



THE VOTER

October 2011 Vol 38, No 10

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of the Clemson Area

President's Message



Our 2011-12 year is off to a good start. Action is our number one priority, and Action Friday is the main tool. We have had four very different Action Fridays that have resulted in advocacy and action in many formats, from consulting with our County Council representative on redistricting to asking the right questions of our legislators to letter writing and OpEds. We invite any of you who have an issue you are concerned about (preferably but not necessarily one that corresponds to some part of the League agenda) to bring the issue and the facts to Action Friday and we will offer advice and support on getting the word out in front of our Leaguers and citizens in general. Every Friday from now till November 18th, resuming in January after a holiday break. Just go through the line at Western Sizzlin and find us in the room past the salad bar. Numbers have ranged from three to eleven, and the discussion is always lively.

We met in our new location at the Clemson Central Library Community Room for the lively and well-attended session with legislators Larry Martin, B.R. Skelton, and Thomas Alexander on September 13th. The space is excellent, the chairs are comfortable (and we don't have to set them up and put them away), and the kitchen is small but adequate. Our thanks goes to the library for making this space available. They also have the old and proposed new Pickens County Council/School Board Districts posted if you want to check them out.

Dues are due to our Treasurer, Bill Hare. You can mail them to us at LWVCA, PO Box 802, Clemson SC 29633: \$60 for one member, \$30 for a second member of the same household. But we don't just want your money, we want your involvement! Whether it's attending a meeting, serving on a committee, participating in a study (we have at least two, maybe three), bringing refreshments for a meeting, or responding to some specific volunteer needs, we need YOU. One particular need right now is someone to work with Carol Kozma on preparing the annual update of the Recreation Flyer, which Carol has done for many years. It's not difficult, but we need to give Carol a break and she will be happy to teach someone new how to do it!

Together, we can make a difference!

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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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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Monday, OCT 3 **Public Hearing on Pickens County Redistricting Plan**, Pickens County Administration Facility, 222 McDaniel Ave, Pickens, 6:30 pm
- Monday, OCT 4 *“The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education”*, Diane Ravitch, Furman U, 7:00 pm
- Tuesday, OCT 4 **LWVCA BOARD MEETING**, Clemson City Community Meeting Room, 5:00 – 6:00 pm.
- Friday, OCT 7 **ACTION FRIDAY LUNCHEON**, Western Sizzlin, Clemson, noon
- Tuesday, OCT 11 **“WELL BEING OF SOUTH CAROLINA’S CHILDREN”**, Presented by Robin Kimbrough-Melton, Central-Clemson Library, 7:00 – 9:00 pm.
- Fri, OCT 14, 21, 28 **ACTION FRIDAY LUNCHEON**, Western Sizzlin, Clemson, noon
- Tuesday, OCT 25 **CENTRAL CANDIDATES FORUM**, Central City Hall, 7:00 pm.
- Thursday, OCT 27 **SIX MILE CANDIDATES FORUM**, Six Mile Town Hall Community Room, 7:00 pm

OCTOBER GENERAL MEETING

“WELL BEING OF SOUTH CAROLINA’S CHILDREN”

What do the numbers really tell us about the well being of South Carolina’s children? Kids Count is out and once again, South Carolina ranks near the bottom of states on indicators of well being for children and youth. Why does it matter to our state that children do well? What don’t the numbers tell us about children and how they’re doing? What do you need to know to be an effective advocate for children in South Carolina? These questions will be addressed at the LWVCA’s October General Meeting on October 11 at the Central/Clemson Library. Social hour begins at 7:00 pm with the program commencing at 7:30 pm.

