



THE NASHVILLE VOTER

The League of Women Voters of Nashville

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www.LWVnashville.org

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Date	Time	Place	Description
Third Thursday On Friday! March 18	11:30 am	Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee—The Martin Distribution Center Metro Center 331 Great Circle Rd.	Third Thursday on Friday! Lunch—Implementation of the Affordable Care Act and Health Care Exchanges in Tennessee Former Tennessee Commissioner of Commerce & Insurance Leslie Shechter Newman probably knows more about implementation of the 2010 Affordable Care Act than anyone else in the state. Newman joined Governor Bredesen's cabinet in January 2007, and under her direction, the department successfully competed for three federal grants totaling \$2.5 million to aid in implementation of the new health care law. For additional information, contact Vickie Ziegler (Vziegler@comcast.net).
Monday March 21	9:00 am to 10:30 am	Pat Dishman's Horseshoe Bend 914 Briarwood Crest 37221	LWVN Coffee & Conversation with Senator Jack Johnson, District 23 Members of the Nashville League continue coffee meetings with their legislators. These events provide an opportunity to get to know representatives and senators, listen to their perspectives, and ask questions of concern to the League. RSVP to Pat Dishman (221-9871) or Carol McSwiney (385-1502).
Monday March 21 & April 4	11:30 am	Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services Metro Center 50 Vantage Way, Suite 250	LWVTN Action Committee Meeting The TN Legislature is back in session and will be addressing issues of concern to the LWV. Join the Action Committee at Stewart Clifton's office. Meetings continue every other Monday throughout the session (3/21, 4/4, 4/18 & so on). For more information contact Chair Barbara Devaney (bdevaney@comcast.net) or LWVTN President Margie Parsley (mparsley99@comcast.net).
Monday March 28	5:15 pm	E/Spaces, Inc. 4322 Harding Pike, Suite 417 Nashville 37205	LWV Nashville Board Meeting Guests are always welcome at the League's monthly board meeting on the fourth Monday (5:15–7 pm). NOTE: Location is upstairs of the Belle Meade Publix on Harding Pike near White Bridge Road. Covered parking is available through the driveway between Sweet CCs & Publix. Take the elevator bank to the office building (not grocery) to the 4th floor, then left off the elevator, and conference room is to your left.
Thursday March 31	4:00 pm	Howard Office Complex Sonny West Room	Metro Planning Commission Special meeting on redistricting (see Metro Government article).
Thursday March 31	6:00 pm	The Parthenon at Centennial Park 2600 West End Ave Nashville 37203	2011 ATHENA Awards The Tennessee Disability Coalition Executive Director Carol Westlake represents the League as one of 28 exemplary women nominated for the 2011 ATHENA Award (see article in February <i>Voter</i>). The Ceremony begins at 6:00 pm followed by a reception at 7:00 pm. For tickets: www.nashvillecable.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=143&Itemid=143

From Nashville's President

Things are heating up—both the weather and at the Legislature! Many of our members are involved in tracking bills important to the League, hosting and attending coffees to become better acquainted with our legislators, and researching topics for visits to the Hill and Action Alerts to our members in order to share the soundest information possible. Thank you ALL, on behalf of the League! The enthusiasm is infectious and Action committee members will welcome all of you who want to get in on the process. The next committee meeting is Monday March 21 (see the calendar for time and place) and the LWVTN Legislative Update is e-mailed each Friday to all League members.

The League's monthly meetings continue to offer topics of high interest and educational value. This month's meeting on March 18th at Second Harvest will focus on the implementation of the Affordable Care Act and health care exchanges in Tennessee. **Leslie Newman**, a long-time League member, is highly qualified to help us understand exactly what is involved in the federal mandate and what it means to us as consumers. This issue is being discussed in the legislature and the program will better help us understand various proposals.

March 9 was Disability Day on the Hill and **Lynn Williams** and I were invited by the Disability Law and Advocacy Center to view and assess the proposed voting machines which will enable people with various handicaps to cast a paper ballot. In accordance with the Voter Confidence Act, passed in 2008 by the Tennessee Legislature, all ballots cast must be verifiable. Paper ballots that can be scanned provide just such a solution. Each polling place will have privacy booths set up and a central scanner to tabulate the votes and store the ballots, which are very like the Scantron tests used in high schools. Two versions of the enabling machines were on display and well-informed folks were on hand to explain the details.

A tremendous amount of thought and collaboration has gone into the development of these machines. They look like a computer monitor set on a low, rectangular printer. There are buttons on the bottom of the screen and various ports to accept special accessories that may be needed to aid specific voters, such as headphones for the hearing impaired equipped with adjustable volume and speed of speech controls. For people with vision impairments, there is a zoom feature to make the print on the screen larger. Those who are unable to reach the machine or see the screen can use the hand held touch pad, which has easily discernable up-down and forward-back keys and a central X key to use when casting a vote. Individuals who are unable to use their hands at all may be able to operate a sip and puff tube to control progress through the ballot.

