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December 12 Holiday Party

Celebrate the Season and Learn More about Historic Mitchelville, HHI

The pictures below relate to Hilton Head Island. How? Join the League on Thursday, December 12 to learn more about our regional historic jewel, Mitchelville, at our annual party/luncheon.

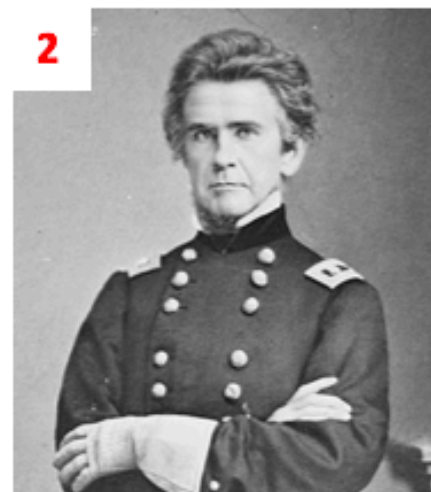
By December 5, send your \$30 check payable to LWVHHI/BA with choice of entree (chicken marsala, flounder picatta, or vegetarian) to Jan Billingslea, 5 Lansmere Place, Bluffton, 29910.

Social time will begin at 11:30 a.m. and lunch at noon. We look forward to seeing you at the Palmetto Hall Golf and Country Club to celebrate the season with special guest Ahmad Ward, Executive Director of the Mitchelville Preservation Project.

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1. In 1862, shortly after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed – while most of the African-American slave population was still trying to adjust to the idea of their new post-war freedom – **the people of Mitchelville were busy creating a completely new, self-governed culture that would be the guidepost for generations to follow.**
2. **Union General Ormsby Mitchel** proclaimed that the land the people of Mitchelville, South Carolina had once toiled under the chains of slavery was now their own.
3. These industrious new citizens built homes on neatly arranged streets, elected their own officials, developed laws, built an economy, and **implemented mandatory**

education for their children.

4. Reports of the success of Mitchelville were so glowing that the famous Underground Railroad freedom fighter, **Harriet Tubman**, was sent to Hilton Head to see this bustling town so that she could share the story of Mitchelville's self-governed success with future freedmen towns.
5. The Mitchelville Preservation Project received the South Carolina African American Heritage Commission's **2014 "Preserving Our Places in History" Organization Award**. Attending: Joyce Wright, artist Jonathan Green, and our own Dot Law.
6. **Ahmad Ward, current Executive Director of the Mitchelville Preservation Project**, will address the League's December 12 holiday luncheon. Don't miss it!

Message from the Co-President



What a fall we've had! Through a very busy election season—with twenty or so contests and ballot issues, our League educated thousands of Beaufort County voters:

- We registered 279 new voters at area high schools and community events
- We hosted and moderated four public candidate forums attracting an average attendance of 90 persons each
- We reached untold numbers of other voters who watched live broadcasts or archived forum footage on the Beaufort County Channel
- We attracted over 4400 unduplicated visitors to Vote411.org, a seven fold increase over the number of visitors prior to the June primaries
- We garnered 94 percent participation among candidates for office on [Vote411](http://Vote411.org) and leveraged candidate exposure as local media gleaned information from this site for their publications
- In partnership with the Coastal Conservation League, we supported passage of the rural and critical lands ballot issue, which passed with 70 percent approval.

Throughout this season, our League modeled civility and professionalism and received many accolades from candidates and the general public.

So congratulations to all of you who contributed to our success! I hope to see many of you at our December 12 luncheon when we'll have a chance to celebrate the holidays and take a breather before we ring in 2019.

Four candidate forums, a new VOTE411.org election information source, voter registration at high schools and community events, and more! It's been a busy election season. The League thanks you for helping us "Make Democracy Work®."



