



Lighthouse

A PUBLICATION OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND

September Membership Meeting

10 a.m. Wednesday, September 15, 2010
 Public Service District #1
 23 Oak Park Drive, Hilton Head Island, SC

Our featured speaker for the September Membership Meeting is Scott Marshall, Executive Director of the Beaufort County Board of Voter Registration and Elections. Mr. Marshall was selected to replace Agnes Garvin in April, 2009. He holds bachelor's degrees in political science and psychology and a master's degree in public administration. Mr. Marshall is a retired Air Force officer and a former senior executive mission director of the Presidential Airlift Squadron. With a little over a year in this position, Mr. Marshall will address the results of his review and assessment of the election process in our county and his plans for future improvements.

Karen Wessel , Vice President and Program Chair

October Membership Meeting

The October membership meeting will be a
 Mayoral Forum (all 7 if still running)
 Tuesday evening, Oct. 12th (7 PM)
 at the High School Auditorium

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2010 LWVUS Convention

“Get in the Way” was the message given by John Lewis, US Representative from Atlanta, civic rights leader and the keynote speaker at the LWVUS National Convention, held in Atlanta the weekend of June 11-15, 2010. A panel of past National Presidents also encouraged attendees to have fun working in the League, and Kathleen Sebelius, US Secretary of Health and Human Services, emphasized the importance of the League’s commitment to Medical Reform. The desirability of Civility in Public Discourse was also a theme during the convention. These messages of inspiration brought great enthusiasm to delegates as they participated in “90 Years of Making Democracy Work: A History of Change, a Future of Hope”.

Leagues all over the States presented their history and their achievements during the roll call of states, which was an inspiring, and sometimes amusing, event. Program changes included the adoption of a “Federal Role in Public Education” study, and an up-date on Arms Control. The body of the convention also voted to have a “Privatization Study: the policy agenda to transfer government function, services and assets to the private sector.” Since funding for this study was not in the proposed budget, various fund-raising processes ensued.

Positions for the LWVUS were amended and concurrences adopted:

“Marriage Equality” for same-gendered partners

“National Popular Vote Pact”, which adds that “the LWVUS supports the National Popular Vote Compact as one acceptable way to achieve

From the Presidents



Co-Presidents Barbara and Ginny in the Ghirardelli vineyards in California this July.

2010 LWWUS Convention

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the goal of the direct popular vote for election of the president until the abolition of the Electoral College is accomplished.”

There were six resolutions passed, saying that the LWWUS

Supports lifting travel restriction to Cuba

Supports safe drilling and mining for energy resources

Supports limiting the use of the filibuster in the US Senate

Adds “Transparency” to the SARA resolution about fair and equitable elections

Supports bills that legislate improved Medicare for all

Supports holding accountable those responsible for the BP oil disaster

In order to pay for some of these actions and studies, the convention voted to raise the Per Member Payment to \$29.70 for 2010-11, and to \$30.00 for 2011-12. In future years, a two-year budget will be presented.

Delegates from South Carolina also participated in, or presented caucuses on Judiciary reform in South Carolina, Criminal justice and a drug study in SC, Membership Recruitment Initiative (MRI), Southeastern States environmental concerns re life or life style, and the Redistricting process after the 2010 census.

Barbara Swift, Co-President LWWVHHI

State Advocacy Update

During the recent General Assembly session, our League joined LWVSC in opposing the Voter Photo Identification bill (H3418) and the Point of Sale bill (H3272). Neither bill passed. The League's reasons for opposition to H3418 were that there have been no documented cases of voter impersonation, the state cannot afford the costs, and vulnerable populations would be discouraged from voting. The Point of Sale bill would have changed the 2006 Property Tax Relief Act (Act 388) so that there would not be automatic reassessments on commercial properties. This would have reduced the amount of money available to local governments, including money for schools. Our opposition was also based on the bill's changing tax law in a "piecemeal" rather than a comprehensive manner.

In addition to voter photo identification, an election issue of concern to the League is the reliability of South Carolina's voting machines. League of Women Voters of South Carolina (LWVSC) President Barbara Zia wrote about this in an article published in *The State* newspaper on June 27, 2010. She said that South

Carolina is one of a few states that uses only paperless machines with no paper trail. Consequently, there is no way to recount votes other than the written absentee, provisional or failsafe votes. The results of a recent primary election in Pickens County might have been different, if there could have been a recount using a paper trail. Only two votes separated the winner from the loser. Barbara Zia wrote "The time has come to admit the faults in our voting system and begin the process of replacing it with one that allows the vote to be verified, recounted and audited. Our democracy depends on it."

After other efforts failed, LWVHHI hoped our legislators would be successful in obtaining state funding for the Beaufort County School District through the budget process to make up at least partly for our district getting nothing under the Education Finance Act. According to an *Island Packet* editorial dated June 13, 2010, Senator Tom Davis hopes a task force working this summer on education funding will come up with some solutions that will be part of comprehensive tax reform already being studied by the Taxation Realignment

Commission (TRAC). He said that the goal "should be a system that is equitable, simple and transparent." The editorial goes on to say that Beaufort County is waiting for a report on its legal options and that "could be money well spent if lawmakers don't get the job done."

