

Officers and Board 2008-2009

President / Vice President - By Executive Committee consisting of members with (*)
 Ruth Christie - Treasurer
 *Linda Brown - Recording Secretary
 *Jean Parks - Membership
 Nina Accardo - Voter Enfranchisement
 *Anne Higgins - Voter Editor
 Open - Programming
 Yvette Wessel - Civic Education (Forums)
 Karen VanEman - At Large
 *Sandra Abromitis - Press Release and Publicity
 Nancy Patterson - Web Page

Nominating Committee

Grace Curry - Chairman
 Marsha Stickford - Member
 Pat Wille - Member
 *Sandra Abromitis - Member
 Linda Brown - Member

Off Board Appointments

Betty Becker - Office Phone
 Barb Panarites - State & Natl Liason
 Kathleen Balogh - E-mail contacts
 Grace Curry - Hospitality/Phone
 Fran Myers - Corresponding Secretary
 Jack Saye - Newsclippings
 Barbara Segraves - Programming
 Jane Wilson - Forums
 Sally Boerschig - Voter Issues

SAVE THE DATE

On March 13-14 - the State Board will be meeting in Asheville. There will be a regional meeting for all League members on Saturday morning, March 14 from 10-12, followed by lunch with a speaker which would be open to the public.

Please put this date on your calendars and we'll keep you informed on the details as they are finalized.

Impact 2008: A Legislative Briefing. An Overview of the North Carolina State Budget, Economic Forecast, and Issues Affecting Your Community

December 2, 2008

In a two-hour presentation attended by 75-80 social justice advocates and employees, three speakers detailed the dismal economic situation and forecast for the underprivileged in North Carolina. Jill Cox from the United Way of North Carolina described several programs they are promoting to encourage advocacy and saving, and to inform low income workers about tax credits and funding available for housing. Elaine Mejia from the North Carolina Justice Center had graphs and charts depicting poverty measures and the state budget shortfall. Louisa Warren, also from the North Carolina Justice Center, spoke about state measures that could lift families out of poverty, even during an economic downturn.

Points made during the presentation:

- In January, the average personal savings rate was -0.7%, similar to savings in the Depression
- 43% of renters cannot afford a 2 bedroom fair market rate unit, which requires a household to earn \$14.15/hour
- In the 1990's the number of jobs exceeded workers and laborers. In the 2000's, workers and laborers exceeded the number of jobs although we were in a period of economic recovery.
- The median NC household income has not increased since 2001 and was \$43,513 in 2007
- 14.3% of North Carolinians were living in poverty in 2007, up from 13.1% in 2000
- The number of North Carolinians without health insurance increased from 15.1% in 2004-05 to 17.2% in 2006-07
- Only 50% of private sector jobs now provide health insurance
- NC unemployment rose from 4.4% in Sept 2007 to 7.0% in Sept 2008, the highest in 18 years
- More people are unemployed and people are unemployed longer. 21% have been unemployed for 6 months or longer
- Underemployment is also a problem. 11% are involuntarily working part-time or short-term
- The NC Justice Center projects a \$1.3 billion state budget shortfall for 2008-09

Policies needed to stabilize our economy and working families:

- Child Care Subsidies – nearly 30,00 eligible children are on subsidy waiting list
- Earned Income Tax Credit - 20% of eligible workers don't file for EITC although the average recipient receives \$1700 from the federal government and 3.5% from NC
- Minimum Wage Increase – the federal minimum wage will increase to \$7.25/hour in July 2009, equivalent to an annual salary of \$15,080/year
- Economic Stimulus – measures should include additional weeks of unemployment insurance, increased food stamp benefits, and fiscal relief for state Medicaid deficits
- Foreclosure Prevention – bridge loans to protect homes of unemployed workers
- Workforce Development – community colleges need to meet unexpected enrollment increase
- Access to Healthcare – more than one in eight children in NC is uninsured
- Dropout Prevention – NC's high school graduation rate is 69%