VOTE411.org Reaches 4400+ Area Voters

This was the first election season that the League of Women Voters of Hilton Head Island/Bluffton Area offered Vote411.org to the voting public. The challenges were formidable and the learning curve steep. However, it's fair to say we met and exceeded expectations. **94% of area candidates completed League member questions. Over 4,400 area voters accessed Vote411.org** to either get information or create a ballot template to assist in voting. For our first time out, this is impressive.

Mastering the Vote411.org software and website was challenging yet that was, in some

ways, the easiest part. We then had to convince candidates to answer our questions and let voters know the benefits of using Vote411.org. This took concerted and coordinated League teamwork.

League members composed relevant and probing questions that would help inform voters about candidate positions. Candidates needed to trust that enough voters would read their answers to make efforts worthwhile.

It took a team effort to get candidates to respond. Nancy Williams followed up initial email requests with “snail mail” letters reminding candidates to respond to our questions. Ruth Wilwerding and her team made phone calls to candidates. MaryAnn Bromley conducted demonstrations at forums and local fairs to help voters and candidates learn to use Vote411.org. And Sandy Stern got the publicity out to local newspapers and local TV stations.

It really took a village.

As a poll manager on election day it was heartening to see voters approach the ballot booths with their ballots pre-printed from Vote411.org or with a preliminary ballot on their smartphones. This made their time in the booth much shorter and voting lines move more quickly.

The initial success of VOTE411.org holds great promise in furthering the League’s mission: *Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.*

~John Riolo, VOTE411.org Specialist

SC Reps Outline Their Priorities & Positions

Newly re-elected state representatives **Bill Herbkersman (District 118)**, **Weston Newton (District 120)**, and **Jeff Bradley (District 123)** shared their positions on issues ranging from redistricting to earmarks at our November 14 general meeting at the Bluffton Library.

Representatives’ priorities for the 2019 General Assembly session were similar: pension reform, education reform, and state utility oversight.

When moderator MaryAnn Bromley asked about their support for **redistricting reform**, Rep. Herbkersman saw a need for change and stated that he supports a “completely independent redistricting commission.” He felt that population should be the main criterion for drawing district lines and that special interests should play no role. Rep. Newton wasn’t sure that there exists clear evidence that an independent redistricting commission produced better results. Rep. Bradley questioned whether appointing an independent redistricting commission would be better than the state legislature. Newton stressed that public input, transparency, and carefully chosen criteria were important. Bradley mused that minority groups might be adversely affected, depending on how districts are redrawn. As a follow-up to Newton’s statements, Bromley – in her role as moderator – asked Newton to clarify if he was saying that he did not support an independent redistricting commission at this time but would be supportive of having criteria specified for drawing district lines. Rep. Newton agreed that this was an accurate representation of his position. Bromley brought the discussion about redistricting to a close by stating that we would be sharing their comments on redistricting with Lynn Teague, our “go to” person at the League of Women Voters of South Carolina (LWVSC) on all state legislative issues.

On the issue of **gun violence** the representatives stressed the need to enforce current laws, enter accurate, timely data into the system, and address mental health issues. Herbkersman also identified the need for background checks.

All three representatives dodged a question about whether they would co-sponsor or support a bill ratifying the **Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)**, which Gilda Cobb Hunter will introduce in January, by saying they would need to see the bill before commenting. However, the language of the proposed amendment is simple and clear: “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State on account of sex.”

The audience then posed questions regarding **the election process**, the legislature’s response to the state Supreme Court’s directive for improving education, the status of the Jasper Port, and earmarks.

Attendees were concerned about long lines and inadequate numbers of voting machines during the recent election. Herbkersman, who sits on the Ways and Means Committee, said that it sets aside money for voting machines, but said there are no credible machines yet available or approved by the state to replace our obsolete machines. He said the state should review the allocation of machines by population and prefers leasing to purchase. Newton feels ensuring the integrity of elections is critical and supports emerging

technology that would provide a paper ballot with a copy to the voter. Although our legislators are not directly responsible for the election process, they nominate and appoint county boards of election. Rep. Bradley is chair of the Beaufort County Legislative Delegation.

