



THE VOTER

NOVEMBER 2013 Vol. 40, No 8

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of the Clemson Area

Co-President's Message

Someone once told me that planting an orchard from seedlings is an unselfish act. It takes many years for some trees to mature and produce the bountiful crops of fruit we desire. Our descendents will be the ones to reap those fruits of our labor. This is also how I view the efforts we are now making toward saving our water, land and air from the pollution of living in an industrialized world. The steps we take now to cultivate a clean environment will be enjoyed by our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.



We were asked last month by our guest speaker, Jan Hammett, what will we do "when the rivers run dry"? Our earth is covered by water, at least 70% of earth's surface. How is it, we might ask, that our rivers could run dry. Out of all that water only 3% is fresh water and over two thirds of this is tied up in polar ice caps and glaciers. Fresh water lakes and rivers make up only 0.009% of water on Earth, and ground water makes up 0.28%, so there is a real possibility that our rivers could run dry of fresh, potable water suitable for consumption.

We are blessed here in the Upstate to be surrounded by lakes and rivers that are relatively clean. However, there are over 1 billion people on earth who do not have access to clean water. We, personally and as a League, can be diligent in preventing water pollution so our descendents have the opportunity to enjoy clean, drinkable water as we have. Personally, we can control what is put down our own drains for disposal or in our trash, realizing that chemical and pharmaceutical contaminates thrown away improperly may eventually end up in our water sources. Chemical contaminating runoff from our property can be controlled by using eco-friendly building materials and finding substitutes for the harmful pesticides, herbicides and chemical fertilizers we use in the yard. As a League, we can support legislation that strengthens bills like the Clean Water Act and oppose projects that could potentially contaminate our groundwater. Participating in community projects such as the DEA Drug Take Back, Hazardous Chemical Pick-up Days, and the Clemson Area Lawn Mower Exchange Day are all little steps we can take to preserve our lakes and rivers from environmental insult.

Many thanks to all of you who work so hard "planting" the seeds now for a cleaner environment; your great-grandchildren will thank you later!

Yours in League,

Sandra

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Co-President's Message	1
Upcoming Calendar of Events	2
November General Meeting	2
OLLI-Our New Meeting Place	2
Obtaining Insurance - ACA	3
Discussion of PC School Board Membership	3
October Meeting Recap	4
Legislative Panel in September	4
Pickens County Election	
Commission Provides Photo ID	5
Holiday Party	5
Candidates' Forum in Central	5
Observer Corps Schedule	6
Contribution Form	6

THE VOTER

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UPCOMING CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tuesday, November 5	Municipal Elections , 7:00 am – 7:00 pm
Tuesday, November 12	LWVCA Board Meeting , Clemson Community Room, 5:30 pm
Tuesday, November 19	General Meeting, Voting Technology , Juan Gilbert, OLLI, 7:00 pm
Tuesday, December 10	Holiday Party , OLLI, 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

NOVEMBER General Meeting: “Voting Technology”

Dr. Juan Gilbert, Chair of the Division of Human-Centered Computing at Clemson University, will present basics of the PRIME III voting system to our November 19 general meeting, 7 p.m., at the OLLI building¹.

The Prime III uses tablet computers and portable printers to make voting accessible to people with and without disabilities, all using the same equipment. The exceptional accessibility of the Prime III allows wheelchair users, blind users and those with many other disabilities to vote privately and independently.

Because tablet computers and portable printers are used instead of special-purpose hardware supplied by a manufacturer, the initial cost of the Prime III is considerably less than for manufacturer-supplied systems¹. Additional cost saving occurs because there is no annual software fee to a manufacturer.

The software for the Prime III is “open-source,” which means that the source code is available for anyone to study. (The LWV position includes a requirement that voting software be open-source.)

Dr. Gilbert is the recipient of a large number of honors and awards¹, none of which are listed on his web site. Some are:

- Fellow, American Association for the Advancement of Science, 2010-present.
- Named one of Ten Tech Innovators by the Chronicle of Higher Education, 2013.
- Federal Communication Commission (FCC) Chairman’s Award for Advancement in Accessibility, 2012.
- Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring, National Science Foundation, 2013.

Continued on page 2

OLLI BUILDING OUR NEW MEETING PLACE

In changing our meeting night from 2nd Tuesday to 3rd Tuesday this year, the Clemson-Central Library was no longer available, so we have relocated to the OLLI building at Patrick Square. OLLI is a lifelong learning program for older adults affiliated with Clemson University, and it is an outstanding facility for our meetings. In addition to the auditorium and full-service kitchen, there is ample parking behind the building. OLLI is always happy to host community groups consistent with their educational mission, and the League certainly fits that description. Do check out OLLI programs and activities while you are in the building, and a big thank you both to the Library for past hosting and OLLI for providing our new home.



