

SUFFRAGETTE



League of Women Voters of Charlotte-Mecklenburg

April 2014

A PRIMARY PRIMER **Linda Levy, Voter Service Chairman**

This information from the Mecklenburg County Board of Elections (BOE) website will prepare you for the May 6th primary election.



- **Contested Races on the Primary Ballot**
US Senate, US House, NC Senate, NC House, Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners at Large, Board of Commissioners--Districts, Clerk of the Superior Court, Sheriff, and Associate Justices on the NC Supreme Court.
- **Locate Your District Candidates From Mecklenburg County BOE Website (www.meckboe.org):**
At voter information select "view my sample ballot." Enter address. Then, at 2014 Election Sample Ballot, select intended political party. The sample ballot for that party/your address will appear.
- **Paper Sample Ballot:** Available from BOE, 741 Kenilworth Ave., Ste. 202.
- **Early Voting:** Thursday, April 24 to Saturday, May 3. No early voting on Saturday, April 26, or Sunday, April 27. No same day registration.
Locations: Hal Marshall Annex, Ballantyne Village Way, Cornelius Town Hall.
Libraries: Beatties Ford, Independence, Main, Matthews, Morrison, North and South Regionals, Steele Creek, University and West.
Hours through Friday, May 2, at Hal Marshall Annex: 8 a.m.-7 p.m.; Libraries: 11 a.m.-7 p.m.; **Final Day, Saturday, May 3,** hours at all sites: 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
- **Absentee by Mail:** Ballot applications available on BOE website. Complete and mail in application to BOE by Tuesday, April 29. Ballot mailed to you must be completed, signed by two witnesses and returned to BOE by Monday, May 5, by 5 p.m.
- **Primary Day Poll Hours:** 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

See the league's on-line voter guide and watch our televised candidate debates on WTVI the weekend of April 26-27. For additional information, visit the League website www.goleaguego.org.



EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT: UNFINISHED BUSINESS

By Lucille Howard

Even though the North Carolina legislature has never approved it, and the presumed deadline for 38 states to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment to the US Constitution has passed, the movement has never died. Advocates are arguing that the original 1979 deadline, extended to 1982, is only in the preamble of the amendment and not in its actual text. After the Madison Amendment concerning congressional pay raises was incorporated into the Constitution in 1992 some 203 years after its introduction, ERA supporters felt that the ERA deadline is irrelevant and have renewed efforts for passage.

The amendment's language that "equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the US or any state" sends a clear message that discrimination cannot be tolerated and there will be strict scrutiny.

The Moore County League of Women Voters and others have worked tirelessly to keep the issue on the LWFNC program. At the 2013 LWFNC convention, passage of ERA in North Carolina was named an *issue for emphasis* for 2013-2015.

Now, Roberta Madden, an Asheville-Buncombe County League member, and Nancy Glowacki of Hendersonville, NC (Moore County), have joined together to form "Ratify ERA-NC", a nonprofit organization. The two are ramping up educational efforts and promoting legislative action. Their website is www.era-nc.org. National updates are on www.United4Equality.org.

The need for ERA in the Constitution is still vital because any laws outlawing sex discrimination are only as permanent as the legislatures which passed them. For example, the Wisconsin legislature recently repealed that state's equal pay law. Such legislation as the federal law promising equality for women in education and school athletics (Title IX), Violence Against Women, Fair Pensions Act and others have already seen efforts at repeal. And discriminatory laws continue to be passed by Congress and state legislatures, while laws banning sex discrimination can be overturned by a simple majority. Furthermore, most sex discrimination cases brought before the US Supreme Court under the 14th Amendment have lost. All this despite a national survey in 2001 which showed that an overwhelming majority of women and men believe the US needs the ERA in the Constitution.

Two strategies are now underway to pass the ERA. US Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y., reintroduced the ERA in June 2011. She supports the full 'start-over' ERA and has 155 co-sponsors on her original legislation.

The "three-state strategy" argues that the count still stands at 35, and just three more states are needed to ratify. Bi-partisan resolutions that clarify the deadline issue have been introduced in the US House (HJR 113) and in the US Senate (SJR15). This is the strategy that Ratify ERA-NC is promoting, urging North Carolinians to call Sen. Burr to sign on as a co-sponsor and all US Representatives to sign onto the House resolution. Sen. Kay Hagan is one of the 34 Senate co-sponsors. A toll free number to call leaders in the Capitol is 1-877-762-8762.

