

President's Message



The speaker at our LWVCA Annual Meeting this year, Shawn Jadrnicek, lit a fire under me. Today I am plowing (no pun intended) through my first library book on permaculture. I read the words that described what I intuitively knew – that as a culture, we want our gardens to bend to our will. ... never mind that it would be far easier to observe Mother Nature in action and work within her guidelines. This rings true in other areas of our culture, does it not?

Many thanks to the folks that had a hand in the recent high school Voter Registration drives! The grand total is well over 600 for the year. Many more thanks too to you who have generously volunteered your time to the League directly over the course of this past year. You help make our communities stronger, healthier and more vibrant!

Yours in League,

Paula Appling

WELCOME NEW MEMBER

Edna Elfont retired in '97 and has been a resident of the upstate for 15 years. She studied cell physiology and now is a writer and a poet. She and her husband have three coffee table books, one how-to book and lots of magazine articles. She turned to the League to become informed about politics in our state. Welcome, Edna!

~Submitted by Paula Appling

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THE VOTER

League of Women Voter Clemson Area
 P. O. Box 802, Clemson, SC 29633
www.lwvclemsonarea.org

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UPCOMING CALENDAR OF EVENTS-2013-14

TUESDAY, AUG. 27, 2013	NEW MEMBER WELCOME/PROGRAM YEAR KICKOFF
TUESDAY, DEC 10, 2013	HOLIDAY PARTY
SATURDAY, FEB 15, 2014	WINE TASTING FUNDRAISER, Calhoun Bridge Auditorium
TUESDAY, MAY 6, 2014	LWVCA ANNUAL MEETING

Oconee Hot Topics

The Oconee County Hot Topics Luncheon was held at the Steakhouse Café in Walhalla on March 27th. The discussion guest was Mr. Scott Moulder, Oconee County Administrator. Among the topics discussed were: the status of the Oconee County High Speed Broadband initiative; Lake Keowee Relicensing and Promotion of Agriculture in Oconee County.

Mr. Moulder explained the broadband plan wherein Oconee County received several million dollars in a Federal Stimulus Grant. In this program, the County is installing “dark cable” and leasing bandwidth to Internet Service Providers (ISP’s). It then in the responsibility of the ISP to provide the “off ramps” and service directly to customers. All of the schools, County Offices, Fire stations and libraries are already utilizing this very high speed internet system. He noted that the first large ISP – Dukenet has signed a contract with the County.

There was a broad discussion of the status of the relicensing led by Ben Turetzky. The main issue in the relicensing is that there will be a change in the Lake Keowee water level in times of extreme droughts that will be lower than the current 794.6 feet (800 is full pond).

Another one of the current initiatives is to develop a more robust agricultural presence in Oconee County. This initiative includes a permanent home for the Heritage Fair and well as plans, which have now been outlined to the County Council, for a Farmer’s Market.

-Submitted by Reggie Turezky



LWVCA Annual Meeting Speaker: Shawn Jadrnicek

The Annual Meeting was held April 30, 2013 at Collins Ole Town in Central. Shawn Jadrnicek, manager of the Clemson University Student Organic Farm and sustainable permaculture designer, was the guest speaker and presented a talk on “Sustainable Landscaping.” Shawn told us that wherever he lives and works, he practices permaculture, which is the art and science of taking care of the earth and people in a sustainable, purposeful, and thoughtful manner. His permaculture landscape designs incorporate what is already there (sunlight, water, LAND) with a goal (for example, using chicken waste to fertilize garden areas) in a way that uses his time and energies efficiently. He works *smarter*, not harder. Permaculture can also be practiced on a smaller scale as on one’s porch or in a city landscape. Shawn suggested *Permaculture: A Designers’ Manual* by Bill Mollison as a reference to learn more.



