

Co-President's Message

Food for Thought

In our culture, it seems, *the squeaky wheel gets the grease*: the most vocal ones are the ones most likely to get attention. Another aphorism in our culture is *might makes right*: the ones who exercise the most power are more likely to win. We see this frequently in our political arenas. It might follow that if no complaints are heard, everything must be okay.

I like to keep the peace. And in my universe, silence is golden. But it looks like:

If we don't like the way things are,

If we are aching for change,

We're going to have to make some noise.

Here's a quote from 1903 by Cal Stewart's character, Josh Weatherby:

"I don't believe in kickin',

It aint apt to bring one peace;

But the wheel what squeaks the loudest

Is the one what gets the grease."

Peace.

Paula Appling



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THE VOTER

League of Women Voter Clemson Area
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UPCOMING CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tuesday, March 25	General Meeting, Health Care , Panel discussion of Affordable Care Act, OLLI, Social - 7:00 pm, Program - 7:30 pm
Thursday, March 27	Pickens County School Board Candidate's Forum, Liberty Seat , Liberty Middle School, Liberty, and 7:00 pm
Tuesday, April 15	General Meeting, Common Core Standards , OLLI, Social - 7:00 pm, Program - 7:30 pm
Saturday, April 26	LWVSC Council of Leaders , Columbia, 9:00 am - 3:30 pm

March General Meeting: "Panel Discussion of ACA"

On **Tuesday, March 25**, the League of Women Voters will host a panel discussion of **Implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA)**. The panel will discuss how the ACA is affecting various aspects of the delivery of health care, and will include an overview of the insurance policies available in our area.

Panelists are:

Reba Cartee, VP for Quality and Physician Collaboration at Oconee Medical Center will speak about the impact of the ACA on her hospital;

Peter Sparks, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Clemson Free Clinic will describe the role of the free clinic; and

Shirley Hanson, a federally Certified ACA Navigator will tell us about her experiences in helping people obtain health insurance.

The meeting will be held at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, 100 Thomas Green Blvd. (578 Issaqueena Trail) in Clemson. Social time, with refreshments begins at 7 p.m. and the program at 7:30 p.m.

The public is invited.

SUMMARY OF AGRICULTURAL POLICY CONSENSUS

By Sandra Gray

On February 18, 25 League members came to consensus with respect to contributing to an updated agriculture position at the national level. Holley Ulbrich presented information about agricultural economic health, Sandra Gray presented regarding animal management and research and development and Paula Appling covered the questions regarding food safety and labeling. In addition to these presenters, five others added comments in their respective areas of expertise. We extend many thanks to Mike Hammig, Ken Marsh, Ken Robinson, Ellie Taylor, and Cynthia Warner.

The meeting began with Holley presenting a short discussion on changes in the recently passed Farm Bill of 2014 that affect certain issues the League supports in its current position on agriculture policy. Funding to the Food Stamp program, now known as SNAP, was cut by 8 billion dollars, mostly targeted at elimination of fraud in the program. The new bill also ends \$5 billion a year direct payment of subsidies, which paid farmers whether or not they actually grew crops. Funding for crop insurance was increased to help farmers recover from crop losses. Continued support for sustainable agriculture and a new program to help cover training costs of new and young farmers was added. The bill authorizes spending of \$956 billion over the next ten years for the support of nutrition and agriculture.

After a brief description of issues related to each of the five main topics by Holley Ulbrich, Sandra Gray and Paula Appling, the floor was open to discussion and responses to the Agriculture Update Consensus Questions were recorded. Listed below are brief summaries of responses to the Consensus Questions by topic.

1 Economic Health of the Agricultural Sector

The League agreed it is important to maintain the production capacity of agriculture when needed. Items approved include government support to farmers with loans and disaster assistance, as well as support to develop alternative production methods like hydroponics, organic and rooftop gardening. Particularly strong support was voiced for local and regional markets as well as support of specialty crops. Support of crop, livestock and dairy commodity programs was rejected. Although the majority favored elimination of direct payments as now defined, if direct payments were continued, then means testing for direct payments to farm operators promoting sustainability should be used. The League supports direct payments to farm operators if the eligibility definition was broadened to cover different types of farms and crops. Farm insurance should be extended to other types of farms such as organic farms, and it should be linked to conservation practices. We were unsure how to define a "single farm operator", but if insurance subsidies are handed out to the operator, then a cap should be set. There was a consensus that antitrust laws concerning agriculture should be revised and enforced. Alternative marketing systems should be promoted. Don Plotnik told an interesting story about his service time in Japan, pointing out that the "new alternative method" using hydroponics was actually not so new and was employed in Japan in 1948 to feed servicemen!