The Legislative Briefing was co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters and the Western North Carolina Community Foundation.

submitted by Jane Laping

January 2009 Membership Report

| Membership numbers: | 2009 | 2008 |
|---------------------|------------|------------|
| Local members | 89 | 99 |
| Lifetime members | 9 | 8 |
| National members | 9 | 13 |
| Total | 107 | 120 |



AN OPPORTUNITY TO VOLUNTEER

One of the co-sponsors of the October 2008 Candidate Forums was an organization called Children First/Communities in Schools. Its stated goal is to improve the lives of children, youth and their families through community collaboration, advocacy and programs. What this actually meant in real terms became apparent to Linda Brown and me, Yvette Wessel, when we joined a group that included Buncombe County's Superintendent of Schools, for a tour of the three low-income housing developments on which Children First concentrates its efforts.

Children First represents a wonderful opportunity for those members of the League who are eager for hands-on service to the community. For members responding to this appeal, the options for involvement are four-fold:

1. Children First's food pantry needs canned and dried food. It also solicits the donation of office and school supplies, cleaning supplies, arts and crafts supplies, gardening tools (families are given small plots of ground for individual gardens), summer camp supplies and clothing for all ages.
2. Children First needs volunteer tutors for school children from Kindergarten through the 5th grade. This commitment would be for one hour a week, in the late afternoon around 3:15 p.m. in one of the three housing developments.
3. Volunteers could consider participating in one of the upcoming tours, like the one Brown and Wessel joined. This is an eye-opening opportunity to gain a sense of the extent of Children First's activities. The upcoming tours are scheduled for February 10, March 12 and April 7. The tours begin and end at the Emma Resource Center next to Emma school. Since space is limited, please call in your intent to 259-9717.
4. The fourth opportunity for service is to sign an agreement to contact elected officials when legislation affecting children is pending.

For those choosing among the options, please contact Children First at 259-9717 or Yvette Wessel at 645-0626 or Linda Brown at 236-3720. Either one of us will be happy to help with delivery of your donation.

Submitted by Yvette Wessel

New League Members

John Fisher
electsusanfisher@charter.net

Sandra Houts

Jane Laping
janelaping@sbcglobal.net

Teddy Jordan
teddy.jordan@doodad.com

Ed Paul

Margaret Preston

Jerry VanEman
kvaneman@hotmail.com

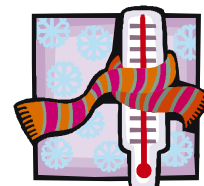
Yvette Wessel
yvettewessel@charter.net

Cecil Bothwell
cecil@braveulysses.com

Sylvia Landis
slandis@charter.net

GET YOUR LEAGUE BUTTON

At gatherings, a name button with the League information lets everyone know who you are. For new members or for members who have lost theirs, you can now get a new button with your name from Ruth Christie. The cost is \$1 per button.



MEMBERSHIP IN THE LEAGUE

Membership is open to all citizens of voting age, female and male, who subscribe to the League's purpose and policies. Citizens of other countries or those under 18 may be non-voting (associate) members. Membership in the LWV of Asheville-Buncombe County (\$50 individual or \$75 household \$20 student) carries automatic membership in the LWVNC and LWVUS. New members joining after 2/01/09 may pay 1/2 year dues through 6/30/09.

Membership

Half price now through 6/30

Individual: \$50 (\$25)
Household: \$75 (\$37.50)
Student: \$20 (\$10)

Member names and addresses are not given or sold to other organizations. We do provide mailing labels when we co-sponsor an event with another organization.

The League of Women Voters welcomes women and men who are interested and supportive of our principles and goals.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Each year there are a limited number of scholarships given to cover the cost of membership. In exchange for the membership we ask that recipients actively participate in League functions.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
Making Democracy Work.



Asheville Sustainability Advisory Committee on Energy and the Environment

December 11, 2008

With the lights on this time because of the rain, fifteen people including members and guests attended the Asheville Sustainability Advisory Committee on Energy and the Environment (SACEE) on Thursday afternoon, December 13. Guests were introduced and the November minutes approved.