-Submitted by Sandra Gray

SPIRIT of DEMOCRACY AWARD

For

Leadership in the League of Women Voters:

- Charter Member LWVCA
- Webmaster for LWVCA
- State & Local League Board Member
- Pioneer Study in Voting Technology in South Carolina
- Photographer for LWVCA & LWVSC

Professional Leadership:

- Clemson University Faculty Senate, Two Terms
- Chairperson, Faculty Senate Policies Committee
- Developer of BA program in Computer Science
- Faculty Advisor for BA Students in Computer Science
- Faculty Advisor for Young Democrats Club

Advocacy Leadership:

- Integrity in Voting System
- Environmental Protection
- Improvement in Education
- Citizen Participation in Government

Presented to

Eleanor Hare

By the League of Women Voters of the Clemson Area

April 30, 2013



REPORT ON APRIL MEETING: ACT 388



The April 9th general meeting focused on funding pre-12 education and the impact of Act 388 on how funds are distributed to school districts. This program drew in large degree on a report on Act 388 that is available on the Strom Thurmond Institute web site, looking at how state aid to individual school districts changed between 2006 (the year Act 388 passed) and 2010.

Two of the most important factors in how much state aid a district gets are Act 388 and the Education Finance Act. Act 388 raised the state sales tax from 5% to 6% and dedicated the extra penny to property tax relief for owner-occupied homes. This tax relief was in addition to the existing relief for the elderly and disabled and the relief enacted in 1995 for the first \$100,000 of market value. Now all the value of the home was exempt from taxes for school operations, with the state reimbursing school districts for the lost revenue (more or less, but we'll skip that part of the story for now).

Since higher valued homes are concentrated in richer school districts, most of the Act 388 money went to richer districts, although there was some limited special aid for some poorer districts.

The extra penny didn't fully fund the state's commitment to property tax relief under Act 388, so they had to tap the General Fund for the rest. As the Great Recession took hold, budgets were very tight and legislators cut the base student cost in the Education Finance Act (EFA) formula. EFA favors poor districts with low tax bases, so they were cut more than wealthier districts. So the double whammy of Act 388 and EFA cuts meant a huge reshuffling of state aid, mostly in favor of richer districts. The districts who gained the most state funding were McCormick, which benefited from the limited special aid, and Beaufort, which has a lot of high-value homes and wasn't getting anything from EFA anyway. McCormick had more than \$2700 per pupil in greater state aid in 2010 compared to 2006, and Beaufort gained \$2183 per pupil. The two districts that lost the most per pupil were two small, poor districts, Florence 4 (down \$1497 per pupil) and Dillon 1 (down \$722).

Another important effect of Act 388 is shifting the tax burden to rental and commercial property. The difference in taxes between owner-occupied and rental or second home property, already high, has become astronomical, with rental and second home property paying more than triple the tax of a comparable owner-occupied property. This difference has resulted in a lot of conversions of second homes and rental property to owner-occupied, which has also affected property tax revenue for cities and counties.

Chances of repealing Act 388 are nil, even though many legislators have been critical of its effects on the budget and on distribution of state funds to schools. It is possible to tweak the funds set aside for poor districts to distribute them more fairly. It is possible to generate more funds for everyone by broadening the base of the sales tax to include services and, with help from Congress, internet sales. And education funding might be less vulnerable if our legislators would strengthen our rainy day funds against future downturns.

~Submitted by Holley Ulbrich

YOUTH VOTER REGISTRATION PROJECT

WHAT FUN WE HAD REGISTERING 313 STUDENTS AT THREE OF OUR LOCAL HIGH SCHOOLS. LINDA GAHAN, ELINOR BARON AND I WENT TO DANIEL, SENECA, AND WEST-OAK TO MEET WITH SOON-TO-BE 18 YEAR OLDS. THEY SEEMED EAGER TO PARTICIPATE IN OUR LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS' REGISTRATION PROCESS.

SOME EVEN GOT EXTRA CREDIT FOR DOING THIS BEFORE WE GOT THERE. JUST THINK OF THE POSTAGE AND/OR TRAVEL TIME AND EXPENSE WE SAVED THE PARENTS. HOWEVER, THE BEST PART WAS WATCHING THE STUDENTS' EYES LIGHT UP AND LISTEN TO THEIR (MOSTLY) INTELLIGENT QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROCESS. TO ME THIS IS WHAT THE LWV IS ALL ABOUT! IF WE CAN GET THEM STARTED EARLY AND DO IT WITH ENTHUSIASM, WE HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE. CONSIDER HELPING WITH THIS WORTHY PROJECT WHEN WE ORGANIZE IT NEXT JANUARY. *~Submitted by Cheryl Myers Lee*

Advocacy-Sales Tax on Internet Purchases

Project Vote Investigation

Be prepared! That's the Boy Scout motto, but it also works for being ready to act when the opportunity arises. We notify members by email when there is pending legislation and legislators need to hear from you, but there are also ongoing issues that we need to know about and address when the opportunity arises, whether it is because of pending legislation or just because you happen to be talking to an elected official. So your Program and Action Team is bringing you one of each: a pending bill at the national level, and an ongoing issue at the state level.

