



THE VOTER

MARCH 2012 Vol. 39, No 3

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of the Clemson Area

President's Message



March is a big month for the Clemson LWV as we do our second national consensus, this time on privatization, and also send our intrepid team of fourteen volunteers into area high school to register seniors to vote. The issue of contracting with private firms to provide tax-funded services is a controversial one at every level of government. Having a position will enable us to advocate when the issue comes up at the county council, city hall, General Assembly or Congress to ensure appropriate safeguards and protect vulnerable populations. Consensus is your opportunity to shake the League's position while becoming informed about an important public issue. We also look forward to our April meeting when we revisit our state position on higher education and look at the funding issues. I hope to see all of you at one or more of our upcoming meetings.

Your board was very pleased with the large number of volunteers for the high school voter registration project. We hope to visit nine high schools, four in Pickens County, four in Oconee County, and Pendleton. We have a small amount of funds from a grant to the state League that we will use for materials—stickers and cards—to give to students at registration. As the year moves on, we will need more voter service volunteers. Carol Ward, Barbara Hamberg and Alice Flower are coordinating the municipal election work in Pendleton. Clemson will be having a special election for mayor this spring. Beyond that lies the June primary and the fall election. So please let us know if you are willing to help.

The Directories of Public Officials are here and are being distributed to various public officials. Copies are also available at all League meetings or you can call our president (holleyu@nctv.com or 654-6828) and she will mail you a copy. Thanks to Paula Appling, Reggie Turetzky, many other volunteers who gathered information, and Duke Energy for the printing expense for this very worthwhile project.

Fundraising letters went out in February to 45 potential donors. We will list our donors in future issues of the VOTER so that you can thank them for their support of our work.

Action Tuesday is the 3rd Tuesday of the month at Western Sizzlin' to discuss opportunities to advocate on issues, mainly at the state and national levels. The March Action Tuesday is March 27th (**moved to the fourth Tuesday**), with the General Assembly in full swing and at work on the budget. There is also lots of action at other times as issues arise. Many of you responded to the call for action on HB 4549 that would restrict citizen groups from doing voter registration. I also had a letter to the editor published in the Anderson Independent on this issue.

On a sad note, we will all miss Clemson Mayor Larry Abernathy, who was a good friend of the Clemson League and a dedicated public servant. We are grateful for his good work in shaping the Clemson community in his 28 years as mayor.

Holley H. Ulbrich

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THE VOTER

League of Women Voter Clemson Area
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HOT TOPICS: Hot topics in 2012 will look at how decreased state funding has impacted local public schools. How should school districts and citizens respond? The Oconee County meeting will be on March 20th at the Walhalla Steakhouse Cafeteria on Main Street at noon. Mike Lucas, Superintendent of Oconee County School, will speak. Contact Reggie Turetzky if you have any questions.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Tuesday, MAR 13 **GENERAL MEETING “PRIVATIZATION CONSENSUS”**, Presented by Holley Ulbrich, Mary Ann McKenzie, Paula Appling, Eleanor Hare, Ellen Magee, CLEMSON-CENTRAL LIBRARY, 7:00 pm-social, 7:30 – 9:00 pm-program.
- Tuesday, MAR 20 **HOT TOPIC “How Decreased State Funding Has Affected Oconee Schools”**, Walhalla Steakhouse Cafeteria, Walhalla, noon.
- Tuesday, MAR 27 **ACTION TUESDAY**, Western Sizzlin’, noon. (new date)
- Month of MARCH **YOUTH VOTER REGISTRATION PROJECT: Oconee, Pickens and Pendleton High Schools.**

MARCH 13 MEETING “Privatization Consensus”

Did you know that custodial workers at Clemson University are no longer state employees? That the Post Office has to be self-supporting and gets no government funding, just government regulation? That Congress is once again trying to privatize TSA, the airport security personnel? From privately run prisons to Chicago’s parking meters, tax-funded services are being turned over to private firms to manage on behalf of the citizens at all levels of government. Privatization has some real advantages and some real drawbacks, and our consensus questions printed in this VOTER identify some of the criteria we might want to consider for supporting or opposing privatization of a particular service and some of the safeguards we would like to see in place to protect the interests of both the taxpayer and the citizens who depend on that particular service. Our privatization team—Holley Ulbrich, Mary Ann McKenzie, Paula Appling, Eleanor Hare, and Ellen Magee—will provide some background information and stories of actual and proposed privatizations and then turn you loose on the consensus questions.

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Wine Tasting – A Fund Raising Success



Dianne Haselton, organizer with Ella



Kathy Clark tastes wines provided by David of Palmetto Spirits.