Margo Flood, Environmental Leadership Center Director for Warren Wilson College, reported that the link for the "Southern Appalachia at the Crossroads" conference on climate change that the College will host March 27, 28, and 29 is www.headwatersgathering.org. Although only 227 paid slots are available for the conference, there will be a free talk open to the public on Friday, March 27 with space for 600 people. Ms. Flood again requested that the committee host a follow-up public dialogue after the conference to continue the momentum and make the event successful. The committee discussed the request and decided instead to facilitate a meeting with featured "green jobs" speaker, Marjora Carter. Ms. Flood will check with Ms. Carter about her schedule.

Maggie Ullman, City Energy Coordinator, reported that she has been working on intern development and an annual report for the Sustainability Office. She is planning for a public relations push in January because this is the first time that the carbon footprint date for the City will be published. Ms. Ullman wants to expand the four, 10-hour day work week from Public Works to other City departments. She presented data to Department Directors showing savings from Public Works. Additionally, eight sectors are turning in draft chapters of the Sustainability Management Plan for review.

Subcommittees met for about 15 minutes and gave the following reports:

City Operations (Melanie Brethauer/Ryan Blau) reviewed documents and views of staff on sustainability. Four themes emerged: Synergies and efficiencies, equality, comprehensive thinking, and action and accountability.

Community Relations (Sasha Vrtunski/ Jane Laping/Dorothy Rogers) researched pledges and discussed what they wanted from the pledge. The pledge will be specific, affirm people for what they are already doing and be informative. Different pledges may be needed for residents and businesses.

David Spector (chair) reiterated that President-Elect Obama's Infrastructure Incentive Program will have many dollars associated with it and Asheville should be ready with projects to present to our Congressmen. He urged members to think about sustainable projects that could be up and running in 3-6 months.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m. SACEE meets again on January 8 from 3:00 – 5:00 pm.

submitted by Jane Laping

Enjoy a night of entertainment while supporting local theater. On Wednesday, March 4, the League will host a theater party to see the NC Stage Company's comedy, "Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead". Tickets are now on sale for \$22 and the price includes a \$6 contribution to the Florence Ryan Education Fund. To order your ticket, please contact Ruth Christie at 232-2883 or rachristie@charter.net. Tickets will be available at the Feb. 19th planning meeting.

Metropolitan Sewerage District Board Meeting

December 17, 2008

Highlight of the meeting was the Auditor's report by Mr. Coleman of Cherry, Bekaert & Holland L.L.P., licensed certified public accountants, who gave credit to Mr. Scott Powell, new Finance Director. He stated that the District is well-positioned financially. While the total of cash and investments seems large, most is already committed to various projects. Capital additions were funded out of operations rather than borrowing. Coleman stated that the financial market will be unstable for 6-10 months, and possibly to 18 months. The Comprehensive Annual Financial Report was accepted by the Board. The agency received a 2008 Excellence in Management Award from the National Assoc. of Clean Water Agencies. Re-registration with ISO also was passed. After approving the Consolidated Motion Agenda, the Board went into closed session regarding new business.

submitted by Leah Karpen

Community Energy Advisory Council

December 12, 2008

Progress Energy, which formed this council in response to public concern about their proposal to build a power plant in Woodfin, presented an annual review of progress made in 2008. A month by month itemization included 23 energy efficiency programs and projects to reduce electricity demand. Several of the projects require action by the staff of the Public Utilities Commission (PUC).

Robert Sipes, Progress Energy Vice President for the Western Region, announced that the PUC is in agreement with Progress about incorporating "smart grid" into the system. "Smart grid" will enable demand/response technology to meet peak demands more efficiently. Sipes confirmed that Progress is also seeing a drop in electrical energy use that is 7% nationwide. Sipes speculates that it is due to the economy, energy efficiency measures, and voluntary closing of small accounts such as vacation homes.