After a voter finishes voting, a paper ballot is generated by the machine with the voter's choices filled in. This document can then be scanned for tabulation. One of the machines had a built-in scanner and another used a system whereby the finished ballot was taken to a centralized scanner in the polling place. It was heartening to see those who are differently abled be enfranchised. Lynn and I were able to cast our own ballots for the machine we felt best accomplished the task. The decision process about which type of machine will be used in Tennessee is ongoing but all should be in operation for the 2012 election.

Also on March 9, a contingent of League members attended the CABLE luncheon honoring women's history month at the Hilton ballroom. More than 400 CABLE members and guests recognized the 2011 ATHENA Award nominees and scholarship program recipients. **Susan Short Jones**, the 2010 ATHENA Award recipient, provided words of wisdom as she described the relevance of the ATHENA Leadership Model, which identifies eight distinct attributes reflecting women's contributions to leadership: authentic self, relationships, giving back, collaboration, courageous acts, learning, fierce advocacy, celebration, and joy. In concert with hard work, assertiveness, and the ability to take risks, these skills help women succeed in business and life.

Each year since 1991, outstanding women from across Middle Tennessee have been nominated by women's organizations for their embodiment of the ATHENA spirit. Each nominee exemplifies leadership, superior performance, commitment to community, and unselfish assistance to women and women's issues. The traditional nominees, including long-time League member **Carol Westlake**, were honored and acknowledged in preparation for the March 31 Awards Ceremony where the 2011 recipient will be announced. In addition, Mayor Karl Dean presented the first 2011 ATHENA Young Professional Leadership Award to **Jude White**, executive director of Renewal House. Leaguer **Mary Beth Ikard** represented us well among her class of 24 peers for this new award. We congratulate Carol and Mary Beth on their nominations!

Looking ahead, I hope you will add League activities to your schedule. Our calendar is always available on the website. The League is where your hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement, so let's do what we do best!

In League, *To Singer*



The March 18 Third Thursday on Friday: Implementation of the Affordable Care Act and Health Care Exchanges in Tennessee

Nashville Leaguers look forward to welcoming long-time member Leslie Shechter Newman, former commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Commerce & Insurance, to discuss legislation that the national and local Leagues have championed for almost twenty years and its proposed implementation. Because her department was charged with implementation, Newman probably knows more about execution of the 2010 Affordable Care Act (ACA) than anyone else in the state.

Newman joined Governor Bredesen's cabinet in 2007 and after the 2010 passage of the ACA her department successfully competed for three federal grants totaling \$2.5 million to aid in implementation of the new health care law. Starting in 2014, U.S. citizens who don't receive health insurance through their workplace will be able to buy insurance directly from an Exchange—a transparent and competitive insurance marketplace where individuals and small businesses can select affordable and qualified health benefit plans. Exchanges will offer consumers a choice of health plans that meet certain benefits and cost standards. Members of Congress also will get their health care insurance through Exchanges.

Newman is a graduate of Johns Hopkins University, and earned her Juris Doctor and Masters of Law in Urban Law from Washington University School of Law in St. Louis. She is an expert in administrative and real estate law, and has practiced in Dallas, Texas; in Tennessee assisting municipal governments across the state through the Municipal Technical Advisory Service of the University of Tennessee; in Nashville serving the Metro Department of Law from 1994 to 2000 and in private practice with a focus on land use, zoning, urban and municipal law, and governmental relations.

The League currently is working with the Tennessee Health Care Campaign and a coalition of nonprofit agencies, community groups, and individuals across Tennessee to ensure implementation of the ACA and new health care exchanges. Important information relevant to implementation is posted on the LWVN website at <http://lwnashville.org/Voter.html>.

In particular, Leagues across the state have endorsed **Guiding Principles and Brief for Implementation of a Health Insurance Exchange in Tennessee**. The purpose of these principles is to educate government officials and the public about fundamental protections necessary to ensure that the Tennessee Health Insurance Exchange will meet the needs of individual consumers and small employers it is designed to serve by offering high-quality, easy-to-understand health coverage options. The law envisions that states will establish their own exchanges; however, the federal government will establish an exchange in any state that fails to do so. The guidelines speak to Exchange viability, risk pools, consumer representation, governance, coverage options, enrollment process, essential health benefits, and provider networks.

