



The Voter

MARCH 2005

The League of Women Voters of Nashville

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League of Women Voters of Nashville

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New website address:
www.LWVnashville.org

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Annual Meeting to Feature League Lobbyist Stewart Clifton

Stewart Clifton, lobbyist for LWV-TN, will speak to the local League at its annual meeting on Tuesday, April 19, 2005 at the Adventure Science Center, 800 Fort Negley Boulevard.

In a break from tradition, the annual meeting will be a breakfast meeting held from 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. in the conference room immediately to the left as you enter the building. The cost of the breakfast meeting will be \$15 per person.

Mr. Clifton, a former Metro Council member and social services activist, monitors legislation

and prepares a legislative report which is distributed via email to League members. He is the ideal person to educate League members about the funding challenges generated by funding cuts by the State of Tennessee and United States government. Under contract with the LWV-Tennessee, the local League supports Mr. Clifton's work with contributions to the LWV-Tennessee Lobbyist Fund.

Please RSVP by April 15 to info@LWVnashville.org or by calling the League office at (615) 297-7134.

You're Invited

League of Women Voters of Nashville Annual Meeting

Speaker: Stewart Clifton

When: Tuesday, April 19
7:30 - 9:00 a.m.

Where: Adventure Science Center
800 Fort Negley Blvd.

RSVP: Via email (info@lwwnashville.org)
or phone (297-7134) by April 15

SCHOOL FUNDING

Three Good Proposals ... But Uncertain Progress

By *Karen Weeks*

In recent months, three task forces have issued thoughtful strategic proposals regarding adequate funding for schools and other essential services. While their respective charges were different, the three sets of proposals present coherent recommendations that work together.

The Metro School Funding Task Force correctly identified problems and made pointed recommendations in its report to Mayor Purcell on February 15. Metro schools face uneven revenues due to unpredictable funding from local, state and federal sources. League members Kathy Nevill, Betsy Walkup, and Lynn Williams served on the task force.

While the task force found that Metro Schools has been an efficient steward of public resources, it also found that the schools can not provide adequate sustained resources for program initiatives due to uncertain and inadequate resources. Local revenues rise and fall with the four-year property tax cycle.

Recent changes in the state Basic Education Program (BEP) funding formula have impacted urban areas adversely. Federal funds—which inadequately fund federal mandates, such as special education and the requirements of the No Child Left Behind legislation—will likely decline.

What's to be done? Recommendations of the Metro task force include:

- Local approval of increases in property or local sales taxes.
- State provision of additional funding for students at risk academically because of socioeconomic status and for

English language learners, as recommended by the report of the Tennessee BEP Review Committee in November to the Governor and General Assembly. Governor Bredesen has proposed a modest start in allocating funding for at-risk students in grades K-12 using general revenues.

• State expansion of its pre-kindergarten program using lottery funds, as proposed by the Governor. The League has been closely following this issue.

The Metro schools task force also suggested that Metro consider acting collectively with other urban districts in bringing legal action against the State of Tennessee for inadequate funding of education. Adequacy lawsuits have been successful in other states.

In the final analysis, however, the long term solution—not addressed by Metro the task force—is implementation of the recommendations by the Tennessee Tax Structure Study Commission made in December: reduce the sales tax on food, eliminate the local sales tax, adjust business taxes, hold harmless local governments, and enact a broad-based progressive income tax. At the earliest, the issue will be addressed after the next elections, in the 2007 state legislative session.

Three distinguished task forces have produced clear, cogent blueprints for what needs to be done. League members care about adequate funding of essential services—not only education. We have an important role to play in supporting and educating the public about this significant policy agenda.

The School Funding Task Force Final Report is available on the website on the Metro Nashville Public Schools at www.mnps.org.

Special thanks and farewell to Pamela Roller

Pamela Roller, the League office administrator, will be leaving us after the April 19 annual meeting. Pamela provides many critical services to the League. She always anticipates possible problems and works hard to put in place processes that will help us weather the transition to a new office administrator. She not only keeps information flowing among League members, but also is responsible for creating and maintaining the League website: www.lwvnashville.org. Pamela is a joy to work with and we wish her well. She will be superb at whatever she does next. Thank you Pamela!