All also cited the need for **education reform**. Some ideas they put forward were gubernatorial appointment of the Superintendent of Education, increasing teacher and non-professional staff salaries, consolidation of some of the state's 86 school districts, and monthly "teacher talk" forums with legislators. Bradley feels the state spends plenty of money on education but needs better outcomes. According to Newton, everyone wants to see improvements in education, but a diversity of opinions in the legislature about how to accomplish this has led to an inability to make progress.

All the representatives support **the Jasper Port**, which they view as the single biggest, transformative driver of our regional economy. Newton sees the present situation as a "forced marriage" between South Carolina and Georgia and feels that the governors need to "renew their vows." The legislature will continue to push for the port.

In regard to **earmarks and transparency**, Herbkersman said they were not a "bad thing" per se (e.g. USCB Hilton Head campus was an earmark), but there is no "sunshine" around earmarks and they need to be relative to a particular bill. One of Newton's priorities is freedom of information and transparency. The current transparency bill doesn't apply to the General Assembly. He intends to introduce a transparency bill that will.

All representatives assured the audience of their **open door policies and accessibility**. They provided their office locations, and Bradley shared his personal cell phone number. Moderator Bromley indicated the **League's willingness and interest in maintaining contact and in providing information and expertise relative to proposed legislation that is aligned with our program priorities**.

Member in the Spotlight: Barbara Nielsen

How did you end up in the Lowcountry?

Dennis and I moved our family here 35 years ago from Louisville, Kentucky. We both worked in administration in the school district there and were also a part of the Prichard Committee that was a statewide group

responsible for Kentucky's landmark educational reform act. We had vacationed here several times and fell in love with Hilton Head. It was a beautiful environment and seemed to have a real sense of community. So, when jobs presented themselves we moved. I spent several years with the Beaufort County School District as the Community Business Partnership Coordinator which provided a wonderful experience in working to bring schools, businesses, parents and the community together for improving education.

There were significant issues in education statewide and I frequently said, "It doesn't have to be this way," and so Charles Fraser said to me, "Well, go up there and change it." I did and the rest is history. I was elected State Superintendent of Education in 1990 and served 8 years choosing not to run for a third term. I also was the first female in that position and the second female as a constitutional officer in the history of the state. We accomplished a lot, but frankly I was tired. Change is a never ending process!

What sparked your interest in civic engagement?

My interest in civic engagement goes way back to high school. I believe that to accomplish change you need to build public capital. To build that capital you need to involve all the stakeholders in moving forward to solve community issues. Different opinions exist but we can, in a civil manner, agree to move forward on common ground. As Superintendent of Education I worked with many organizations, including the League of Women Voters, to move education forward. We also contracted with the Harwood Institute for Civic Engagement to assist schools and their communities to engage with each other to address educational issues. Schools, after all, are mirrors of their communities. It was a real learning experience.

Why the League?

I have seen first hand the difference that the League of Women Voters can make in providing a place where people of different backgrounds and opinions can meet, discuss, research and educate communities on important issues in a nonpartisan manner. It contributes, in a positive way, an opportunity to build the public capital



"I have seen first hand the difference the League of Women Voters can make in providing a place where people of different backgrounds and opinions can meet, discuss, research and educate communities on important issues in a nonpartisan manner."

~Dr. Barbara Stock Nielsen

necessary for healthy communities. We have a strong League here and hopefully we can all contribute to moving our community forward together.



Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

Welcome, New League Members

We are delighted to recognize those who have recently joined the League of Women Voters of Hilton Head Island/Bluffton Area. Please help us welcome:

Dale DeAtley Helen Glenn Diane Polevoy

To receive an electronic membership directory, members should [email Ellen Dahl](#), Membership Director. Please note that our membership and email distribution lists are confidential and shall be used for the conduct of League business exclusively.