~Submitted by Robin Kimbrough-Melton, Research Professor at the Institute on Family and Neighborhood at Clemson University

ACTION FRIDAYS

Please mark your calendar and plan to come to an Action Friday either to share an issue of concern or to learn about issues and opportunities for action. In four short weeks we have talked about redistricting, helped Eleanor Hare write an op-ed, finalized questions for our September meeting with our legislators, took action on comprehensive sex education, lobbied our Department of Transportation Commissioner on I-73, wrote letters to the editor on drug testing for the unemployed and I-73 and the gas tax, and had a discussion about protecting funding for the mentally ill in Congress. And that’s just the first four weeks! Congress is still in session, so there will be lots of opportunities to advocate there, and the off-season is also a good time to talk to legislators while they are home (or in Columbia crafting next year’s legislation). After each Action Friday you may get an email from me with the details on action we are taking that you can be a part of, but it’s better to be there where you can ask questions or offer advice and information. Western Sizzlin, Fridays at noon until Thanksgiving.

~Submitted by Holley Ulbrich

Glancing To November: Role of Federal Gov't in Public Education

Get Ready! Consensus Meeting in November

In November's General Meeting, "The Role of the Federal Government in Public Education", we will attempt to come to consensus on 15 questions covering funding and equity, common core standards, and a few general questions. Remember that consensus is neither a simple majority nor unanimity, but an overall sense of the group. Consensus results from answers to questions on which members can find common ground.

Because there is so much information to cover in a relatively short amount of time, it would be helpful to acquaint yourself with the questions and other information collected on the LWV US website: www.lwv.org. →Click on heading For Members and scroll down to select Projects & Programs. To the left of the page on League Projects and Programs, select Public Education that is under the heading Projects and Programs. Several articles in this month's VOTER will get you started.

Where Have We Been?

From the very beginning of our Republic, a well-educated citizenry was thought to be essential to protect liberty and the general welfare of the people. Even before the Constitution was established, the Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 included responsibilities of the nation for an education system. Education has long been considered a national concern by the federal government. Through federal action, education has been encouraged and financially supported from the first Northwest Ordinance in 1785 to the present. Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution granted Congress the power to lay and collect taxes to provide for the general welfare of the United States. It is under this "general welfare" clause that the federal government has assumed the power to initiate educational activity in its own right and to participate jointly with states, agencies and individuals in educational activities.

During the first century of our new nation, Congress granted more than 77 million acres of the public domain as an endowment for the support of public schools through tracts ceded to the states. In 1841, Congress passed an act that granted 500,000 acres to eight states and later increased land grants to a total of 19 states. The federal government also granted money, such as distributions of surplus federal revenue and reimbursements for war expenses, to states. Though Congress rarely prescribed that such funds be used

only for schools, education continued to be one of the largest expenses of state and local governments so the states used federal funds whenever possible for education.

Two of our constitutional amendments played an important role in public education. In 1791, the 10th Amendment stated, "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." Public education was not mentioned as one of those federal powers, and so historically has been delegated to the local and state governments.

In 1868, the 14th Amendment guaranteed rights to all citizens by stating, "all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens in the United States and of the state wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the law."

Included below is a brief historical overview of federal involvement in public education.

History of the Role of the Federal Government in Public Education: Timeline

Event	Date	Explanation
Land Ordinance & Northwest Ordinance	1785/1787	Requirement of a system of public education to be established in each township formed under a specified formula. Regulated monies raised via taxes and selling or renting land.
Land Grants	1841/1848	Congress granted 77+ million acres of land in the public domain as endowments for support of schools. Federal government also granted surplus money to states for public education.