Our work as advocates is obviously an ongoing one. Maybe some of what we learned at our March general membership meeting on advocacy will help us in the future. Attendees may remember that Hilton Head Island Town Councilman John Safay emphasized the importance of using the media to get across a message. Fred Washington, Beaufort County School Board Chairman, talked about how we must build coalitions. Garrett Budds, South Coast Director of the Coastal Conservation League, talked about the usefulness of telling a story to explain an issue and the need for perseverance to accomplish objectives.

Fran Holt, Action Chair for State Issues



**Visit our Web
Site**

lwhhi.org

Membership

We are half way through our summer and I hope everyone is having fun. I would like to welcome three new members to the League: Carol Barker, Angelina Lograss and Dr. Cyndi Levy. We have an exciting new season ahead with the Nov. elections right around the corner and this year we will be electing a new mayor. I hope every member can become involved especially our new members. If you would like more information on how you may become involved contact our Co-President, Barbara Swift, at bstwift@roadrunner.com. If you know anyone who would like to join the league please contact me for information. Ellen Forwalk at 843-681-3096. I hope to see everyone in the fall.

Annual Meeting Provides Budget and Tax Lesson



The charming veranda of the Port Royal Golf Club provided the setting for the May 12 Annual Meeting and Luncheon. The weather was perfect,



attendance was very good, and our speaker was one of the most distinguished members of the South Carolina League of Women Voters, Dr. Holley Ulbrich.



Holley is the League's off-board specialist on State and Local Taxation and Alumni Distinguished Professor Emerita of Economics at Clemson University. She is also a Senior Scholar with the Strom Thurmond Institute of Government and Public Affairs.

Holley began her talk, "Fixing a Broken SC Tax System", by debunking the myth that South

Carolina is a high-tax state. In tax burden SC ranks 37th, in per capita tax revenue SC ranks 45th and in revenue resources SC ranks 35th. The state faces a budget gap of \$563 million next year because of tax cuts and revenue shortfalls, a slowdown in sales tax revenue, unavoidable cost increases, and the recession. The sales tax became an important source of revenue when Act 388 substituted the sales tax for the property tax as a source of school funding. Add to that the state-imposed cap on assessment increases, elimination of the bottom bracket of income tax and the tax on groceries, and the reduction of income tax on unincorporated small businesses, and the revenue loss comes close to next year's budget gap mentioned above.

Looking back over the last 35 years, Holley detailed the various increases and decreases in taxes which resulted in state revenues which she characterized as unstable and inadequate. Winners in the last decade were senior citizens, homeowners (especially senior citizen homeowners), new and expanding businesses, owners of automobiles, and unincorpo-

rated businesses (a good thing). Losers have been owners of rental and commercial property, business in general, renters, school children, local governments, college students and their families, and people who depend on public services.

The SC Tax Realignment Commission was created by the General Assembly and has been charged with addressing the inadequacies and inequities of the state's tax structure. They are a short-term body, however, with a limited mandate. The SC League has testified in support of a permanent tax commission. Holley would have us stress the need for adequate funding of public services, especially education; a broader, more dependable state revenue base; more equitable distribution of the tax burden; and protection of the fiscal autonomy of local governments. Broadening of the sales tax base should include elimination of exemptions, broader coverage of services, and taxing internet and catalog sales. For briefs on tax issues from the Strom Thurmond Institute, go to www.strom.clemson.edu/.

Annual Budget

In accordance with our by-laws, the Fiscal Year 2010-2011 Budget was presented to the Board by Budget Chair Bob Ghirardelli in March and

approved at the same meeting. It was published in the April Lighthouse, which can be found on our website www.LWVHHI.org, as can all the issues of the Light-

house for this past year. Our fiscal year ends on June 30, so this budget is for the fiscal year that began on July 1, 2010 and

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ends on June 30, 2011. The budget reflects increases in some areas, some of which our local chapter has no control over. Our Per Member Payments (PMP) to National and State League, consume most of our dues income and an increase to National was approved at the League of Women Voters national convention in June. Therefore, we are concentrating more effort on ways to save and ways to increase our income.

To that end, we are hoping that most of our members will accept a change from receiving a hard copy of the Lighthouse to receiving it electronically. The

Annual Budget

savings in printing and postage are significant. Personally, I have come to enjoy the colorful electronic version and no longer miss the hard copy. Bob McGarry has very kindly offered to help orient anyone who has problems opening the e-version of the Lighthouse.

We are grateful that so many of our members have included contributions to the League in their dues renewal payments. To those members we say "Thank you very much," and we invite everyone to consider making an extra contribution at any time. Although regular contributions are not tax-deductible, there is a way to contribute to the

LWVUS Education Fund that benefits our local chapter and also provides a tax deduction to the donor. If you'd like to know more about that, please call me or send me an e-mail, and I will be happy to share the particulars. Again, we are very grateful to the League members who have already done that.

Offered with thanks to Bob Ghirardelli and also to Barbara Swift and Andrea Bhatt who served on the Budget Committee, with Bob and me.

Janet Law, Treasurer

Fall Calendar of Events

Board Meetings

Thursday, September 9 , 9:45 am at Savannah Bank, 852 Wm. Hilton Parkway

Thursday, October 7, 9:45 am at Savannah Bank, 852 Wm. Hilton Parkway

Membership Meeting

10 a.m. Wednesday, September 15,

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23 Oak Park Drive
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Speaker

Scott Marshall, Executive Director of the Beaufort County

7 PM Tuesday evening, Oct. 12th
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Officers and Board 2010—2011

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