Larry Shirley, State Energy Office Director, reported that he had met with President-elect Obama's team for energy and that there will be billions of dollars for local government and states for energy efficiency projects. Projects can be set up and fully funded in 180 days and will include \$1 billion for low income weatherization projects.

Progress is partnering with Enviro Energies of Wilmington to pilot three micro wind turbines to be sited in North Carolina, one in the mountains. Micro wind turbines employ a different design than windmills, are smaller, less expensive, and can generate 60 kilowatts per month.

Rick Lutovsky, business sector, reported that the Energy Task Force continues to meet to discuss adequate fuel supplies including electricity, natural gas, propane, and gasoline. The Business and Industry sector announced forums for businesses to take advantage of specific Progress Energy efficiency programs. The Home and Community sector is looking at similar education for the public and challenged the task force to be "outreach associates." Maggie Ullman, reporting for the Government sector noted that Asheville is developing a citizen and business pledge to gain commitment for adopting energy efficiency measures.

Comments from member Dave Hollister included a challenge to Progress to remove dirty energy options for a cleaner energy future. A comment from the public, Joe Barton, described the negative aspects of nuclear energy. The meeting closed at 10:30 a.m. The next meeting is January 9, 8:30 to 10:30 a.m. at the Chamber.

submitted by Jane Laping



The Caffeine Committee

Because there has been a renewal of energy and interest in small informal meetings where members can discuss the current events and observer reports, we will gather on February 10th at 10:00 at the Atlanta Bread Company on Merrimon Ave. for coffee and conversation. Please join us for lively conversation and caffeine.

MINUTES

LWV-A/BC Board meeting

Jan. 27, 2009

6:00 pm at YWCA – Minutes

Submitted by Linda Brown. Chaired by Jean Parks.

Board members present: Sandra Abromitis – Public Relations; Nina Accardo – Voter Services; Linda Brown - Recording Secretary; Ruth Christie – Treasurer; Anne Higgins - Editor of *The Voter*; Barb Panarites – Liaison with state and national; Jean Parks – Membership; Nancy Patterson – Webmaster; Karen VanEman - Member at large. Yvette Wessel – Civic Education

Minutes of the Nov. 18th Board meeting - Approved (Yvette, Barb)

Financial matters – Ruth Christie - The Treasurer’s report - The League has \$4,927 in checking, \$1,241 in a MM account, and \$5,155 in a CD. The Florence Ryan Fund has \$1,133 in checking and a CD worth \$10,311. Approved (Anne, Nina). Year to date, we have spent more than we have taken in; however we paid the per member payment up front for the whole year, plus the League was extremely active in during the 2008 national election. **Disposition of maturing CDs** - Voted: To roll over the total amount of the LWV cd, which matures on Feb. 23, into another cd at the Bank of Asheville. (Ruth, Anne). Voted: To roll over the FREF cd, which matures on Feb. 23, continuing to keep the \$10,000 principal at the Bank of Asheville for a term of 6 months, with the interest going into the FREF checking account. (Ruth, Karen) **Scholarship** - Voted: To transfer \$35 from FREF to LWV for per member payments for scholarship recipient. (Ruth, Karen) **YWCA** - Nina reported that we owe the YWCA for use of the conference room for our monthly board meetings. Since we pay with children’s books from Malaprop’s, Nina will finalize the book transfer to the Y from now until May. After that date, the board will review the situation. **Appoint Budget Committee** - Janet Bowman has agreed to chair the Budget Committee. Sandra and Barb volunteered to sit on the committee. As Treasurer, Ruth is ex officio; she offered to host the two *committee* meetings at her home. *League members interested in the budget process are invited to attend the meeting. Please contact Ruth Christie.* **Fundraising letter** - Sandra presented a copy of the letter which will be mailed to the membership, Voter list, and a list of possible contributors. Board members are urged to send Sandra the names of potential contributors. The Voter will have a squib, “Time for a Contribution.” Jean will send the latest membership list to Andy, who will print labels. We will have a stuffing party at the next Board meeting.

