



LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®

SUFFRAGETTE

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LWVC-M Focus on Sex Trafficking

The Human Trafficking study committee of LWVCM began in March 2014 to study the issue of human trafficking in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg region and initial efforts focused on determining the extent of sex trafficking in this area. When LWVUS adopted a position on Human Trafficking at the National Convention, the LWVCM committee shifted its focus to potential actions the League could take to advocate for ending sex trafficking in our community.

We used the definition of sex trafficking as stated in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act: *Sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced through force, fraud, or coercion or in which the person induced to perform a commercial sex act has not attained 18 years of age.* Sex trafficking is largely an invisible crime, and this was confirmed by our committee as we learned that it has not been tracked extensively in this region. With the 2013 passage of Safe Harbor legislation in North Carolina, more attention is being given to tracking the trafficking.

The following is a report of our findings placed within the framework of the position on human trafficking adopted at the LWVUS 2014 National Convention. Potential recommendations noted are those derived from interviews with community agencies and service providers as well as the League committee (Becka Tait, Karen Bean, Rachel Nilender, Suzanne Schweikert, Cindy Thompson, Ann Wood). The committee is aware this is a complex issue and is hoping other ideas will be generated at the *Idea Summit to Address Potential Anti-Sex Trafficking Actions by LWV Charlotte Mecklenburg* on October 25.

STATEMENT OF POSITION ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING (*As adopted at the LWVUS 2014 Convention*)

The League of Women Voters opposes all forms of domestic and international human trafficking of adults and children, including sex trafficking and labor trafficking. We consider human trafficking to be a form of modern day slavery and believe that every measure should be taken and every effort should be made through legislation and changes in public policy to prevent human trafficking. Prosecution and penalization of traffickers and abusers should be established, and existing laws should be strictly enforced. Extensive essential services for victims should be applied where needed. Education and awareness programs on human trafficking should be established in our communities and in our schools.

Human Trafficking in Char-Meck--Findings on Sex Trafficking mapped to LWVUS position

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North Carolina

In the Polaris Project annual state ratings process, North Carolina was given the highest rating, a Tier 1, because NC has passed significant laws to combat human trafficking. This process tracks the presence or absence of 10 categories of state statutes that Polaris deems critical to a comprehensive anti-trafficking legal framework. North Carolina has passed legislation in 8 of the 10 categories. Categories still needed are: Posting of the National Hotline and Civil remedy. *North Carolina State Report, State Ratings 2013*<http://www.polarisproject.org/state-map/north-carolina>

Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department

With the passage of the 2013 Safe Harbor Act in NC, human trafficking is now reported to and investigated by local police departments. Prior to 2013, the FBI handled all cases and thus they were federal crimes tried in federal courts. State laws should be easier to enforce.

- For instance, in NC, state law does not require proof that the perpetrator knew the victim was underage; in Federal courts, proof of knowledge is required
- Federal mandatory sentencing – 10 years minimum; NC – no minimum and no local prosecution yet because of newness of law
- Federal still working labor trafficking cases and will still handle some sex trafficking

At CMPD, Sgt. Melanie Peacock is assigned to the Sexual Assault Unit for CMPD and works sex trafficking as needed. There is no full time detective assigned. For human trafficking investigations, she oversees a team of trained

detectives from various other units including Vice, Missing Persons, Sexual Assault, and Youth Crime. When a case is reported to CMPD, she decides which detective is most appropriate to the case and assigns that detective to the investigation. Sgt. Peacock differentiates that prostitution is consensual; human trafficking is not. A trafficked person has no choice and is a victim, therefore is not charged.

A federally-funded task force that includes Homeland Security, FBI, CMPD detectives, service providers, and victim rights advocates meets regularly. They discuss specific cases to decide how best to proceed, thus meetings are not open to the public.

Meeting with Sgt. Melanie Peacock; June 11, 2014 at CMPD; Becka Tait and Cindy Thomson attending

Potential ideas:

- Advocate for mandatory anti-trafficking training for law enforcement statewide. CMPD trains its workforce but not all law enforcement agencies require this.
- Advocate for mandatory anti-trafficking training for lawyers and prosecutors.
- Increase legal and financial consequences for traffickers and johns who deal in sex trafficking in order to reduce demand.