CONSENSUS ON PRIVATIZATION

Federal, state and local governments own extensive assets and are major employers. Governments often consider selling assets, and outsourcing some functions and services to the private sector, including “core” government services such as providing for the safety, security and general welfare (public well-being) of citizens, the economy, and our country. Privatization of these government assets, services and functions has been occurring for decades at all levels of government. The consequences of “privatizing” a government service or function, in particular, may enhance the function or service. Alternatively, it may reduce or alter functions and services. Government revenues may be reduced or lost and jobs may be cut. In some instances, this may have a detrimental effect on the “common good” or public well-being.

One state, for instance, has declared as a matter of state law and policy that “using private contractors to provide public services formerly provided by state employees does not always promote the public interest. To ensure that citizens..... receive high quality public services at low cost, with due regard for tax payers..... and the needs of public and private workers, the (legislature) finds it necessary to regulate such privatization contracts throughout the state.”

The purpose of this study is to identify policies and parameters that should be considered when any governmental entity is planning to undertake some type of privatization process.

PRIVATIZATION CONSENSUS QUESTIONS

1. As a general matter, the extent to which government functions, services and assets have been privatized in the past decade is:
 Much too much Too much About right Too little Much too little No consensus

2. Core government services and functions important to well-being of the people should remain with government and not be transferred to the private sector.
 Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No consensus

3. As a matter of good government policy, which of the following criteria should be applied when making decisions to transfer government services, assets and functions to the private sector?

a. Transparency and Accountability: All government contracts with private companies for services must ensure public access to relevant records and information regarding contracted services, functions and assets and provide for adequate government oversight and control.

High priority Lower priority Not a priority No consensus

b. Public Well-being: Provisions are in place to assure that, in the event any public services are to be privatized, there will be no increased risks to public well-being, especially to vulnerable populations.

High priority Lower priority Not a priority No consensus

c. Cost and Quality: Privatized services should not appreciably increase the costs or decrease the quality of services to the public.

High priority Lower priority Not a priority No consensus

d. Environmental and Natural Resources: Defined parameters should be in place to assure that environmental and natural resources are not compromised.

High priority Lower priority Not a priority No consensus

e. Contracts and Sales of Public Assets: All government contracts and privatized public assets should be subject to competitive bidding and comply with all laws regarding awarding contracts.

High priority Lower priority Not a priority No consensus

f. Economic Impact: Privatization should not result in a negative economic impact on the communities in which the services are provided.

High priority Lower priority Not a priority No consensus

g. Government Recovery of Services and Assets: Provisions should be in place to recover key services, assets and functions should the private sector fail to safeguard them.

CONSENSUS ON PRIVATIZATION continued

4. Privatization is not appropriate:

a. When the government lacks the will, ability or resources to adequately oversee contracts with the private entity and any successor thereto.

Agree Disagree No Consensus

b. When there is no private entity able or willing to provide the service for the short and long term.

Agree Disagree No Consensus

c. When it poses a potential threat to national security.

Agree Disagree No Consensus

d. When it poses a risk to personal or security data.

Agree Disagree No Consensus

e. When there has been evidence of potential corruption.

Agree Disagree No Consensus

f. When the private entity's goals and purposes are not compatible with public well-being.

Agree Disagree No Consensus

g. When the private entity has not complied with existing government requirements for public records, open meetings or publication of reports and audits.

Agree Disagree No Consensus

h. When a loss of revenue decreases government support for mandated or critical services.

Agree Disagree No Consensus

5. Some states have developed laws and regulations to control the process of privatization within their jurisdictions. As a general matter, should privatization be regulated?

a. Yes, all privatization efforts should be regulated.

b. Yes, some types of privatization efforts should be regulated.

c. No, privatization efforts should never be regulated

d. No consensus

6. Which of the following should be included in the regulatory process when privatizing public assets, services and functions?

a. Timely public announcements regarding intentions to privatize and the clear and measurable expected benefits to the public

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No consensus

b. Public and stakeholder (investors, shareholders, experts) input into the decision and terms of the contract.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No consensus

c. Feasibility study regarding performance, costs and benefits.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No consensus

d. Adherence to all laws regarding public contracts..

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No consensus

e. Transition plans for displaced employees.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No consensus

f. Accountability and transparency provisions in all contracts.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No consensus

g. Regular performance evaluations including meaningful opportunity for public comment.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No consensus

h. Provisions for transferring services and assets back to the government or another contractor in the event of inadequate performance.

S 1025: A Very Good Bill

S 1025 requires post-election audits to be conducted by county election commissions, pursuant to regulations promulgated by the State Election Commission. This bill passed the Senate with no opposition on February 14, has been sent to the House and was referred to the Judiciary Committee.

The League of Women Voters of South Carolina supports this bill. If the requirement for a post-election audit had been in place at the time of the 2010 General Election, it is likely that the miscounted votes (all 2000+ of them) would likely have been detected and the count corrected before the results were certified. This bill will not correct every problem with the current technology, but it is a giant step toward reliability.