Watch for action in North Carolina at the 2015 legislative session and be alert to take action. Nearly 35,000 are part of 20 groups endorsing the Ratify ERA-NC effort, including LWFNC.

The North Carolina League of Women Voters: The Early Years **by Suzanne Elsberry Schweikert**

The National League of Women Voters was rooted in the National American Woman Suffrage Association which met in St. Louis, MO in March of 1919 to celebrate fifty years of striving for women to obtain voting rights. At this meeting, this dedicated and determined group of women headed by Carrie Chapman Catt formed as a part of their organization a League of Women Voters. The women attendees were from the 15 states which had ratified woman suffrage, and this new group worked within the association to expedite the franchise for women both in the U.S. and abroad. The following year (1920) the group became officially known as the National League of Women Voters and later received its certificate of incorporation in 1923.

In 1950, thirty years after the ratification of the 19th Amendment, seven North Carolina cities proudly lay claim to having organized Leagues: Asheville, Chapel Hill, Charlotte (re-established in 1947), Durham, Greensboro, Raleigh and Winston-Salem. These seven joined together and formed the League of Women Voters of North Carolina in 1951.

During the years 1951-54 the NC League sponsored studies which concentrated on the efficiency (or lack thereof) of state government and the economy. There was also particular focus on the prison system. Subsequent years (1954-58) saw the Leagues "...calling for meetings of governing bodies during the consideration of public business..." and asking for a "...detailed study of the Constitution of NC," and testifying "on the inequities arising from the failure of the General Assembly to comply with the reapportionment mandate."

The sixties were busy years for Leaguers as they attempted to revise the NC Constitution in order to bring about what they called a more "equitable representation" and a "more effective judiciary system." They also worked tirelessly on reapportionment, the penal system (responsible in part for making it separate from the Highway and Public Works Departments) and election laws. Leagues opposed the "Speaker Ban Law," which threatened academic freedom, and recommended a study of the educational system through the secondary level. These accomplishments represent a very brief sampling of the vitally important and impressive work undertaken by the enthusiastic women and men of the NC League during these years.

Information in this article was compiled from the book, *By Her Own Bootstraps: A saga of Women in North Carolina* by Albert Coates, Professor Emeritus in the Law School of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

LWVC-M ANNUAL MEETING MAY 30 WILL FOCUS ON CLEAN ELECTIONS

Melissa Price Kroom, Director of North Carolina Voters for Clean Elections, will be the keynote speaker for the LWVC-M annual meeting May 30. North Carolina Voters for Clean Elections is the leading voice for returning power to citizens and for lessening the corrosive influence of special interests in state politics. Under Kroom's leadership, 13 municipalities across North Carolina passed resolutions opposing the Supreme Court's Citizens United decision, leading to the filing of a joint House and Senate resolution opposing Citizens United in the NC General Assembly.

The Suffragette, a publication of the League of Women Voters of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, intends to be a vehicle for disseminating in-depth information, inspiring action, and promoting participation in the civic affairs of the State of North Carolina. It is a **published by the membership committee, Suzanne Elsberry Schweikert, chair, and edited by Delores J. Hurt and Lucille Howard.**



MEMORIAL FUND ESTABLISHED FOR LIZ HAIR

A Fund to honor the memory of LWVC-M Life Member Elisabeth (Liz) Green Hair has been established by the League. Contributions (tax deductible) can be made by check to LWVC-M Citizen Education Foundation and mailed to the League Treasurer: PO Box 3068, Matthews, NC 28106-3068.

REINSTATE THE REFUNDABLE EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT

The League of Women Voters of North Carolina and Charlotte-Mecklenburg are pushing hard to get the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) re-instated by the NC Legislature at its short session beginning Mary 14. This tax credit benefits working families who still have a very low income. It's been described as the best tool to fight poverty in the current tax climate, but NC ended the credit in 2013.

The regressive nature of a broadened sales tax base on low-income working families can be partially offset by re-instating the EITC, which would benefit over 900,000 working families. Money from the credits to these families is immediately put back into the local economy.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Contact your NC Senator and Representative voicing your concern about the EITC and ask that they vote to reinstate EITC.
2. Contact Gov. McCrory and urge him to lead the effort to reinstate EITC.
3. Have a House Party to educate your friends and neighbors to hear information about tax issues. Contact Peg Chapin ptchapin@hotmail.com or Mary Klenz klenzmary@gmail.com
4. Write a letter to the editor supporting EITC

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