Extensive essential services for victims should be applied where needed.

In the fall of 2010, the Women's Commission partnered with the Presbytery of Charlotte and NC STOP Human Trafficking on a two-day conference addressing human trafficking. Out of that conference, one of the local churches dedicated two cottages with a total of four beds for sheltering domestic victims of human trafficking. At the time there were only two beds (10% of the 29 beds at the Shelter for Battered Women).

Safe Alliance and the Women's Commission do not track trafficking cases as distinguished from domestic violence cases.

The following are local shelters for trafficking victims: Hope House (operated by On Eagles Wings Ministries, 6 beds), Lily Pad Haven (4 beds), Compassion to Act (6 beds), Justice Ministries/Rise Up (2 beds), Safe Alliance Shelter (8 beds allocated if available after domestic violence victims are provided for). As of April 2014, 93 trafficking victims have been given shelter since 2009.

Data from Mike Sexton, the Women's Commission

Through the efforts of a local human trafficking task force, a coordinated community response for the Charlotte area was provided to The Polaris Project in late 2012. (This task force is no longer active.)

Potential idea:

Institute better tracking mechanisms among service providers to determine the extent of trafficking in the region

Education and awareness programs on human trafficking should be established in our communities and in our schools.

There appear to be pockets of interest in and advocacy for anti-trafficking in the Charlotte Mecklenburg region. For example:

- VigilanteTrucker.com
- Triad Ladder of Hope (has activities in Charlotte) and other faith-based groups
- All We Want is Love – nonprofit based in Charlotte that focuses on education and training
- On Eagles Wings Ministries

Potential Ideas:

- Advocate for sex trafficking awareness training for children and their parents. Include information on sex trafficking, how to be safe, what to be aware of when using social media and the internet.
- Make the coordinated community response process available to schools and other institutions that interact with children (foster care system, girl and boy scouts, etc.)

Idea Summit to Address Potential Anti-Sex Trafficking Actions by LWV Charlotte Mecklenburg

Date: Saturday, October 25, 2014, 9:00 am to 12:00 noon (snacks and drinks will be provided)

Location: League Office, 1817 Central Avenue, Charlotte

Facilitator: Anne Davidson, Executive Vice President, Roger Schwarz & Assoc.; This model requires a 3-hour commitment to the discussion. Please RSVP to Karen (beank@bellsouth.net) or Becka (beckatait83@gmail.com) so we can plan accordingly.

Questions to Ask Candidates

by Linda Levy

League members know how important it is to make **informed** decisions when voting, which means knowing where the candidates stand on issues. This requires asking questions of or assessing answers candidates give at debates, in voter guides, or in person.

In the 2014 General Election, Mecklenburg voters will choose a U.S. Senator, U.S. House Representatives, State Senators, State House Representatives, County Commissioners, some judges, a Sheriff and several other officials. The ballot will also include a quarter-cent county sales tax increase referendum for education, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library and the Arts & Science Council.

Among questions (listed on the LWVUS website) to ask candidates who would represent us in Congress are:

- What should the federal government do about the growing economic disparity between the poor, the middle class and the wealthy?
- What do you believe the federal government should do to limit the impact of global climate change?
- Do you support or oppose an amendment to the U.S. constitution to reverse the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision?
- Explain how you would change U.S. immigration policies or why you believe the U.S. immigration policies do not need to be changed.
- How can the federal government, in collaboration with other levels of government, provide an equitable, quality education for all children pre-K through grade 12?
- What gun safety measures would you support that will protect all Americans?

Some questions to ask state candidates:

- *Until 2013 North Carolina had a law allowing statewide judicial candidates and some Council of State candidates to qualify for public campaign funding or "Voter-Owned Elections" – if they refuse special interest funds, adhere to spending limits, and prove their grassroots support by obtaining a large number of small contributions from N.C. voters. 80% of candidates used this program in N.C. from 2004-2012. Will you vote to implement a new Judicial "Voter-Owned Elections" public campaign funding law?*

- Would you support the creation of a "Voter-Owned Elections" public financing option for state legislative races that would provide candidates with an alternative to candidates spending most of their campaign raising money?
- If elected, will you actively work to establish an independent, non-partisan system for drawing legislative and congressional districts?
- What should state government do about the growing economic disparity between the poor, the middle class and the wealthy? Do you support increasing the minimum wage for North Carolinians or advocating for a living wage for the working poor?