The national issue is authorizing states to require internet and catalog sellers to collect sales tax and send it to the state of destination, which is actually what state law requires but which states have been unable to enforce due to legal obstacles. A 1993 Supreme Court decision removed one obstacle, saying that Congress could permit the states to compel internet retailers to collect the tax on their behalf, but Congress has not acted for 20 years. And then, presto, the Senate passed the bill with a large majority. Now it is up to the House, where it will be harder.

Here is the essence of what I said to Rep. Duncan:

"I am writing in support of legislation lifting the ban on collecting sales or use tax on Internet purchases that is presently preventing states from collecting a tax that has been in place in most states for as long as they have had a statewide sales tax. This is NOT a tax increase. It is an aid to states in enforcement and collection of an existing tax. Sales tax on purchases is passed forward to the buyer to support public services in his or her state of residence, but as a matter of practicality and convenience, it is collected by the seller and remitted to the state. This practice is easy with in-state sellers, but difficult with out-of-state vendors. As a result of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in the *Quill* case twenty years ago, Congress has the power to authorize states to collect this tax but to date has failed to do so.

This tax is unfair to our in-state sellers, who compete with Internet sellers but are handicapped by having to collect the tax. Our Main Street and mall merchants are important parts of our local communities who create jobs and support civic and charitable groups and provide spaces for people to gather and build community, as well as paying property and income taxes. We should not be discriminating in favor of out-of-state sellers at the expense of our own.

Some Internet sellers argue that the cost of compliance is too high, with sales taxes in 45 states and the District of Columbia. The legislation requires \$1 million in sales in order to be required to collect. Because some internet and catalog sellers have a physical presence in most or all states, they already collect the tax. Software has been available since the early 1980s to assist them in that effort. The exemption of local taxes, or local taxes that are not uniform statewide, would also make it easier to comply with the tax."

Please try to contact Representative Duncan and add your voice in your own words.

~Submitted Holley Ulbrich

Our League joined other leagues studying implementation of the **National Voter Registration Act (NVRA)** at social assistance agencies in our three-county area. The NVRA requires that an opportunity to register to vote be provided to clients when they apply, reapply or have other contact with these agencies. Project Vote provided funding to cover copying expenses and mileage to investigate compliance. Led by Ellen Magee, Frances Plotnik and Eleanor Hare participated in this project.

In the 20 years since passage of the NVRA, the application process has migrated from paper-and-pencil to computers. Instead of applying in person, many clients apply by Internet, by mail or by phone and rarely enter the waiting rooms of the Department of Social Services (DSS) or the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Only the county health departments had clients in their waiting rooms, so we found very few clients to interview.

Application documents that we saw did not ask if the client wished to register to vote, but we were not able to see the documents on the computers. Personnel in the offices assured us that all clients were asked if they wanted to register to vote in their initial interview, but not in reapplication.

At most offices we found a rather unenthusiastic attitude toward encouraging voter registration. Voter registration forms were displayed in a rack on the wall in several offices, but only the Pickens County Health Department displayed the forms provided by the State Elections Commission. (The state forms give the addresses to which the form should be returned.) The DSS office in Pickens County displayed photocopies of the state form with the return address typed on the form. In all other offices, if the photocopied form was available, it did not have any indication of where it should be returned.

Posters advertising voter registration might have been helpful, but we found only one – in a hidden alcove where no clients would see it.

Receptionists did not usually take applications from clients and only once were we able to speak to a person who did intake interviews. The personnel we talked to tried to be helpful, but they seemed to be unaware that the NVRA required them to be more proactive in registering voters.

~Submitted Ellen Magee & Eleanor

LWVSC CONVENTION IN PICTURES



Kelly McFarland Stratman, LWVUS Field Support Director, presents workshop on *The Three-Legged Stool: Engaging Members and Developing Leaders*.