League to Participate In Forum on the Media

The local League will partner with Scarritt-Bennett to produce a forum designed to increase discussion between journalists and the communities they cover about important social issues. The Preview Forum, "The News We Need: Finding Balance in an Age of Spin," will focus on how the birth of 24-hour news stations, internet bloggers and changes in FCC regulations have launched us into a new era. For more information, see the LWV-Nashville website at:

www.lwvnashville.org

League Plans to Raise Membership Dues

The Board of the League of Women Voters of Nashville will recommend a dues increase from \$45 to \$60 for individual members at the annual meeting on April 19, 2004.

The additional \$15 per member is needed to cover local operating expenses for the proposed 15-month budget period beginning April 1, 2005 through June 30, 2006. The increase will raise membership income from \$5,800 for this fiscal year to \$8,500 for the coming fiscal year.

In order to retain members unable to pay the dues increase, the League budgeted \$300 in the Marian Ott Scholarship Fund. People who would like assistance with membership dues should contact the League office.

Reasons for the dues increase include:

(1) Moving the beginning of the fiscal year from April to July: The dues increase will help the Nashville League cover the additional costs associated with aligning the Nashville League's fiscal year with that of the State and National League. Fiscal year 2005-2006 is 15 months instead of 12 months.

(2) Covering the costs of per member payments to the state and national league: The current dues of \$45 barely cover per member payments the Nashville League has to pay to the state and national league. For every \$45 collected this year, \$40.80 was paid out in per member payments to the national and state leagues, leaving just a little under \$5 per member to cover the cost of mailings to members. Per member payments to the state and national league total \$5,638 for

the coming fiscal year, only slightly less than the income generated by dues this year, \$5,800.

(3) Using the membership dues to cover more of the Nashville League's operating costs: The Board feels that membership dues should help fund Nashville League operations. The League needs the dues increase to continue funding the part-time office administrator (10 hours per week) who responds to citizens' requests for information and assistance, keeps the League website current, and facilitates communication among members.

The \$15 increase is truly a contribution to our local league!

PROPOSED DUES INCREASE

| Time Period | Current Fiscal Year: April 1, 2004 to March 30, 2005 | Transition to New Fiscal Year: April 1, 2005 June 30, 2005 | Increase |
|-------------------|--|--|----------|
| Individual | \$45 | \$60 | \$15 |
| 2nd Family Member | \$20 | \$30 | \$10 |
| Student | \$22.50 | \$30 | \$7.50 |

Plan of Nashville: A Vision of Our Community for the Future

By *Berdelle Campbell*

Vice President, LWVN and Chair, Environment Committee

The new book, *The Plan of Nashville-Avenues to a Great City*, is not to be missed. Written by Christine Kreyling, produced by the Nashville Civic Design Center and published by the Vanderbilt University Press, it was officially presented to the public in January. If you don't have your copy and haven't seen it, you're strongly advised to get acquainted with it. You will not be disappointed.

I refer to it not as a Plan but rather a Vision. In fact the first line of the preface says "The plan of Nashville is a vision." It's easy to think of it that way and the reader is invited to do so. Some good history generally makes a fine start and this book provides a lively summary of our city's beginnings. There are wonderful maps and old pictures that I dare say you've probably never seen that will surprise and delight you.

This plan is a community based vision of how the urban core of Nashville should look and work in the 21st century. In the last 45-50 years more than 100 plans dealing with some aspect of the center city have been produced. All these, coming from Metro Government Departments and consultants were constrained by politics, patronage and available funds. This Plan/Vision is different, mainly in that rather than a top-down approach, the Nashville Civic Design

Center [an independent body] organized the process of listening to the community, to the people. More than 800 citizens participated in the process, attending workshops and forums, expressing opinions and their dreams, discussing issues, selecting priorities.

