

Lighthouse

A PUBLICATION OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND/ BLUFFTON AREA



Inside this issue:

September Meeting	1
Report from LWWUS National Convention	1
From the President	2
Membership	2
A New Year and A New You	3
Spotlight on Janice "Jan" Billingslea	4
Campaign Finance Reform	5
Special Recognition	5
Calendar of Events	6
Officers and Board	6

SEPTEMBER MEMBERSHIP MEETING BEAUFORT COUNTY LAND PRESERVATION BUS TOUR WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2012

What? Instead of holding a regular meeting this September, we are going on a bus tour to see a few good examples of the many sites that have been preserved thanks to voters who passed previous referenda to preserve land in our county. **Garrett Budds**, Conservation Director for the Beaufort County Open Land Trust, will be our guide.

Why? Seeing some of the results of previous referenda should help us inform ourselves and the public about the **land preservation referendum that will be on the ballot on November 6**. The upcoming referendum is for \$25 million. More information about it will be provided during the bus tour.

Where? The tour will start at **Fish Haul Creek Park on Hilton Head Island** and then go to the **Bluffton Oyster Company in Bluffton**. League members and guests may start the tour at either of these two locations. We will then visit Widgeon Point on Lemon Island and possibly Altamaha in Okatie, which overlooks the Okatie and Colleton rivers, before returning to the Bluffton Oyster Company and Fish Haul Creek Park.

When? Those people starting the tour at Fish Haul Creek Park should be there by 9:15. The bus will leave promptly at 9:30. Anyone wanting to start at the Bluffton Oyster Company should be there by 9:45. The tour will be completed by 12:30.

How? Make your reservations by contacting me as soon as possible. Space is limited, and we are inviting the public to join us. Please make sure to provide your phone number and e-mail address in case we need to contact you. Please also indicate whether you will start the tour on the island or in Bluffton. If you start it in Bluffton, you will obviously not see Fish Haul Creek Park.

Cost? \$5.00 for League members and \$7.00 for guests of members should be paid when boarding the bus.

Directions to Fish Haul Creek Park: From William Hilton Parkway (Business 278), take Beach City Road (near mile marker 4). At the circle, take the second exit and continue on Beach City Road. Shortly after coming to a 4-way stop sign, you'll see Fish Haul Creek Park on your right. It is approximately 2 miles from William Hilton Parkway.

Directions to Bluffton Oyster Company: From Highway 278, take SC46, take second exit at circle to stay on SC46, go about .8 of a mile and turn right at stop sign onto May River Road. (a continuation of SC46). Take the 3rd left onto Wharf Street. Park in the lot on the right just before getting to the end of the road.

Fran Holt, VP and Program Chair,
Phone: 843-837-3436; e-mail: franholthbl@gmail.com

REPORT FROM THE LWWUS NATIONAL CONVENTION By Karen Wessel, President

I was indeed privileged to attend the National Convention in Washington, DC, this past June. Delegations from every state filled the Washington Hilton and just about every information session, caucus, and workshop overflowed with delegates. There were so many activities, speakers, and voting sessions that most of us never got out of the hotel for more than a quick dinner.

The official title of the convention was "The Power of the Vote: Imagine, Commit, Act!" Speakers included Professor Kathleen Hall Jamieson of the University of Pennsylvania, Eleanor Clift, former Congressman Mickey Edwards, and Trevor Potter, former chair of the Federal Election Commission. Special speakers included Eleanor Holmes Norton, Attorney General Eric Holder, and John Zogby, political pollster. One of the speakers' common themes was the need for campaign finance reform, in particular the problem of massive sums of money coming into the election process from unidentified sources. Of equal importance to the mission of the League, the effort to suppress votes in various ways

Continued on Page 2.

From the President



Welcome back from our annual summer hiatus. The LWVHHI/BA has a very full schedule this fall election season. I hope you will take a few moments to read this issue and note the important dates on your calendars. As I write this, we are coordinating with the local candidates who are running for federal, state, and local governmental office. We hope to offer a series of candidates' forums for each of the contested races leading up to election day on November 6. Our

voter's service chair, Rita Donahue, and membership chair, Julie Wittig, will hold voter information and registration drives on the island and in the Bluffton area. In addition to the election related programs, LWVHHI will participate in a state consensus on education in November. Fran Holt, program chair, has arranged a wonderful tour as our program for September. Please see the details and sign up information on page 1. I hope to see you on the tour.



Karen Wilber Wessel
President,
LWVHHI/BA

Report from the LWVUS National Convention (*Continued from Page 1*)

continues in many states. Our state League was recognized as a leader in combating voter suppression efforts in SC. League members were encouraged to notify local TV stations that they may refuse to air deceptive advertisements from the so-called third party organizations. The speakers also emphasized some basic ways to protect our democracy, including actively working to restore the Senate majority vote and to encourage open primaries, independent, non-partisan redistricting groups, the passage of the Disclose Act, and all efforts to modernize the voter registration process.