For County Commissioner Candidates:

- Do you support the 2014 Mecklenburg County Sales Tax Referendum proposal for a quarter-cent (one fourth of a penny) sales tax increase that will be on the ballot? (*If voters approve the measures, it is expected to bring in approximately \$35 million a year in additional revenue to Mecklenburg County: 80% to Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. Other beneficiaries will be Central Piedmont Community College, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library and the Arts & Science Council.*)
- A number of cities and counties around North Carolina have instituted a living wage for their employees and have given incentives to business owners to do the same. Do you support a living wage for the working poor in Charlotte-Mecklenburg? Why or why not?

Check your newspapers for dates and locations of candidate debates. LWVCM debates will be aired on WTVI the Sunday before Elections. The LWVCM web site, www.goleague.org, will list the exact times. Our Voter Guide (available mid-October) will include responses to League questions from NC representatives, Mecklenburg Districts 1&5,

Mecklenburg County Commissioners-at-Large, District 26 judges and other local candidates. Look for their positions on issues that are important to you – and make an **informed** decision when you vote!

For information on the districts you are in and who the candidates are, go to the Mecklenburg County Board of Elections website, www.meckboe.org.

The Suffragette, a quarterly publication of the League of Women Voters, intends to be a vehicle for disseminating information, inspiring action, and advancing participation in the civic affairs of the State of North Carolina.

Observing The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Board Of Education

By Peg Chapin, Advocacy Chair

The School Board meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays. I attended the board meeting on Sept. 23, 2014. The State of North Carolina is obligated to fund schools adequately and equitably, so it is a significant driver in budget planning. We learned that the state has cut funding for transportation by \$.6 million, Central Office by \$1 million, at risk children by \$.9 million and teacher assistants by \$10.6 million and that, along with the 2% increase in student population, leads to a problem with funding our public schools.

Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools had 145,212 students on the twentieth day count. This figure represents 1,750 more students than the district had projected and 3,300 more than the state projected. A cap of 100 charter schools was in place for years, however, in 2011 the legislature lifted the cap. Parents were also able to apply and be accepted into multiple charter schools. A student can only select one school, but each school may report that it expects the student to attend. CMS is not notified if a child drops out of a charter.

Now the school system will request more funding from the state so it can provide an adequate student/teacher ratio since the state budget did not .

If you are interested Charlotte/Mecklenburg Schools, you are welcome to join me at School Board Meetings.

Women's Equality Day Presentation

The following are excerpts of the speech given by noted columnist, teacher and writer, Kay McSpadden, at the LWVC-M Women's Equality Day celebration on August 26, 2014. Edited by Suzanne Elsberry Schweikert

As you know, the 19th Amendment was passed in Congress in 1919 but it needed 36 of the states to ratify it. By 1920 only 35 states had, and it looked like the 36th, Tennessee, was about to table the amendment without approval. On August 18, the legislators of Tennessee had already voted twice and come to a tie, 48 lawmakers for the amendment, and 48 against. When the speaker called for a third and final vote, the youngest member of the legislature, Harry Burn, changed his vote and joined the supporters of the amendment. Later he explained his change of heart by saying that he had received a letter from his mother urging him to approve suffrage for women.

At least every state finally did officially ratify it. Not so with the Equal Rights Amendment. What a radical idea that was. Originally drafted by Alice Paul in 1923, the amendment reads: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." Despite the failure of that piece of legislation, after the 19th Amendment was ratified, many key pieces of legislation **have** impacted the lives of girls and women in particular. Laws concerning divorce, property rights, custody of children, access to birth control, abortion, and workplace discrimination have changed the landscape of life for American women. And women have made many gains. Half of the workforce is made up of women. More than half of the college students are female. A million and a half women have served in the armed forces, and in many jobs women work in equal numbers as men.

But challenges remain. When I interviewed for my first teaching job in 1977, the personnel manager told me that the school district didn't want to go to the trouble of hiring a woman who would just—as he said—"up and get pregnant and leave." I always thought that was a funny image—to up and get pregnant—but the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 made those kinds of questions illegal.

