The final League consensus position must be voted on and approved one final time by the membership at an annual meeting.

Consensus means that the vast majority of the group agrees with the position although it doesn’t have to be 100% agreement. Then the League position can be acted on by designated members through contacts with government officials, public meetings, and the media.

This process, at its heart, is what gives the League its reputation for being informed and reliable. The deliberation, the push to understand an issue fully, and the final decision by all members, are what set the League apart from many other grassroots organizations.

LWVMS 2009 Legislative Priorities

The League Lobby Corps will monitor and lobby for the following issues. If need arises (and there is time and woman power) action may be taken on other issues.

1. Cigarette Tax Increase

Position – Supports controlling health care costs by raising the excise tax on cigarettes by \$1.00 in order to decrease smoking levels and significantly decrease smoking attributable illnesses.

2. Election Laws: Opposes Voter ID

Position – Supports the right of every citizen to vote. Believes that voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed.

3. Judiciary Selection for Supreme Court and Court of Appeals

Position – Supports merit selection and then retention election of Mississippi Court of Appeals and Supreme Court judges. Selection would be by a nonpartisan committee. The retention election would be later in order to indicate if the public feels the judge has been doing a good job.



4. Education Issues – will monitor legislation that affects education and will lobby as needed.

Member Spotlight – Natalie Maynor, LWVMS Treasurer



A retired sociolinguist, I returned four years ago to my hometown of Jackson after having taught at MSU for about thirty years. I'm living in almost my old neighborhood in Jackson and am loving it. Although there have been some negative changes in Jackson through the years, like the higher crime rate, I prefer the Jackson of today to the Jackson of the '50s. Maybe the difference is simply the perspective of an adult versus that of the child I was when I grew up here, but there's a vibrancy in today's Jackson that I find exciting.

In addition to work with LWV, I'm involved with Jackson Friends of the Library, the Our Fondren Neighborhood Association, the Mississippi Democratic Club, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Jackson, and various ad hoc events and causes that come along. In addition, I've somehow managed to find time to submit more than 53,000 cemetery pictures to findagrave.com.

The work of LWV is extremely important. I am proud to be part of it!



Citizen Input on Health Care Reform Requested

Tom Daschle, Health and Human Services Secretary, has posted a request for public input on health care reform on the Obama-Biden Transition Web site. For the posting, go to <http://change.gov/page/s/healthcare/> As the Obama-Biden team works to put together a health care proposal, it is important for citizens to let their views be heard. League members are encouraged to take this opportunity to participate and urge the new administration to act quickly to pass legislation containing this provision.

2009 Citizens' Handbook & Calendar Get your preorders in!!

Looking for the perfect gift for your local politicians, co-workers, or anyone interested in making our state and communities better places? The

LWVMS has produced an invaluable combination citizen handbook and calendar for sale. Each calendar contains the addresses and phone numbers of public officials, tips on contacting them, election and legislative

deadlines, district maps, and much, much more. The 8 1/2" x 11" calendar also contains a space each day for you to note your appointments. *Proceeds help support the League's activities including candidate debates, voter registration drives, and citizen education projects.*

For quantity orders of 10 or more, call or E-mail Fran at 601-956-2507 or FLLWV@aol.com. If ordering a large number of calendars, ask about reduced postage and handling.

Citizen's 2009 Handbook & Calendar

Preorder your guide and support the League today!

Cost: \$10.00 each plus \$1.70 P&H if mailed

Please provide the following information to pre-order your 2008 Calendar:

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

I would like to order _____ 2009 calendar(s) for \$_____ Total

Make checks payable to **LWVMS**.

Mail requests to:

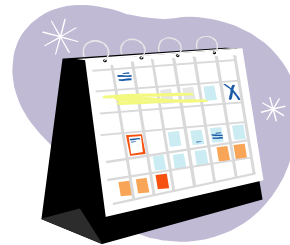
League Calendar

LWVMS

P.O. Box 55505

Jackson, MS 39296-5505

Proceeds help support League programs and activities including voter service and citizen education projects.



"The world is governed by those who show up!" - Bob Kane



Our League in the Year 2009 and Beyond!

Have you become a member of the **League of Women Voters Endowment Trust**? By contributing to the Trust, you provide continuous benefits to the LWVMS. Is there someone you wish to celebrate or remember? Send your contributions to the

LWVMS Endowment Trust, PO Box 55505, Jackson, MS 39296-5505. The interest from the trust may be used to take action on issues or support other League projects and therefore is not tax deductible.

Ask a Friend to Join the League!



LWVMS MAL (Member at Large) Dues or New Member Coupon

This coupon is for those wishing to join the State League because they are not near a local League or for those MALs who haven't paid dues for the 2008-2009 FY. **Your dues cover memberships in the state and national Leagues. MALs are welcome to attend League meetings at any level, including local.**

NAME: _____ **Phone:** _____ **E-mail:** _____

ADDRESS: _____

Dues are \$35. Members at the same address pay \$35 for the first member and half price (\$17.50) for each additional member at that household. Students pay \$20.