OBTAINING HEALTH INSURANCE THROUGH THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

For people who do not get their health insurance through their employer, through Medicare or Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act provides a mechanism for purchasing regulated insurance policies through a state exchange or marketplace and, if appropriate, obtaining subsidies. It was intended that nearly all information and enrollment in South Carolina would take place through healthcare.gov. That site is experiencing some difficulties and other approaches might prove useful.

A good starting point is valuepenguin.com/ppaca/exchanges/sc. Here you can get a listing of policies available on the exchange and the premium costs including subsidies. If your income is too high to receive a subsidy it might be worthwhile checking policies available outside the exchange. If your income is too low to receive a subsidy it will indicate that you may be eligible for Medicaid. In which case you should contact the South Carolina Benefit Bank (tbbsc.org) to check your eligibility. Since South Carolina chose to reject federal funding and not expand Medicaid, it is possible that you might find yourself in the "coverage gap" because you are ineligible for the existing Medicaid program and earn too little to obtain a subsidy through the exchange. If this is the case you might be able to get free or subsidized treatment at the free clinics in Anderson (864-261-4542), Clemson (864-654-8277), Easley (864-855-0853), and Seneca (864-882-4664), at the Heritage Essential Medical Services in Clemson (864-722-0283) and Mountain Lakes Access Health in Seneca (864-885-7344).

If you choose to purchase insurance offered through the exchange you will find that there are only three companies offering policies for residents in Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens counties. They are Blue Cross and Blue Shield (Southcarolinablues.com), its subsidiary company Blue Choice (Bluechoicesc.com), and a non-profit coop, set up by the Affordable Car Act, Consumers' Choice (cchpsc.org). You can purchase policies and, if appropriate, get subsidies through healthcare.gov, directly from the individual companies or from independent agents and brokers, provided that they are certified by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the federal agency overseeing the implementation of the Affordable Care Act. Policies purchased before December 15, 2013 will become effective on January 1, 2014. Enrollment is scheduled to end on March 31, 2014.

Written by Peter Sparks and submitted by Eleanor Hare

DISCUSSION OF PICKENS COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Several years ago the League adopted a position in favor of restoring three at-large members to the six-member Pickens County School Board. When two bills (H4165 and H4258) were filed in the legislature, both of which would add an at-large member to the School Board, the League began circulating a petition in support of both bills.

Support for increasing the number of members of the school board had been heard at our candidate forum in October of 2012. All three candidates for school board said that having six members was not working well. All supported having an odd number of members.

When Senator Larry Martin, Rep. B. R. Skelton, Rep. Phillip Owens and Rep. David Hiott of the Pickens County Delegation met to hear public input concerning the composition of the School Board on October 22, Sandra Gray, Laura Goldstein and Eleanor Hare made statements for the League. Don Plotnik also spoke in favor of having an odd number of members on the School Board, but did not identify himself as a League member. Ron Goldstein, Frances Plotnik, Charlotte Holmes and Paul Holmes were present to support the League.

Members of the Pickens County Taxpayers Association, the Republican Party and the Tea Party said that no changes were needed. Several spoke about money spent on the new high schools and seemed to equate increasing the size of the school board with increasing spending on schools.

School Board Trustee, Jim Shelton, said that Act 388 negates anything the school board can do.

People from Easley were concerned that the school board membership does not represent their needs, especially with respect to Gettys Middle School. Several stated that Gettys was on the list to receive funding, but the money ran out before finishing the list. One man said, "If it ain't fixed, break it. We wouldn't be here tonight if it was functioning properly." Several stated that they wanted school board districts to more closely represent high school attendance areas.

A representative of the NAACP also supported adding an at-large member.

Addition of an at-large member would not incur additional cost. Increasing the number of single-member districts to seven would cost approximately \$36,000 to send out new voter registration cards to all voters. Because the current six single-member school board districts are the same as the six single-member county council districts, creating seven single-member school board districts would also increase the number of ballot styles in a General Election from 34 to 40.

Senator Martin announced that the delegation would carefully consider all that was presented and would reach a decision by January when the Legislature reconvenes.