On-going business

Update of “Facts for Voters” - The Board agreed to return to the old title, “Facts for Voters.” Nina will update the names of the newly-elected officials. Sandra will update the addresses. Barb will proofread. Andy will print. **Update of the Membership Book** - Jean will print the pages involving members’ names and addresses. However, the bylaws will no longer be in the blue book; instead, they will be printed on our website: ablwv.org In the future, we may put the membership list (password protected) on our website or provide it in digital format upon request. **Calendar** - On Tuesday, Feb. 10th at 10 am at the Atlanta Bread Company on Merrimon Avenue, Jean Parks will host an informal social coffee. We will meet and greet one another, hear about members’ experiences observing boards and commissions, and discuss issues for the Feb. 19th meeting. On Thursday, **Feb. 19th** at 7 pm in the 1st floor conference room of the YWCA, Nelda Holder will chair the annual membership meeting where we decide our local programs. *The Board urges all members to think about issues of concern to our community – and attend this vital meeting.* On Wednesday, **March 4th** at 7:30 pm at the NC Stage Company, the League will hold a fundraiser – the hilarious Tom Stoppard play, “Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead.” The tickets cost \$22, of which \$6 goes to FREF, which funds our forums. On Saturday, **March 14th** the WNC regional League meeting will be held in Asheville. Brenda Rogers, the vice president of our state League is in charge. There will be a keynote speaker and a full discussion of one issue – health care in our state. On **April 6**, the World Affairs Council, in cooperation with Physicians for Social Responsibility, will sponsor a meeting on nuclear issues. As a co-sponsor, the League may present the national position on nuclear issues. On Saturday, **May 16th** the League will host a luncheon at its Annual Meeting. Jean will ask Grace Curry to find a suitable location.

National Popular Vote - The national League has long held the position of abolishing the Electoral College. The National Popular Vote (NPV) wants to achieve popular election of the president, not by constitutional amendment, but by a compact agreed to by state legislatures. Fair Vote North Carolina has offered to present information regarding NPV to our League chapter to participate in a debate. We need to present both the pros & cons on this issue so we can reach a consensus to submit for the National League study by May 1st. The Forum Committee will draw up a proposal for a March forum, and then bring it back to the Board.

Coordinating observers - Barb Panarites has volunteered to coordinate observers of boards and commissions. Beginning in March she will hold informal coffees at her home so that observers can share their experiences. *If you are an observer and need a button with your name on it, please contact Ruth Christie.* **Community relations** - The discussion was tabled until the next meeting.

NEXT BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, February 24th at 6 pm. Sandra Abromitis and Anne Higgins will co-chair. Adjourned at 8:30 pm

Obama remarks: Ledbetter Fair Pay Act

Remarks of President Barack Obama on the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Restoration Act bill signing on Jan. 29, 2009.

It is fitting that with the very first bill I sign - the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Restoration Act - we are upholding one of this nation's first principles: that we are all created equal and each deserve a chance to pursue our own version of happiness. It is also fitting that we are joined today by the woman after whom this bill is named - someone Michelle and I have had the privilege of getting to know for ourselves. Lilly Ledbetter didn't set out to be a trailblazer or a household name. She was just a good hard worker who did her job - and did it well - for nearly two decades before discovering that for years, she was paid less than her male colleagues for the very same work. Over the course of her career, she lost more than \$200,000 in salary, and even more in pension and Social Security benefits - losses she still feels today.

Now, Lilly could have accepted her lot and moved on. She could have decided that it wasn't worth the hassle and harassment that would inevitably come with speaking up for what she deserved. But instead, she decided that there was a principle at stake, something worth fighting for. So she set out on a journey that would take more than ten years, take her all the way to the Supreme Court, and lead to this bill which will help others get the justice she was denied. Because while this bill bears her name, Lilly knows this story isn't just about her. It's the story of women across this country still earning just 78 cents for every dollar men earn - women of color even less - which means that today, in the year 2009, countless women are still losing thousands of dollars in salary, income and retirement savings over the course of a lifetime.