Of course, women still face workplace discrimination. When women take time from work for childbirth or to care for children, some employers argue they are exempt from consideration for pay raises and promotions. Consequently, women make less money—about 77 cents for every dollar earned by a man despite laws passed in the 60s, including the Equal Pay Act and Title 7 of the Civil Rights Act.

Title 9 of the Education Amendments bans sex discrimination in schools, and has been the impetus behind an explosion in girls' sports. However, no school funds girls' sports to the extent that it funds boys' sports. Not only do schools offer more sports for boys, the facilities, uniforms, and equipment are often superior to what the girls have.

In 1994 the Violence Against Women Act stiffened the federal penalties for sex offenders and funded services for survivors of domestic violence and rape. Yet rape culture prevails, with victims blamed for the motives and actions of their attackers. Girls and young women are objectified in the media. Try to buy non-sexualized clothing for an adolescent girl. Ask any woman if she's ever been sexually harassed.

In 2014, 94 years since the passage of the 19th Amendment, it shouldn't still be news that a woman has won the most coveted prize in mathematics for the first time, or that a woman has been hired to coach a men's basketball team. Our math and science classes shouldn't be predominantly male. Women shouldn't have to keep making the same arguments that the suffragettes made—that equality is not sameness, that denying that women face challenges and hurdles peculiar to them is not how you level the playing field.

Girls and women living in poverty face a double handicap—and those are the girls I see every day. In my rural district in South Carolina, 74% of my students live in poverty. Children born into poverty suffer physical deprivations that can lead to brain damage and developmental delays. Growing up without secure shelter or enough food makes children anxious and angry. Growing up without books or music lessons or vacations or trips to museums or all the enrichment activities offered to their wealthier peers makes them narrow in the things they know and appreciate. The children I teach live for the present because the future is so uncertain. Girls growing up in poverty experience higher rates of unplanned pregnancies, marry younger, drop out of school more frequently, and experience more domestic violence than their wealthier peers. They have fewer educational and job opportunities and are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed than any other demographic.



Support for women and children is key to helping people break the cycle of poverty. That includes access to affordable health care and contraception, quality day care for children, and jobs paying a living wage. It means earned income tax credits for the working poor, wraparound social services in schools, and enforcement of laws designed to protect women. And it starts with making sure that women exercise their right to vote, putting in office officials who see them as equal, important contributing members of society.

I could tell you numerous sad stories of young women growing up in poverty at my school—stories of children enduring more hardships than anyone should have to bear. But let me tell you about some success stories. Even in our flagship English class—Advanced Placement English—I had many students this past year who were extremely poor. Several of the girls, however, were fierce and determined to rise above their situations. One girl has a father so violent that he is legally barred from any contact with her, yet her award-winning artwork is vibrant and joyful. One of my sharpest thinkers and best writers is a girl with two disabled parents who depend on subsidized meals and social security checks to keep their family together. A third girl whose family has a history of homelessness worried for the last month of school that she wouldn't be able to afford to pay for her cap and gown and wouldn't be able to participate in graduation—a graduation where she would be an honor graduate. All of these students have heavy strikes against them, but they also benefited from laws and programs designed to help the poor. Without protection from a violent father, without breakfast and lunch provided by their schools, without organized sports and band and after-school drama clubs, without outreach programs encouraging them to take advanced courses—those girls could easily have joined the ranks of young women leaving high school with bleak futures. Instead, all three earned scholarships and are heading off to college right now—scared but confident that they can find the resources they need, aware that they stand on the shoulders of men and women who advocated for them in the past.

My challenge to women and men of 2014 is to unite in common cause for what is right and just, to keep our eyes on the horizon and our hands on the plow. Elect representatives who put the welfare of the community before partisan politics, who are committed to the common good. Vote for people who understand the importance of institutions such as our public schools, who listen to the voices of the poor and downtrodden, who don't ignore the concerns of race and gender, who act with honesty and compassion. And we devote ourselves to carrying that mission forward, grateful for the efforts of those who came before us and determined to change the future for the better.

To read her speech in its entirety, please go to our website: www.goleaguego.org

This issue of the Suffragette is a publication of the membership committee, Suzanne Elsberry Schweikert, chair, and edited by Delores Hurt

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