Make your check out to: LWVMS and return to LWVMS, Attn. Natalie Maynor, Treasurer, PO Box 55505, Jackson, MS 39296-5505



LWV Gulf Coast Dues and New Member Coupon

(Jackson, Harrison and Hancock Counties)

Your dues cover membership in the local, state and national Leagues.

NAME: _____ **Phone:** _____ **E-mail:** _____

ADDRESS: _____

Dues are \$40. Members at the same address pay \$40 for the first member and half price (\$20) for each additional member at that household. Students are \$20.

Make your check out to: LWV-Gulf Coast and return to William R. Lindsey, Treasurer, 12195 Oaklawn Road, Biloxi, MS 39532

*****The Jackson Area League puts its dues coupon in its own "Voter"*****

"Nature, like a loving mother, is ever trying to keep land and sea, mountain and valley, each in its place, to hush the angry winds and waves, balance the extremes of heat and cold, of rain and drought, that peace, harmony and beauty may reign supreme."

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, leader of the Women's Suffrage Movement.

Quoted by the Sierra Club in September 2008.

A Loud Whistle: Bunny Greenhouse



Bunnatine "Bunny" Greenhouse, a member of LWV of Baton Rouge, was a top civilian procurement

officer for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers supervising billions of dollars in work assignments when she discovered something was seriously amiss. She believed that Halliburton and its subsidiaries were able to get preferential treatment, including billion dollar contracts, for rebuilding projects in Iraq. She could not keep quiet, no matter what the consequences. By blowing the whistle Greenhouse helped bring accountability and transparency to a giant government organization. Her reward for whistle blowing? A demotion from her job. But this woman has absolutely no regrets. Bunny was inducted into Northeastern State University's Louisiana Center for Women and Government's Hall of Fame. She was featured in November 2008 at the National Press Club in Washington D.C., and is included in the book, [Your America: Democracy's Local Heroes](#), written by John Siceloff and Jason Maloney.

"You will not read their stories without being inspired to act - and that is the beginning of hope for democracy." --- Bill Moyers, NOW on PBS. Go to:

pbs.org/nw/youramerica and click on "Meet Local Heroes" - scroll down and you will find Bunny's story.



Election Law Committee Hearing Testimony, 10-15-08 Fran Leber, Pres. LWVMS

SOS Hosemann, Senator Burton, Representative Reynolds, and Committee Members;

The right of every citizen to vote has been a basic League principal since our origin in 1920. The League of Women Voters believes that voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed. LWV supports early voting, same-day voter registration, shortening the period between registration and voting, and we oppose Voter ID. It is important to increase accessibility to the electoral process in order to ensure both a representative electoral process and the right of every citizen to vote.

Senate Bill 2910 23-15-211.1, which passed this year, states: *"For purposes of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993, the secretary of state is designated as Mississippi's chief election officer."* The U.S. Justice Department has pre-cleared SB 2910. To return the voter to the center of the election process, the chief election officer's (SOS) responsibilities should be legislated. The Secretary of State should be required by law to keep the public informed of election changes in the law, the Justice Department's approval of the law changes, new election law policy changes, and problems and their solutions. The SOS must protect the right to vote and encourage participation in the political process. The SOS must mandate an election voter service (hot line) throughout the year and have it be listed in the phone book and on the Secretary of State's web site. We look forward to working with you in implementing the above suggestions. F.L.



LWVMS 2009 Calendar

Feb. 14 – Congratulations on the League’s 89th birthday!!

March – Women’s History Month. *“Women Taking the Lead to Save Our Planet.”*

March 19 (Thurs.) – Board Meeting: 736 Congress St., Jackson. All are welcome!

March 19 (Thurs.) – Sunshine Week/Legislative Visit Day at the Capitol. You Can Make a Difference! You will get further information as the time nears so save the date!

March 20 – Deadline for the April “MS Voter.” E-mail articles to Ellen Russak at editor.lwv-ms.org or mail to 205 King Richard Rd., Starkville, MS 39759

May 16 (Sat.) – LWVMS 2009 Convention, MSU School of Architecture Jackson Center. *Save the date!!*

May 16 (Sat.) – Board Meeting to follow Convention. All are welcome!

June 13-15 – LWVUS Council 2009: Washington, D.C. Each local League is eligible to send two delegates.

Aug. 25 - Deadline for the September “MS Voter.” E-mail articles to Ellen Russak at editor.lwv-ms.org or mail to 205 King Richard Rd., Starkville, MS 39759



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MISSISSIPPI

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Jackson, MS 39295-5505

Phone: 601-352-4616

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Mission:

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan, political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.