Early philosophy – first six presidents		Discussion of a national university and urging of federal involvement in public education. Seen as critical to preparation for citizenship in a republican form of government.
First Morrill Act otherwise known as the Land Grant Act	1862	Donated public lands to states to be used for the endowment to support and maintain at least one college with specific purpose of teaching branches of agriculture, mechanic arts and industrial education.
The original Department (Office) of Education established	1867	Began to collect data – information on schools and teaching that would help states establish effective school systems.
Second Morrill Act	1890	Gave the Office of Education responsibility for administering support for the original system of land-grant colleges.
Smith-Hughes Act	1917	Promoted vocational schools
Lanham Act	1941	Eased the burden on communities affected by presence of military and federal installations: payments to school districts.
Impact Aid laws	1950	
GI Bill	1944	Provided post secondary education assistance to GIs returning from World War II
George-Barden Act	1946	Provided funding for agricultural, industrial and home economics training for high school students
National Defense Education Act	1958	In response to Soviet Sputnik. NDEA included support for loans to college students in science, mathematics and foreign languages.
Elementary and Secondary Education Act	1965	Established comprehensive set of programs including Title I of federal aid to disadvantaged.
Title IX	1972	Prohibited discrimination in education based on gender.
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act	1973	Prohibited discrimination based on disability.
Department of Education cabinet level agency	1980	Recognized the important role of public education in our country.
Educational Testing Service (ETS) and NAEP	1983	Federal government transferred responsibility for administering the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to ETS: the nation's report card.
Nation at Risk	1983	Report indicating that the USA was falling behind in education achievement.
President G.H. Bush	1989-1992	“Indian Education Bill of Rights” K-12 Drug awareness model Advisory committee on Hispanic education America 2000 education reform program Work began on national standards
President W. Clinton	1993-1999	Academics 2000 offered grant to states / local school districts for innovation. Teach for America.
President G.W. Bush	2001-2008	Reauthorization of ESEA –No Child Left Behind.
President Barack Obama	2009 -	President Obama's Blueprint for Reform – Reauthorization of ESEA. Race to the Top: Grants awarded to states with innovative ideas that accepted the Common Core Standards.

The Role of Federal Government in Public Education: Common Core Standards

Students who move from one part of the United States to another during their K-12 school careers are likely to encounter substantial variations in requirements for graduation. The Common Core Standards Initiative (CCSI, 2010) stated: "We need standards to ensure that all students, no matter where they live, are prepared for success in postsecondary education and the workforce. Common standards will help ensure that students are receiving a high quality education consistently, from school to school and state to state. Common standards will provide a greater opportunity to share experiences and best practices within and across states that will improve our ability to best serve the needs of students."

Currently, standards for student performance vary widely by state. The roots of current state-to-state inconsistencies lie in the fact that public education in the United States has traditionally been a local responsibility. However, textbook publishers have created something of a "de facto" national curriculum, based on market needs. Consequently, many textbooks from major publishers have reflected the curricular choices that were made by educational groups in the largest states. Some publishers do create textbooks and other curricula for smaller markets.

Rothman (2009) summarized the efforts of various groups to create common standards across the United States. Initial efforts to foster development of national standards and a related system of assessments in the core subject areas began in the early 1990's through awarding grants to a dozen national organizations.

The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) launched the Common Core State Standards initiative in March 2009 after the nation's governors agreed in concept to adopt a uniform set of standards. The final report was issued on June 2, 2010 (NGA, 2010), and, by early 2011, 40 states have adopted the Standards. The adopting states are currently aligning them to their own state standards.

The Fordham Institute (Carmichael, et al. 2010) reported that the Common Core standards received high marks when compared to state standards across the country. The Institute suggests that Common Core Standards represent an opportunity for creating consistency and raising standards in all states.

Assessments

The implementation of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has created a 50-state and 50-test environment in public education. As a result state-to-state expectations and performances vary greatly. States publish annual reports of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), which are required by federal law, but the meaning of "proficient" in those reports can vary widely from one state to another (Cronin, et al. 2007).

Larger testing companies market a variety of norm-referenced standardized tests. However, they are designed to rank students, rather than to determine how well students have mastered curricular objectives as criterion-referenced tests would do. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) publishes results that are technically adequate for state-to-state (and international) comparisons, but that assessment is not designed to produce individual student scores. NAEP requires a large sample of students to produce results. Most school systems are too small to qualify for testing that would produce local NAEP results. The tradition of local governance has led to inconsistent requirements and standards for student performance across the country. Thus, in 2010, the United States does not have a consistent set of academic assessments for grades K-12.