The vision for Nashville includes:

- the Cumberland River as key focus, both east and west banks treated as prime places for recreation, for residences, for enjoyment
- broad tree-lined boulevards, some replacing urban interstates, bringing people into the city rather than a rush of traffic passing by
- a balanced transportation system integrating pedestrian and biking opportunities as well as mass transit into an infrastructure long dominated by cars

The book includes an explanation of the process mentioned above that produced the vision. The LWVN Environment Committee plans to sponsor a membership meeting, open to the public, focusing on *The Plan*. Key people from the Design Center will be invited to talk about the plan and participate in open discussion. Don't delay, look at this new volume. It is a great vision dedicated to elevating the quality of Nashville's environment and promoting public participation in the creation of a more beautiful and functional city for all.

LWV Calendar

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| April 6, 2005 | Legislative Breakfast | 2005 Day on the Hill Breakfast with the Women's Political Caucus; Legislative Plaza |
| April 19, 2005 | LWV-Nashville Annual Meeting | Adventure Science Center 800 Fort Negley Boulevard, Nashville |
| April 28, 2005 | Preview Forum: The News We Need: Finding Balance in an Age of Spin | See League website for details: www.lwvnashville.org |
| May 3-6, 2005 | Southeastern Regional Civil Rights Conference | Renaissance Nashville Hotel The pre-registration (\$125.00) deadline is MARCH 31st! After that time the fee will be \$175.00 per person; so please register NOW! See League website for details: www.lwvnashville.org |
| May 21, 2005 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. | LWV-Tennessee Spring Conference | Murfreesboro, TN See League website for details: www.lwvnashville.org |

League supports Pre-Kindergarten Alliance

Both the state and local Leagues have signed on to the Tennessee Alliance for Early Education. The Alliance is an affiliation of a variety of groups interested in early education, including the Tennessee Association for the Education of Young Children (TAEYC) and Tennessee Stand for Children, and is quickly expanding to include a diverse mix of organizations that will rally support for the expansion of pre-kindergarten programs in Tennessee. In announcing its support for the pre-k legislation, The Alliance is asking all those interested in ensuring that Tennessee children have increased access to quality pre-k educational opportunities to visit www.tnprek.org, www.taeyc.org or www.stand.org/tn/ or to e-mail prekalliance@mpf.com for more information about how they can get involved.

News from the League of Women Voters of the United States

To celebrate the League of Women Voters 85th Anniversary on February 14, the LWV-US launched the Democracy Agenda, an advocacy and public education effort to strengthen and renew the basic tenets of American democracy. The goal of this effort is to protect our electoral processes and preserve our constitutional rights by safeguarding civil liberties.

Directors Approve Slate of Officers for 2005-2006

The LWV-Nashville nominating committee recommended a slate of officers for fiscal year 2005-2006 at the February 14 board meeting. Berdelle Campbell presented the nominating committee's recommendations on behalf of Luvenia Butler who chaired the nominating committee. Other nominating committee members are Silvene Hudson and Lucy Du. The Board accepted the nominating committee report, which will be presented to the membership at the annual meeting on April 19.

The officers of the League of Women Voters of Nashville include a president, a first vice-president, a second vice-president, a secretary, and a treasurer who are elected for terms of two years by the general membership at the annual meeting and take office immediately. The president, the first vice-president, and the secretary are elected in even-numbered years. The second vice-president and treasurer are elected in odd-numbered years. The current and proposed slate of officers is contained in the chart below.