On a more personal note, I particularly enjoyed the workshops for League Leaders, Advocacy, Social Media, Membership, and Voter Registration. It was also an interesting experience to see such a large organization at work. To say they are organized and efficient would be an understatement. I cannot imagine any other national convention could run as smoothly while still allowing opportunities for dissent. While I often could not keep up with all the motions and counter motions, it was amazing to see democracy in action and that is what the League is all about. We should all be proud of our membership in an organization that practices what it preaches each and every day.

Membership

As we begin a new League year, it's time to grow the membership again and reach out to the folks in our communities and invite them to join us. Start by telling your friends about the League of Women Voters and what your membership means to you. Invite them to our upcoming meetings and events and share our newsletter. Please forward via email this issue of the Lighthouse to a friend who may be interested in joining the League so they can read about the great work we do. If there is someone you know who is interested in joining the League that you'd like me to contact, please let me know (wittig4@hargray.com) and I will be glad to follow up.

Our strength lies in our membership and in the knowledge, expertise, and skills that each of us brings to the League. I look forward to working with you this year as we continue to recruit new people and welcome them to the League.

Remember, the League of Women Voters is where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement. Join us in making democracy work.

Julie Wittig
Membership Chair

A New Year and A New You!



In September 2012, we begin a new year of League meetings and activities. This is the perfect time to get involved and try something new. If you are striving to make a difference in your community, the League offers wonderful opportunities for personal and professional growth. As a League member, here are a few ideas to consider doing this year:

Register voters (help register and educate voters before the November 6, 2012 election).

Volunteer for a Forum (help the League prepare for a candidate/issues forum before the election).

Attend a consensus meeting (education issues to be addressed this Fall).

Become an observer and be the eyes and ears of the League by observing how local government works (attend a meeting of the Town Councils, Town Planning Commissions).

Volunteer to be on a committee (education, voter services and observer corps need volunteers). For more information, please contact these committee chairs:

**Education Chair Pamela Hollinger at 706-9928/pamelahollinger@yahoo.com;
Voter Services Chair Rita Donahue at 671-6656/ritamariadon@gmail.com;
Government Issues/Observer Corps Chair Joan Kinne-Shulman at 842-9246/
rjshulman@hargray.com.**

Attend monthly membership meetings to stay informed on current issues.

Attend a Board meeting and see how our League functions.

Write to your elected representatives about issues that are important to you.

Volunteer to staff our booth at a fun event.

Take the next step, enhance your membership and choose how *you* will make a difference!
The League welcomes your participation.

Julie Wittig,
Membership Chair



Spotlight On



**Janice "Jan"
Billingslea**

In 2007, my husband, Morris, and I retired and moved from New Jersey to Bluffton, SC, to begin a new chapter in our lives. It felt wonderful to finally leave our heavy workload behind.

For 36 years, I was a Family Service Caseworker and Family Service Manager for the Department of Citizens Services in Newark, NJ, and Morris was a trial attorney. In addition to our jobs, we co-owned a hair/nail salon and boutique and also a thriving restaurant and night club, which was well known for headline R&B, jazz, and comedy acts. I also enjoyed a career as a top producing realtor and received numerous awards for sales achievements. Oftentimes, the workload as exhausting, but I managed to find the time to be active in my church, to be a Girl Scout troop leader, and to mentor young women.

Once firmly rooted in South Carolina, I looked for meaningful ways to occupy my time and to get involved in this new community that I now proudly call home. I immediately discovered Women in Philanthropy, a women's giving circle, wherein members have come together financially to make a mark in charitable giving in the Lowcountry. As I watched the grant-making

process, I jumped in with both feet and served on the membership committee. I was elected to the board in 2010.

Having grown up in Birmingham, AL, in the tumultuous 1960s, civil rights, voting rights, and equal justice under the law have always been of paramount importance to me. My parents were active participants in the civil rights movement and our family-owned restaurant was the venue for several local underground organizational meetings. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, the Rev. Jesse Jackson, and many other Southern Christian Leadership Conference activists were fed in our restaurant. As a child, I attended demonstration and prayer meetings at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church where ultimately four little girls were killed when the church was bombed on a Sunday morning. Morris and I were married in that church in 1976.

The LWV was an organization that I had heard of but knew very little about, except for its efforts to register voters and sponsor political debates. That was before Julie Wittig became my neighbor and bent my ear. She was so excited about the League and her role as a membership chair. On her invitation, I

attended a meeting and found the members to be quite engaging and very committed people. As I learned more, I became very interested in becoming a member of an organization that serves an immeasurable role in our democratic process on a non-partisan basis.

As a current LWV member, I am proud the LWV has taken on the mantle to battle forces that would attempt to suppress voting or to otherwise disenfranchise people. I am also encouraged with the League's emphasis on working to fight the flood of secret money in politics because campaign reform is critical. I also look forward to forming lasting friendships and bonds.