Two coalitions, together representing 44 states and the District of Columbia, won a U.S. Department of Education competition for \$330 million dollars federal aid to design "comprehensive assessment systems" aligned to the Common Core and designed to measure whether students are on track for college and career success. The awards, announced in September 2010, were divided between the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), comprised of 26 states receiving \$170 million, and the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium that comprises 31 states and received \$160 million. At least 12 states participated in both coalitions and are waiting to decide which assessment system will best meet their needs. An advantage of having assessments that are used in more than one state is that results from all participating states could be compared.

Why not national standards or assessments?

The most common arguments against adopting the Common Core Standards for K-12 center on two issues: 1) the cost and difficulty of changing the existing curriculum and assessments and (2) the sovereignty of states in issues related to education and local control. Governor Rick Perry of Texas stated that the Race to the Top funding would only generate a one-time amount of \$75 per student, yet cost Texas taxpayers an additional \$3 million. A third argument is that the individual state standards might be more rigorous. However, states that adopt the Common Core are permitted to add 15 percent more in content.

Another concern is the potential to use scores from the student assessments as a major component of teacher evaluations and merit pay plans, an idea that has popular appeal. (*TIME*, 2010). In August 2010, ten of the nation's premier educational researchers (Baker, Barton, Darling-Hammond, Haertel, Ladd, Linn, Ravtich, Rothstein, Shavelson & Shepard, 2010) co-authored a report that cautioned against relying on student test scores as a major indicator for evaluating teachers, citing the technical problems associated with using scores from standardized student assessments in value-added statistical models.

Does the United States need a national curriculum?

The U.S. Department of Education presents the view that, since the developers of the Common Core Standards and the proposed assessments have been groups with state representation rather than the federal government, neither program is a federal initiative. (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, March 13). In March 2011, the Albert Shanker Institute issued a call for common curriculum guidelines (Albert Shanker Institute, 2011; Gewertz, C. 2011, March). This document voices the concern that common assessments are being developed from the common standards with no curriculum in between. In May 2011, another group published an article with a different view: "Closing the Door on Innovation: Why One National Curriculum is Bad for America" (2011), discussed by Gewertz, C. (2011, May). The article also cites the prohibition against a federal curriculum contained in the 1965 ESEA.

The Role Of The Federal Government In Public Education: Equity And Funding

Public school funding comes from many sources – federal, state and local taxes as well as grants provided by both governmental and nongovernmental agencies. The federal government adds less than 10 percent to local education budgets, yet it contributes significantly to the rules for how the funding is used. Additionally, the United States invests 5 percent of the GDP in public education. Nearly half of the k-12 education funding in the United States is intended to come from the states, drawn from a combination of income taxes, fees and other taxes. However, some states resemble Illinois, where the state’s share is only 27 percent. The remainder usually comes from local property taxes.

Equity

States that rely heavily on property taxes to fund education tend to have large inequities in school funding, which mirror the inequity of wealth in society-at-large. Hurst (2007) noted that inequities in wealth stem from the fact that wealthy people earn much of their income from investments and/or inherited funds, while the poor earn all of their income from jobs and they spend it on food, shelter, transportation, etc. In the United States, the wealthiest 20 percent own 84 percent of the total wealth. Inequities in school funding reflect housing patterns. During the past 50 years since *Brown vs. Board of Education*, schools have become re-segregated (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Currently, three-fourths of the Black and Latino/a students attend schools that are predominately non-white.

Adequacy

Since, 1990, rather than looking at equity, most lawsuits have focused on adequacy—whether a state is providing local districts with just enough funding and resources to give all students a basic education. Odden and Picus (2008) developed a model calculating the cost of an adequate education. They defined an adequate education as one that includes factors such as a full-day kindergarten, core class sizes of 15 for grades K-3, 25 for grades 4-6 and specialist teachers. The cost of an adequate education varies. For instance, more money is needed to educate students from impoverished communities and students with special needs.