LWV-Nashville Current and Proposed Directors

| Officer | Term | Name | Status |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|--|-------------------|
| President | April 1, 2004-June 30, 2006 | Karen Edwards | Elected in 2004 |
| 1st Vice President | April 1, 2004-June 30, 2006 | Lucy Du | Elected in 2004 |
| 2nd Vice President | April 19, 2005-June 30, 2007 | Berdelle Campbell | Nominated in 2005 |
| Secretary | April 1, 2004-June 30, 2006 | Mary McLennan | Elected in 2004 |
| Treasurer (off board) | April 19, 2005-June 30, 2007 | Marian Ott | Nominated in 2005 |
| Education | April 1, 2004-June 30, 2006 | Jan Bossing | Elected in 2004 |
| Health Care | April 19, 2005-June 30, 2007 | Joanne Rich | Nominated in 2005 |
| Human Needs | April 19, 2005-June 30, 2007 | Tracye Rode | Nominated in 2005 |
| Membership | April 19, 2005-June 30, 2007 | Jennifer Cole (Co-Chair); Rose Rodriguez (Co-Chair) | Nominated in 2005 |
| Metro Government | April 1, 2004-June 30, 2007 | Karen Weeks | Elected in 2005 |
| Voter Service | April 1, 2004-June 30, 2006 | Carrie Hudson (Co-Chair); Lynn Williams (Co-Chair, off board) | Elected in 2004 |
| Voter Editor | April 19, 2005-June 30, 2007 | Amy Robertson (Editor) | Nominated in 2005 |
| Fund Raising Chair | April 19, 2005-June 30, 2007 | Joyce Prusak | Nominated in 2005 |
| Nominating Committee | April 19, 2005-June 30, 2007 | Margie Parsley (Chair); Tommie Morton-Young | Nominated in 2005 |

Program of Service

*Approved by Board of Directors:
February 14, 2005*

I. LOCAL PROGRAM 2005-2006

The LWV-Nashville will always emphasize voter services. In the 2005-06 year, we will also focus on identifying and promoting quality public policy in the best interest of the citizens of Nashville and Davidson County.

II. STUDY AND ACTION

The goal of the 2005-2006 study and action program is to promote broader, more diverse citizen participation in decision making affecting public policies in Metropolitan Nashville/Davidson County. The program focus will be:

A. EDUCATION

- Study and advocate quality education
- Advocate equal access to educational opportunities, with special attention to children from diverse backgrounds and with special needs
- Monitor and communicate school issues in the context of the federal No Child Left Behind legislation and the [Chamber of Commerce] Metro Schools Report Card

B. ENVIRONMENT

- Support a comprehensive coordinated approach to land use, growth and development, and transportation, with focus on encouraging and monitoring efforts to expand efficient and accessible mass transit, continued improvement of the Metropolitan Transit Authority, and monitoring activities related the commuter rail project
- Monitor continued implementation of Metro's Waste Management Plan, which includes refuse pick-up and disposal, recycling, and hazardous waste disposal
- Monitor state and federal issues that impact the local environment, including air and water quality, and public lands protection (state parks and state forests)
- Provide information and coordination of actions taken on state and federal environmental issues, consistent with national and local League positions

C. ELECTORAL PROCESS

- Monitor distribution of federal allocations and all aspects of implementation of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 in Metropolitan Nashville/Davidson

County

- Monitor acquisition process for new voting machines and equipment
- Monitor Davidson County Election Commission
- Support adequate resources for the election process
- Support the Metro ADA Compliance Office to ensure compliance with The American with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the provision of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 related to voting rights for citizens with disabilities

D. HEALTH CARE

- Support a system which consists of a basic level of comprehensive physical and mental health services, and which emphasizes cost effective preventive health care and widespread health education efforts for residents of Metropolitan Nashville/Davidson County
- Monitor and provide information on the policy impacts of TennCare on Metropolitan Government and health care for residents of Metropolitan Nashville/Davidson County
- Monitor the long-term care needs of elderly, frail and disabled citizens and advocate for home and community based alternatives to nursing homes

E. HUMAN NEEDS

- Support equal access to education, employment and housing
- Support programs and policies to prevent or reduce poverty and to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families in Metropolitan Nashville/Davidson County, including those newly immigrated and individuals with disabilities.
- Continue voter education activities with newly naturalized citizens

F. METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT

- Educate citizens about their elected and appointed officials and about how Metropolitan Nashville/Davidson County Government works.
- Educate citizens about the budget process and finances for Metropolitan Government and support policies that provide adequate resources for public services, consistent with state and national League positions
- Monitor the Metropolitan Council and its committees
- Continue to support and advocate for the ethical standards