But equal pay is by no means just a women's issue - it's a family issue. It's about parents who find themselves with less money for tuition or child care; couples who wind up with less to retire on; households where, when one breadwinner is paid less than she deserves, that's the difference between affording the mortgage - or not; between keeping the heat on, or paying the doctor's bills - or not. And in this economy, when so many folks are already working harder for less and struggling to get by, the last thing they can afford is losing part of each month's paycheck to simple discrimination. So in signing this bill today, I intend to send a clear message: That making our economy work means making sure it works for everyone. That there are no second class citizens in our workplaces, and that it's not just unfair and illegal - but bad for business - to pay someone less because of their gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion or disability. And that justice isn't about some abstract legal theory, or footnote in a casebook - it's about how our laws affect the daily realities of people's lives: their ability to make a living and care for their families and achieve their goals.

Ultimately, though, equal pay isn't just an economic issue for millions of Americans and their families, it's a question of who we are - and whether we're truly living up to our fundamental ideals. Whether we'll do our part, as generations before us, to ensure those words put to paper more than 200 years ago really mean something - to breathe new life into them with the more enlightened understandings of our time. That is what Lilly Ledbetter challenged us to do. And today, I sign this bill not just in her honor, but in honor of those who came before her. Women like my grandmother who worked in a bank all her life, and even after she hit that glass ceiling, kept getting up and giving her best every day, without complaint, because she wanted something better for me and my sister.

And I sign this bill for my daughters, and all those who will come after us, because I want them to grow up in a nation that values their contributions, where there are no limits to their dreams and they have opportunities their mothers and grandmothers never could have imagined. In the end, that's why Lilly stayed the course. She knew it was too late for her - that this bill wouldn't undo the years of injustice she faced or restore the earnings she was denied. But this grandmother from Alabama kept on fighting, because she was thinking about the next generation. It's what we've always done in America - set our sights high for ourselves, but even higher for our children and grandchildren. Now it's up to us to continue this work. This bill is an important step - a simple fix to ensure fundamental fairness to American workers - and I want to thank this remarkable and bipartisan group of legislators who worked so hard to get it passed. And this is only the beginning. I know that if we stay focused, as Lilly did - and keep standing for what's right, as Lilly did - we will close that pay gap and ensure that our daughters have the same rights, the same chances, and the same freedom to pursue their dreams as our sons.



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LEAGUE CALENDAR 2009

FEBRUARY

Caffeine Committee Informal Meeting:
 Atlanta Bread Co. on Merrimon Ave
 from 10:00-11:00 (see pg. 1)... Feb 10

Planning Meeting - led by Nelda Holder
 YWCA, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m (see pg.5)
 .. Feb 19

Board Meeting
 YWCA, 6:00 p.m..... Feb 24

MARCH

Theater party and Fundraiser- NC Stage
 Co. - Tom Stoppard's Shakespearean comedy
Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead
 (See pg. 4) March 4

LWVNC State Meeting in Asheville
 Details to come. March 13, 14

Board Meeting
 YWCA, 6:00 p.m.; Executive Committee
 meeting 5:30. March 24

APRIL

Nuclear Issues Forum - sponsored by
 World Affairs Council, in cooperation with
 Physicians for Social Responsibility. Co-
 sponsored by LWV/ABC. Owen Confer-
 ence Center (third floor) at 7:30 pm. Two
 short videos will look at Nuclear issues.
 Leah Karpen to moderate.

..... April 6

MAY

Annual Meeting - Details to come
 May 16

Events of Interest

Third Annual Human Rights Fair -
 The Unitarian Universalist Congregation
 of Asheville. 10:15 a.m. -1:00 pm
 Feb 8

**World Affairs Council - Great Decisions
 Series** - Every week starting Monday Feb
 2 - March 16. Held at UNCA.
 Owen Conference Center at 7:30. See
 website www.main.nc.us/wac/gd.html for
 more information Feb 2 - March 16

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