Submitted by Eleanor Hare

OCTOBER MEETING RECAP: WHEN THE RIVERS RUN

Jan Hammett, member of the Spartanburg League of Women Voters and currently the elected Commissioner for the Spartanburg Water and Soil Commission, presented a very interesting program at the October 15 meeting entitled "When Rivers Run Dry." Her lecture spanned several areas of interest to the League including climate change, safe water, pollution, recycling and water shortages. She explained how all these factions go hand in hand to preserve our safe drinking water for the future. This is an urgent issue. The United Nations Assembly voted in 2010 that access to clean water and sanitation for all people of the world should be a fundamental human right for all people. Yet, Jan reported, an estimated 900 million people lack access to safe drinking water. Studies indicate about 2000 children **a day** die because of unsafe drinking water. Unsafe water can result from manmade pollution found from our aquifers to our oceans. Close to home, it was recently reported that the Savannah River bordering SC and Georgia is the 4th most polluted river in the US.



Jan told us that there is no "away" for our waste. We need to learn to recycle or reuse our used resources, or it ends up polluting our environment, resulting in less drinkable water for all. There is no "dilution and hope it goes away" anymore.

Accidental contamination of our environment from petrochemical and other industrial chemicals must be prevented, Jan said. She took an active role in supporting the National LWV position to prevent construction of the Keystone pipeline across important aquifers in our Congressmen Midwest. Her active protests in Washington DC resulted in her arrest but brought home the message to our about the importance of protecting our waters from possible contamination as a result of an accident or spill.

World population is increasing, she reported, with 10.5 billion expected by 2050. Currently, only 3% of the earth's water is fresh and only 1% suitable for drinking. With population growth increasing each year, we must work locally and internationally to protect that 1% of our water that is drinkable. She asked the question, "When people run out of fresh water, will fresh water remain a basic human right or will industry consider it a commodity?" Generally, populations migrate to where there is fresh water, so where will they go when the rivers all run dry?

She left us with an African proverb, "when you pray, move your feet," challenging us to be active in our fight to preserve clean water for our nation and the world. *~Submitted by Sandra Gray*

Legislative Panel at September Meeting



Our first meeting of the 2013-14 year was well attended and lively as three local legislators commented on issues before the General Assembly. Moderator Janie Shipley led Senators Martin and Alexander and Representative B.R. Skelton through a series of League and audience concerns ranging from common core standards and spending last year's \$68 million surplus to gas taxes, infrastructure, solar power and school vouchers. A full house of about 50 people were present at our new meeting site at Patrick Square.

~Submitted by Eleanor Hare

Pickens County Elections Commission Provides Photo IDs

The Pickens County Elections Commission brought their photo equipment to Voter Registration Drives at the Easley, Liberty, Pickens and Central-Clemson libraries in early October. Rodney Allen, Executive Director of the Pickens County Elections Commission, reported that the project went very well. The goal of this project was to help citizens obtain the necessary photo identification to prepare for the November 5, 2013 municipal elections in Central, Easley, Liberty, Norris, and Pickens.

This Voter Registration Drive produced 2 new registrations and 58 citizens who were already registered received photo IDs. Many of the persons receiving ID cards also changed their address information and other information.

The League of Women Voters commends the Pickens County Elections Commission for their efforts to insure that our citizens are registered and have photo IDs.

~Submitted Eleanor Hare

HOLIDAY PARTY

DECEMBER 10, 7:00 - 9:00 pm

OLLI BUILDING

Please bring an hors d'oeuvre to share or a bottle of wine. Come with husbands & friends to experience fellowship, eat holiday treats and have fun.

November General Meeting, *continued*

¹ See Calendar for address:
<http://clemsonarea.sc.lwvnet.org/calendar.html>

¹ p 6, <http://clemsonarea.sc.lwvnet.org/files/AugVotr2013.pdf>

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juan_E._Gilbert

~Submitted by Eleanor Hare

Candidates' Forum in Central

On Tuesday, October 29, the League held a Candidate Forum for Central Town Council at the Central Town Hall. Three of the four candidates, Paige Bowers, Benji Cumbie and Ken Dill, participated. A fourth candidate, although invited several times by mail, email and phone, neither replied nor attended.

The candidates who attended are all currently serving on Town Council. Mr. Cumbie and Mr. Dill spoke of accomplishments in the recreation program, especially the disc golf course¹, which opened in May of 2012.

All cited improvements to water, sewer and electricity. The water tower received a major upgrade. In the past, when the water level dropped below a certain level, someone had to climb the tower to change settings. The tower has been renovated and a computer installed that automatically adjusts the water in the tank.

The candidates all said that the fire station needs to be replaced because it is too small for new trucks and the exit is difficult to manipulate. The space currently occupied by the fire station could be better used for other purposes.

The candidates all spoke of the importance of the town being friendly for families.

League members participating were Paula Appling, Sandra Gray, Eleanor Hare, Mary Ann McKenzie, Don Plotnik, Frances Plotnik, Arlene Stewart, Holley Ulbrich and Carol Ward.

¹ <http://cityofcentral.org/parks-rec/>

~Submitted Eleanor Hare



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