Funding Priorities

When schools are not funded adequately, this has a long-lasting impact. For instance, Darling-Hammond (2010) noted that dropouts cost the country at least \$200 billion a year in lost wages and taxes, costs for social services and crime. Since the 1980s, national investments have spent three times more on the prison system than on education. Data show that the national average for educating a child is \$9500, while it costs \$43,000 per year to keep a person incarcerated. With 5 percent of the world’s population in the United States, we house 25 percent of the world criminals (Kang & Hong, 2008).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

In 2001, President George W. Bush signed the reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act, “No Child Left Behind,” which was intended to close achievement gaps, particularly for minority children. However, data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reveal that scores were higher in math and reading for minority students before NCLB. One provision of NCLB permitted parents to remove a student from a low-performing school and transfer to another, better performing school. They would receive a voucher which would pay some of the cost of attending another school – public or private. Additionally, courts and education agencies stepped in to “remediate.” The sanctions imposed by NCLB had the effect of punishing or threatening punishment to low-performing schools and teachers, sending them the message that they were incompetent and that they should not have the right to make decisions about how to educate students. Studies (Reeve, 2009) showed that threatening public schools and teachers with punishment had harmful effects on students who remained in the public schools.

Supporters of NCLB appreciate the increase in accountability for schools and teachers as well as the focus on low scoring sub-groups. Critics of NCLB decry the lack of federal funding for many of the Act’s mandates, the emphasis on penalties, the reliance on standardized tests, and the lack of attention to gifted students as well as to subjects such as science, social studies and the arts. One goal of NCLB has been to offer choice to parents whose children attend poorly performing schools.

However, large-scale studies of voucher school students have revealed little difference in their performance compared to public school students with similar backgrounds, and having vouchers has not raised the performance of the most needy students (Rouse & Barrows, 2009). Furthermore, many (Holland, 2011) argue that the NCLB goal of 95 percent of students meeting state standards in reading and math by 2014 is unrealistic.

Race to the Top (RttT)

Race to the Top was signed into law by President Barack Obama in 2009. This program shifted the basis of awarding funds to emphasize competition. Competitive grants reward reform planned in the winning states. Funding is flexible as long as states demonstrate grant dollars are aligned with the agenda outlined in their winning applications. Only twelve states received funding through RttT.

Two of the requirements met by states that received RttT funding were (1) improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance and (2) lifting the cap on the number of charter schools that could be created.

While both these funding requirements can be effective, neither is foolproof, and each addresses only one part of the problems schools face. For instance, research studies show that promising increased pay based on teacher effectiveness is not an effective incentive. Furthermore, research showed there is a problem when teacher performance evaluation is based only on student scores in standardized tests (Springer et al. 2010).

Although there is no question that some charter schools are effective, they have not been the panacea many expected. They were originally proposed as an opportunity for educators to test research-supported methods for reaching hard-to-educate children, and some have done quite well. However, a large-scale research study funded by pro-charter advocates revealed that only 17 percent of the 2403 charter schools had significantly more growth in test scores compared to traditional public schools, and, in fact, 37 percent showed significantly *less* growth (Center for Research on Education Outcomes, 2009). Furthermore, many charter schools do not admit and/or retain students who need increased support, e.g., students from impoverished communities and students with special needs.