The State Election Commission requested the electronic data from all counties for the 2012 Presidential Preference Primary and posted Audit Reports.

MARCH MEETING continued from page 1

Privatization is a 20th century phenomenon, going back at least to the Reagan administration in this country and the Thatcher administration at the same time in the U.K. Internationally, governments had accumulated a variety of nongovernmental entities—coal mines, steel companies, auto firms, airlines—that might better be run by private firms. But as the movement to divest government of ancillary activities picked up steam, it spread to core government functions such as public safety, prisons, education, and serving populations with special needs, like children in poverty and the mentally ill. The core idea is that government is not equipped to manage such a diverse array of specialized services and that private firms, motivated by profit, will be more efficient than government in providing those services. Experience with actual privatizations has raised some questions about what should be privatized and how, and what role government should continue to play in overseeing these privatized tax-funded firms.

Privatization actually takes many forms, but we are focusing on those cases where a government contracts with a private sector firm to provide a service that was formerly staffed by public employees and overseen by an elected government body. There are also alternatives to privatization in increasing efficiency that can be and have been used in many instances. They include contracting with other governments or quasi-governmental agencies and service sharing among governments such as the BOCES (Board of Comprehensive Educational Services) in several states that contract with school districts for specialized services.

Our Congress and our General Assembly see many privatization proposals every year, so this is a consensus that will provide a lot of opportunity for advocacy and action to ensure that our tax dollars are being spent wisely, that firms who contract with government are accountable, and that the needs and interests of those who depend on public services are safeguarded. Please join us on March 13th to explore this very important and interesting public issue.

~Submitted by Holley Ulbrich

CatBus “Green” Facility

LWVCA members toured the new environmental state-of-the-art Clemson Area Transit Facility on February 14, 2012



In South Carolina, New Report Finds No Evidence Of 'Dead' Voters

The South Carolina State Election Commission has just released its initial review of allegations from the state's Department of Motor Vehicles that more than 950 deceased voters appeared to have ballots cast in their names after they died. And no surprise, the commission found that of the 207 cases reviewed, there was no evidence in 197 of them that fraudulent votes had been cast. The commission said that records in the other 10 cases were "insufficient to make a determination."

The findings are not a big surprise because what often appears to be "dead" people voting usually involves something else — such as clerical errors — once officials investigate.

But in South Carolina, the issue is highly charged because the state is currently battling the Justice Department's decision to block implementation of its new voter ID law. The allegations of "dead" people voting have fueled arguments that photo ID is needed to stop fraud at the polls. The Justice Department argues that the law is unnecessary and would discriminate against African-American voters who are less likely to have the required photo ID.

In its review, the election commission found 106 cases of clerical errors by poll managers — such as marking that John Doe Sr. had voted when it was really John Doe Jr. There were another 56 cases of what the commission called "bad data matching." It said that the DMV used only a voter's Social Security number to match their names against death files, and that produced incorrect matches. The commission says there's no evidence that the voters are in fact dead.

The commission has turned its findings over to the state attorney general's office, which has been investigating the allegations of fraud. by [Pam Fessler](http://www.npr.org/blogs/itsallpolitics/2012/02/23/147295537/in-south-carolina-new-report-finds-no-evidence-of-dead-voters?ft=1&f=1014&sc=tw)
<http://www.npr.org/blogs/itsallpolitics/2012/02/23/147295537/in-south-carolina-new-report-finds-no-evidence-of-dead-voters?ft=1&f=1014&sc=tw>

Clemson City Council 1st and 3rd Monday, 7:30 pm.
 Seneca City Council 2nd Tuesday, 7:00 pm.
 Pickens County Council 1st and 3rd Monday, 7:00 pm.
 Oconee County Council 1st and 3rd Tuesday, 6:00 pm.

Anderson County Council 1st and 3rd Tuesday, 6:00 pm
 Pickens County School Board 4th Monday, 7:30 pm.
 Oconee County School Board 3rd Monday, 6:00 pm.
 Anderson Co. School Board 3rd Monday, 6:00 pm

Contribution Form

League of Women Voters of the Clemson Area LWVCA, P. O. Box 802, Clemson, SC 29633

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Amount Enclosed \$ _____ Phone (opt) _____

I wish my contribution to remain anonymous.

I wish my contribution to be tax deductible where allowed by law. My check is made out to the "*League of Women Voters Ed Fund*" which is a 501(c)(3) organization.

I wish to support the League's action priorities. My check is made out to the "League of Women Voters" and is not tax-deductible.

League of Women Voters of the Clemson Area

P. O. Box 802
 Clemson, SC 29633

[Recipient]

Address Line 1

Address Line 2

Address Line 3

Address Line 4