Observer Corps

The League's Observer Corps program is integral to the importance of open government in the United States. Honoring Sunshine Week—the national celebration of open government—League member **Marian Ott** wrote an exceptional opinion article in the March 13 Tennessean, “Good policy is result of open records”

(<http://www.tennessean.com/article/20110313/OPINION03/103130372/Good-policy-result-open-records>). Ott says: “Transparency is vital—watching the struggles in other parts of the world should give us an appreciation of our open and democratic society. We have a right to watch, to monitor public officials when they deliberate toward decisions—decisions that will affect us. We also have access to public records so we can review data to make our own determination on public policy matters or to ensure that the decision-making was free from self-dealing. I have served on government boards and have firsthand experience with the occasional awkwardness of having to deliberate in public. But with the openness also comes public input. I have participated in several decisions where a draft proposal was revised because of public input and a better decision made. The awkwardness is definitely worth the improved and transparent decision-making.”

Articulating and acting in favor of open government in America is especially germane in an environment where some would challenge such fundamental rights. Participating as a League observer or following Observer Corps postings on the LWVN website (<http://lwnashville.org/ObserverCorps.html>) provides hands on opportunities to be involved in your government. For more information, contact Barbara Gay at 297-4145 (Barbara.b.gay@gmail.com).

LWVTN Action Committee

The LWVN welcomed **Senator Douglas Henry** to its March 4 Legislator Coffee hosted by **Sue Breidensteiner**. League member and lobbyist **Stewart Clifton** introduced the Senator with wonderful anecdotes about his service and commitment to Tennessee's voters and sound government. Senator Henry gave Leaguers a realistic assessment of what they might expect during the current session.

The group applauded his sponsorship of SB 1417, the Single Article Cap Removal Act. The League views elimination of the cap on sales tax for items costing more than \$3,200 as an unjustified tax break for upper income individuals and businesses because those who can afford such purchases can also afford to pay taxes at the same rate as everyone else. It is estimated that such legislation would provide new revenue of more than \$85 million.



The Senator responded to a lively series of questions and emphasized the need to work with the new majority as well as take a reasoned and responsible approach to the economic challenges that continue to face the state.

Later, at the LWVTN Action Committee meeting, members reported on legislative activities from across the state via conference call. The February Third Thursday program in Nashville featured Chair **Barbara Devaney** and LWV Knoxville Board member **Mary Headrick, MD** discussing the environmental issues surrounding the hydraulic fracturing process being used around the country to obtain natural gas from shale after a showing of the documentary "Gasland."

Members of the Action Committee suggested that a letter be sent to the chairmen and members of the Government Operations Committee about the need for consumer, environmental, and scientific representation on the Oil and Gas Board as well as the establishment of adequate protective regulations before hydraulic fracturing can cause pollution and geologic problems in Tennessee like those being experienced in other parts of the country. In addition, an Action Alert was sent to all LWVTN members.

The LWVTN Action Committee meets every other Monday throughout the session at Stewart Clifton's office (see Calendar). For more information contact Chair Barbara Devaney (bdevaney@comcast.net) or LWVTN President Margie Parsley (mparsley99@comcast.net).



Metro Government

The Charter for Metropolitan Davidson County stipulates that the Planning Commission prepare the redistricting plan for the Metro Council and school board district lines based on the new Census figures. The 2010 Census numbers have now been received and the process begun. Early in March, Planning Department Executive Director Rick Bernhardt told Metro Council members that redistricting could be completed within one week after the department received the numbers. Public presentations, including one prepared for Council members and one for the public, will be held as part of that process.

The Planning Department will provide daily updates on its webpage (<http://www.nashville.gov/mpc/index.asp>) and will include an e-mail link for public comment on the process and the proposed new district lines. Public presentations will be held March 23 and 28, times and places yet to be determined, and the Planning Commission will receive the proposed new districts at a special meeting on March 31 (see Calendar).

The Planning Department is following eight basic guidelines in the redrawing of Council districts:

- Roughly equal population in each district, as required by the Metro Charter
- Minimal change from existing districts
- Compliance with the Voting Rights Act to ensure fair minority representation
- Districts as compact as possible with contiguous territory
- No splitting of satellite cities
- Maintenance of neighborhood boundaries
- Maximum practical use of natural boundaries
- Appropriate opportunity for public comment

ATTENTION! *The Nashville Voter* became a digital publication in Spring 2010. If you have received this copy of the *Voter* in the mail, it means the League of Women Voters of Nashville has no recorded e-mail address for you. Please help us in the switch to electronic publications and announcements by sending your e-mail address to LWVNash@gmail.com. This will ensure you receive all LWV newsletters, event invitations, Third Thursday announcements, and Call to Action alerts. Thank you, *Voter* Editor Sue Bredensteiner (suebred@mindspring.com).