2 Animal Management

We came to a consensus concerning the operation and management of concentrated animal feeding (CAFO) operations. They should be transparent with data collected on the operations including the monitoring of

CONSENSUS SUMMARY CONTINUED

the health of the animals, and the League would like to see more over-site and control of the excess use of these in animals. In reference to the "Right to Farm Act" where farmers are exempt from nuisance complaints by neighbors concerning their farming activities, the League concluded that is more of a home rule issue. The authority for land use management should go to local governments. The lack of ownership of animal waste and resulting contamination produced by some of the CAFOs is a problem, and it is important to treat the waste using environmentally sound technologies to prevent pollution problems.

3 Research and Development:

After a discussion of the properties of the new technology using nanoparticles, the group decided that funding and support of research and development was important across the board. This includes basic research as well as the importance of independent assessment of risk of new technology. Also important is support of new technologies that promote conservation on the farm and promote seed banking and preserve genetic diversity. The group felt transparency in the reporting of research studies was most important and not so important the intellectual property rights of private entities.

4 Food Safety

Paula led a discussion on the pros and cons of genetically modified foods (GMO) before proceeding to the specific questions. GMO crops were originally developed to decrease the need for herbicides but this has not been the case. Many other countries in the world prohibit the use of GMO products in foods and many others require labeling of food products with GMOs. Currently, 90% of the corn grown in the US is genetically modified. The importance of government funding and involvement with food safety was an issue that our League felt strongly about. We felt that testing and follow-up of any food developed using new technologies such as GMO or nanoparticles should be required. In particular, we wanted to limit the use of antibiotics in animals and chemicals like pesticides, herbicides and synthetic fertilizers. The League also supported adding additional personnel to help with compliance of these issues.

5 Food Labeling

Several questions were addressed concerning food labeling and whether the label was sufficient. We concluded labeling describing the nutritional parameters of the product were insufficient except for the common allergy labeling. Defining packaging terms and accurate listing of ingredients in our food is important but did not feel that the government needed to regulate the use of images of other sensory advertising used in marketing of a product. Although the definition of new technology was not clearly defined, there was a consensus that all foods, plant and animal, which contain or was developed using "new technology" should be labeled as having used that technology.

In summary, the LWVCA supported the elimination of most farm subsidies, but not the opportunities for farm credit and insurance. The League approves of programs that support the use of sustainable and environmental methods in agriculture. Transparency in all funding and research is important. The use of antibiotic, hormones and other chemicals in the growth of plants and animals is discouraged. Food safety is a priority. Current labeling of food products is generally insufficient and the League concluded that government should help define what is put on the labels, especially when new technology is involved.

LWV CANDIDATES' FORUM FOR SENECA CITY COUNCIL

Took Place on Monday, February 24th,
Gignilliat Civic Center, Seneca, SC



Joel Arnold, Ernest Riley



Stuart Pohl, Denise Rozman and Joel Ward



Andrea Alewine and Scott Durham

(Robert Holbrook is not pictured. He was
unable to attend the Forum)

RETHINKING OUR OBSERVER CORPS

The League **needs an active Observer Corps** at the local level in order to alert our members of pending actions of government in a timely manner.

Three situations come to mind: the use of the Kellett School property in Seneca, the approval of the Winkopp/Dukes structure in Clemson and the re-accreditation of Pickens County schools. Although the League has no positions that are directly applicable in the Seneca and Clemson situations, citizens of both cities would have benefitted from timely warning. The Seneca situation was satisfactorily resolved after citizen intervention. The outcome of the Clemson situation appears less promising. Pickens County schools have been “recommended or re-accreditation as long as they are able to show progress toward fixing the problems within the school board by April,” according to WSPA.com.

Our League needs designated people to take responsibility for monitoring and reporting the actions of important councils and boards. Reports need not be elaborate. A single sentence reporting that monitoring occurred would assure our membership that our citizens will not face untimely surprises.

Our Observer Corps began in the 1970s, before the Internet became a part of our culture. Personal attendance at meetings provides valuable insight into attitudes that do not appear in the minutes, but monitoring of minutes could provide awareness of developing situations. The creation of an E-server Corps for meetings that are geographically challenging to our membership would greatly enhance our ability to educate and inform our community.

Any volunteers?

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.

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