Thank You!

We thank the following individuals who made donations to help our League "Make Democracy Work.®" during this membership year. We invite others to join their ranks and will publish a growing list of donors each month.

Carrie Chapman Catt Society (\$300+)

Defender of Democracy (\$200-299)

Mary Agnes Garman
Vivian Miller
Kay Roshnow
Connie & Jerry Voight
Nancy Williams

Patriot (\$100-199)

Alice Gianni

Barbara Swift

Friend (-\$99)

Anonymous

Barbara Catenaci

Eileen Drehwing

Sally McGarry

Caroline McVitty

Ellen Walton

Donations may be mailed to LWVHHI/BA, P.O. Box 23862, Hilton Head Island, SC 29925. We are only able to acknowledge donations made by check. If you have been left off this list in error, please email our [Treasurer](#).



In Memoriam

We extend our heartfelt condolences to the families of the following members whose involvement greatly enriched both the League and and far-reaching Lowcountry organizations. They will be missed by many!

Robert (Bob) Dixon

A professor of political science, Dr. Dixon taught 40 years in Vermont, and in retirement, at the Technical College of the Lowcountry. His passion for the democratic process extended to a lifelong commitment to community and political causes. Wife Ellie Dixon is also a League member.

Robert (Bob) Ghirardelli

Dr. Ghirardelli's background in chemistry led to a career at the US Army Research Office, where served as Director of Chemical and Biological Sciences. He served on the Durham, NC School Board and maintained his strong involvement in multiple organizations upon retirement. Wife Ginny Ghirardelli is also a League member.

Richard Shulman

A Master Electrician in New York City, Richard had an electrical contracting business there until retirement. He was active in the Audubon Society, as a Bargain Box volunteer, and through the Coast Guard Auxiliary volunteered with the Coast Guard in Savannah. Wife Joan Kinne-Shulman is a League board member.

Patricia Wilber

A lifelong advocate for good citizenship and social justice, Pat developed an extensive curriculum teaching civics and patriotism during her career in Michigan, Georgia, and Pennsylvania schools. Upon retiring to HHI, she served as a tutor, substitute teacher, and community organizer. Daughter Karen Wilber Wessel was a League president.

Monthly Calendar of Events

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

December 6 – Board meeting, 10 a.m., Palmetto Electric Cooperative on Mathews Drive, Hilton Head Island. All members welcome.

December 12– Holiday party, 11:30 a.m. social time, noon lunch, Palmetto Hall Plantation Golf and Country Club, 108 Fort Howell Drive, Hilton Head Island. Speaker: Ahmad Ward, Historic Mitchelville Project. RSVP with \$30 by December 5. See invitation below.



Holiday PARTY

DECEMBER 12

11:30AM – 2 PM · SOCIAL TIME: 11:30AM · LUNCH: 12 PM

PALMETTO HALL PLANTATION
108 FORT HOWELL DRIVE, HILTON HEAD ISLAND, SC 29926

COST IS \$30

Featured Speaker:

AHMAD WARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MITCHELVILLE PRESERVATION PROJECT

Menu:

CHOICE OF: CHICKEN MARSALA · FLOUNDER PICATTA
VEGETARIAN (CHEF'S CHOICE) · DUTCH BAKED APPLE PIE · COFFEE, TEA

Reservations:

CHECK TO JAN BILLINGSLEA, 5 LANSMERE PLACE, BLUFFTON, SC 29910

PLEASE SEND ENTRÉE CHOICE.

QUESTIONS: JJBILL12@AOL.COM OR 843-815-3743.

RSVP BY 12/5/2018

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND/BLUFFTON AREA



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Know a Potential New Member?

Forward this newsletter using the button below, print out the [membership form](#), or bring a prospect to the next League event. Better yet, do all three!

Forward Our Email to a Friend



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P.O. Box 23862 | Hilton Head Island, SC 29925

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