I owe a debt of gratitude to the League for allowing me the opportunity to get involved on a local political level and for giving me the vision for further personal growth. In summary, I am enjoying my membership.

Campaign Finance Reform

On May 16, at the Port Royal Clubhouse, following our Annual Meeting and a delicious lunch, our members and guests enjoyed a very interesting and informative talk about campaign finance reform by John Crangle, Executive Director of Common Cause of South Carolina.

He talked briefly about campaign finance reform on the national level, including some of the effects of the Supreme Court decision *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, but his focus was on what's happening in South Carolina. He is especially disturbed by the existence of "leadership PACs," political action committees associated with a state official.

Although the state Senate has

prohibited leadership PACs, the House of Representatives has not. The Palmetto Leadership Council, which is associated with S.C. House Speaker Bobby Harrell, has given contributions to many candidates for both the S.C. Senate and House although Senator Tom Davis voided his contribution.

An article in *The (Charleston) Post and Courier* on April 29, 2012, indicated that the Palmetto Leadership Council has also been involved in steering lots of money in contract work to legislators and their families. Common Cause of S.C. has been working hard since 2006 to eliminate these PACs. Although the effort has not yet been successful, in a

note dated July 3, 2012, Mr. Crangle said that "we are gradually gaining ground."

As a follow-up to Mr. Crangle's talk, our League submitted an op-ed to the *Island Packet/Beaufort Gazette* titled "Money in Politics Out of Control in SC, US" that was published on June 23, 2012. It was reprinted in the summer issue of *The SC Voter*, and can be found on page 9 at www.lwvsc.org/files/lwvsc2012_3summer.pdf.

On the same page, there is another article about what the League is doing about campaign finance reform.

Fran Holt,
VP and Program Chair



Visit our Web Site

www.lwvhi.org

Special Recognition

During the spring 2012 membership drive, members were asked to consider adding a donation to benefit the League of Women Voters at both the local and national level when sending in their dues. Our League recognizes and thanks the following members for their generous contributions to LWVHHI/BA and the LWVUS Education Fund:

Ann Coffin
Ann Cromwell
Margaret Downward
Elizabeth Fox
Ginny and Bob Ghirardelli
Alice Gianni
Linda and Tom Hennessey
Niki and Dave Jordan
Janet Law
Sally McGarry
Caroline and Arthur McVitty

Vivian and Tom Miller
Kathy and John Quirk
Ann Robinson
Joan Kinne-Shulman and Richard Shulman
Andrea Siebold
Barbara Swift
Connie and Jerry Voight
Loretta Warden
Karen Wessel
Julie Wittig and Kevin Schoneman

To the entire membership, thank you for supporting League of Women Voters through your dues and donations as we continue to safeguard democracy, improve our communities and help all citizens become active and informed participants in government.



Monthly Calendar of Events

Officers and Board 2012—2013

Board Meetings

Board meetings are held at 9:45 A.M., on Thursday mornings at The Savannah Bank, 852 Wm. Hilton Pkwy, Hilton Head Island.

Thursdays: 2012—Sept. 6, Oct. 4, Nov. 8, Dec. 6.
2013—Jan. 3, Feb. 7, March 7, Apr. 4, May 2

All members are welcome at Board meetings.

OFFICERS

President:	Karen Wessel	682-3397
Vice-President, Program Chair:	Fran Holt	837-3436
Treasurer:	Dot Law	842-5622
Secretary:	Caroline McVitty	681-6124

BOARD

Fund-raising:	vacant	
Education:	Pamela Hollinger	706-9928
Government Issues/Observer Corps:	Joan Kinne-Shulman	842-9246
Hospitality:	Katie Miller	681-6448
Membership:	Julie Wittig	706-3735
Newsletter:	Joan Kinne-Shulman	342-9254
Public Relations/Publicity:	Dee Ann Dowlen	341-2318
Voters Services:	Rita Donahue	671-6656

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

September 12, 9:30-12:30, Bus Tour (See article on page 1.)
September 25, 10:00-1:00, Voter registration drive at HHI High School. (Part of the League’s National Voter Registration effort.)
October—No regular membership meeting will be held, but members, guests, and the public are encouraged to attend the League’s candidate forums. (Dates to be determined.)
November 14, 10:00 A.M., State Consensus Meeting on Evaluating and Retaining Effective Teachers in Our Public Schools. Location: Hilton Head Public Service District Meeting Room, 21 Oak Park Drive (off Mathews), Hilton Head Island.
December 12, 11:30 A.M., Holiday Luncheon followed by talk by guest speaker County Council Chair Wes Newton. Location: Moss Creek Clubhouse.
 Meetings in January through April will be on the second Wednesday of each month at 10:00 A.M., probably alternating between a Hilton Head Island location and one in Bluffton. On May 8 we will have our Annual Meeting/Luncheon and will have a guest speaker. To get updates about meeting plans, please refer to the calendar on our website, www.lwvhhi.org.