Panel Discussion on Ethics Reform: SC Senator Robert Hayes, Jr., SC Rep. Bill Taylor and Henry LeMaster, Co-chair Governor's Commission on Ethics Reform. "Keep pushing us to pass this legislation."



Dr. Paul DeMarco & Sue Berkowitz present *Health Care Access for All in SC*. ACA will eventually have to address medical costs.



Newly elected LWVSC State Co-Presidents JoAnne Day & Susan Richards;; VP Community Relations Barbara Zia



Linda Bilancone & Alice Henderson present *Women in SC History and Politics – The Grimke Sisters* at Sunday luncheon

Ellouise Schoettler, storyteller presented *Pushing Boundaries* (A 1960's housewife morphs into ERA Activist) at Saturday night's banquet



Convention Delegates

ADVOCACY: ETHICS LEGISLATION

HOME RULE ISSUES

H.3945 MEETS CROSS OVER DEADLINE: WE NEED ACTION IN THE SENATE

H.3945 PASSED THE HOUSE

Call to Action: Tell your Senator to:

The bill will be heard in a subcommittee chaired by Sen. Luke Rankin on Tuesday, May 7 at 3:00 PM. Sen. Rankin’s subcommittee includes senators Hutto, Malloy, Campsen, and Massey. Contact your Senator and ask them to:

“Support H.3945 with amendments that restore independent oversight; ensure transparent enforcement; guarantee free speech of complaints; and require full income disclosure, including that of elected officials, their immediate families, and businesses with which they are associated.”

WE NEED YOU! Please contact the following Senate Judiciary members (SENATOR LARRY MARTIN) and ask them to amend H.3945 to:

- Restore and expand independent oversight of the General Assembly through the Ethics Commission;
- Ensure transparency in the enforcement process by making all decisions, including rejected complaints, public after consideration of probable cause;
- End limits on the constitutionally guaranteed free speech of complainants;
- Require reporting of income of officials’ immediate families; and
- Require reporting of income of businesses with which officials are associated.

~Barbara Zia LWVSC Co-President

Issues surrounding powers of appointment arise from time to time, primarily for counties. If a board or commission is created by an ordinance of county council, the county council makes the appointments. If the General Assembly creates the board or commission, most commonly the governor upon the recommendation of the county delegation makes those appointments. Election Commissions are one example of this process.

There is a secondary issue of powers of appointment at the state level that has to do with representation. Some state boards and commissions are appointed with a representative from each of the 16 judicial circuits, again on recommendation of the county delegations in that circuit. Judicial circuits are very unequal in size, so that representation on those boards does not reflect the populations of the areas represented.

What can we do? Urge county councils and county delegations to publicize upcoming appointments so that we can offer candidates. Beyond that, we can also urge legislators to delegate some of those appointments to county boards and commissions to county councils. Finally, we need to object to the practice of appointing by judicial circuits. Talk to your legislator about these issues and let’s see if we can get some movement going.

~Submitted by Holley Ulbrich (State Convention Caucus)

EVERY MEMBER CANVAS – WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR THE LWVCA IN 2013-2014*

CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:

1. Serve on a committee/team:
 - Program and Action
 - Voter Service & Communications
 - Finance & Fundraising
 - Membership & Hospitality
2. Help with a special event:
 - Welcome New Members
 - Holiday Party
 - Wine Tasting Fundraiser
 - Annual Meeting
3. Work on a program for a general meeting or program planning in January
4. Help with hospitality and set-up at a general meeting
5. Register high school students in the spring
6. Help with Voter Registration in the fall
7. Assist in Candidates Forums
8. Join the Observer Corps, attend a public meeting and write a report for the VOTER

9. Attend a state/national meeting:
 - League Leaders’ Day
 - State Council or State Convention
 - National Convention
10. Advocate for a league issue by writing letters or making phone calls to legislators
11. Telephone several league members about upcoming meetings and possibly carpooling
12. Organize a lunch group of fellow leaguers to get to know each other
13. I cannot participate this year but will pay my dues
14. Help with THE VOTER.

NAME _____

DATE _____

***PLEASE FILL OUT AND SEND TO PAULA OR SANDRA.**

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