The progress of the U.S. Department of Education’s Equity and Excellence commissions can be tracked through <http://www2.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/eec/index.html>. Produced by the LWVUS The Education Study: The Role of the Federal Government in Public Education © 2011 by the League of Women Voters of the United States

LWVCA'S CONVERSATION WITH LEGISLATIVE PANEL

The League of Women Voters of the Clemson Area sponsored a successful legislative panel at their new meeting location on September 13, 2011. Visitors and members enjoyed sumptuous refreshments by the Membership Committee before the panel began at 7:30 p.m. at the Central Clemson Library, where most future monthly meetings will be held. Donna London moderated an informal discussion of important questions among our guests--Senator Larry Martin of Pickens County, Senator Thomas Alexander of District One (Oconee/Pickens County), and Representative B. R. Skelton of Pickens. All panelists pointed to the budget and redistricting as the two most important accomplishment of 2011 Legislative Session. When they were asked about what the new Tax Reform Study Commission had done, they said that tightening up of tax loopholes wasn't possible during an election year. When asked about the SC Retirement plan, Senator Alexander admitted to some challenges but praised the sound system in the state. Senator Martin expressed praise for our free public education, while Representative Skelton opposed a school choice bill supported by the Tea Party. All of them claimed to support public education, but they also praise the use of vouchers. Private schools accepting vouchers will put their independence at risk. Representative Skelton also revealed the decreasing number of the Life Scholarships and complained about our low gas tax that is used to fund road repair. He is sponsoring a bill to stop teen pregnancy. If the new Voter I.D. bill is upheld by the Justice Department, the panel said it would be paid for out of the state's budget. Senator Martin's new Immigration Law is supposed to avoid the mistakes made by a similar law in Alabama so he feels it won't be constitutionally challenged. They deferred to DHEC about the Twelve Mile Creek Superfund clean-up to assure that SC is complying with the 1972 Clean Water Act. They said that they were in favor of spending money on existing roads for repairs. Senator Martin believes that DOT needs restructuring. Our next program will be on October 11 and will be led by Robin Kimbrough-Melton.

Submitted by Carol Ward, Co Chair Program & Action Team



CONVERSING WITH OUR LEGISLATORS

Senator Larry Martin, Representative B.R. Skelton,
Senator Thomas Alexander, Moderator Donna London

LEAGUE LEADERS' DAY

Eight members of the Clemson LWV were at League Leaders' Day in Columbia on August 27th for a very full day of presentations, conversations, and networking. We had a number of excellent presentations, including redistricting, transportation, and recycling, and a look backward from eight past state LWV presidents. Co-presidents Barbara Zia and Peggy Brown kept the day flowing with humor and grace. Lots of opportunities to network with other Leaguers and some words of wisdom from our NC League neighbor and national LWV contact person Mary Klenz. If you have never been to a statewide meeting, try to participate the next time one comes around. We are not alone--there are people like us who care about public issues and thoughtful citizen participation in government all over the state, and you leave with a great feeling of being part of something much bigger than yourself.

~Submitted by HOLLEY ULBRICH

CANDIDATES FORUMS

Six Mile: Mayor: Roy Stoddard, Graham Gillespie (write-in); Town Council (2 seats): Jeff Dennis, Brenda Rippy, Tommy Yongue

Central: Town Council (3 seats): Lynne O'Dell Chapman, Tony H. Craig, H. R. Holladay, Jr., Blake Magnus, Joe N. Moss, Will Mullinax

LWVCA Dues are Due!

\$60 member, \$30 2nd family member, \$25 student.
P.O.Box 802, Clemson SC 29633

VOTER PHOTO ID UPDATE

On August 29, the Justice Department requested more information from the state legislature on how they would implement the new law. This will take another 60 days.

OBSERVER CORPS

Clemson City Council	1 st and 3 rd Monday, 7:30 pm.	Anderson County Council	1 st and 3 rd Tuesday, 6:00 pm
Seneca City Council	2 nd Tuesday, 7:00 pm.	Pickens County School Board	4 th Monday, 7:30 pm.
Pickens County Council	1 st and 3 rd Monday, 7:00 pm.	Oconee County School Board	3 rd Monday, 6:00 pm.
Oconee County Council	1 st and 3 rd Tuesday, 6:00 pm.	Anderson Co. School Board	3 rd 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

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