

IN THIS MONTH'S VOTER January 2008

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| President's Report | 1 |
| Program Suggestion Request | 1 |
| Membership Report | 2 |
| Immigration Study Update | 2 |
| LWVUS Immigration Summary | 3 |
| Observer Report | 4 |
| Vance Policy Institute | 4 |
| Theater Night Invitation | 5 |
| LWVUS Immigration (cont.) | 5 |
| League Calendar | 6 |

Officers and Board - 2007-2008

President - Ruth Christie
 President Elect - Barb Panarites,
 Civic Education
 Vice President - Karen Sanders
 Treasurer - Jack Saye
 Recording Secretary - Linda Brown
 Jean Parks - Membership
 Hal Hogstrom - Voter Enfranchisement
 Anne Higgins - Voter Editor
 Marsha Stickford - Programs
 Linda Brown - Observer Corp

Nominating Committee

Chairman - Grace Curry
 Member - Judy Bissell
 Member - Pat Wille

Off Board Appointments

Office Phone - Betty Becker
 Web Page - Judy Bissell and
 Nelda Holder
 Kids Voting - Sheila Franklin
 Hospitality/Phone - Grace Curry
 Corresponding Secretary - Fran Myers
 Newsclippings - Jack Saye
 Press Release Editor - Sandra Abromitis

President's Report

The League is a grassroots organization. Our opportunity to tell National what we want included in a League position on Immigration is fast approaching. Two sets of consensus meetings are to be held on Jan. 14 and 24. See Marsha's article for details. Do make every effort to attend one of the pairs of meetings.

At the February meeting, members will decide on the focus for our local activities in 2008-2009. Have you thought, "Why isn't the League concentrating on ...?" Or "I think the most important thing for the League to be doing is ..." If so, let me know so we can include your ideas in the discussion on Feb. 25.

Join the League in honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at the annual Prayer Breakfast on January 19 and at the peace walk and Candlelight Service on Jan. 21. Details are listed on our calendar on the last page.

Our Holiday Party was a very pleasant mingling of old and new members and guests. A big thank you to Fran Myers for sponsoring us at the Crowfield's club house, to Grace Curry for making all the arrangements, to Patsy Kever for introducing the elected officials attending, and to the many volunteers who helped with set up, serving the refreshments, and clean up.

Our next social event will be the League Theatre Party at the NC Stage Company on February 27. The \$20 ticket price includes a \$5 contribution to the Florence Ryan fund. See Hal's article for details.

Thank you to all League members and friends who generously responded to our fall fundraising appeal. We reached the goals set in the LWV-A/BC and Florence Ryan fund budgets.

Ruth Christie, President

REQUEST FOR PROGRAM SUGGESTIONS

Please let me know if you have any suggestions for program topics for League meetings this Spring. The Board will be discussing ideas for additional member meetings at our January 22 meeting. I would like to include input from members about topics they would like to see our local League address in our programs. Our last forum on the Economics of Immigration was not well attended by our membership and it is possible that was because it was not a topic of interest for our members. We want to keep you involved in our programs! So either email me at mestickford@charter.net or call me at 258-0210 with your suggestions before January 21st. Thanks!

submitted by: Marsha Stickford, Program Chair

WELCOME BACK TO THE LEAGUE

Judy Boonebiggle7@charter.net**Julia C. Cogburn**jccogburn@charter.net**Joyce Spitzer**joyfullight333@aol.com**Janie Wilson**janie2wilson@hotmail.com

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.

Membership

Dues for half year membership through 6/30/08 for new members joining after 1/1/08 are:

| | |
|------------|---------|
| Individual | \$25 |
| Household | \$37.50 |
| Student | \$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.

LWV IMMIGRATION STUDY REPORT

Submitted by Marsha Stickford

Over the past 6 months our local League has been participating in the National League's Study on Immigration. Local League members have had the opportunity to become more informed on this issue through two community forums on immigration related issues and access to articles on the National website and in our VOTER. National League studies are conducted to gather member input into the formulation of a League position on an important issue – in this case immigration. League positions serve as the basis for action at the National, State and local levels; they are what guide the educational and advocacy efforts of our organization.

The process used to gather this input takes the form of consensus meetings, where League members come together to participate in a facilitated discussion focused on assisting the group reach general agreement on a set of questions. The questions to be considered were printed in the December issue of the VOTER. We hope you will take advantage of the information provided to you on this important issue and attend one of the two sessions of the Consensus meetings on Monday, January 14th and Thursday January 24th.

Session 1 consists of two meetings at 10 am to 12 am on the 14th and the 24th at the home of Hal and Valerie Hogstrom at 23 Beaverbrook Road (phone # 281-1702)

Directions: Going north on Merrimon, pass Ingles and take a right on Wembley (about 1/3 of a mile beyond Ingles) which is opposite the bird sanctuary. Follow Wembley up the hill and turn left on Windsor. This takes you past the entrance to the country club. Stay on Windsor until you see Beaverbrook Road on the right - a T junction - and turn right. Stay on Beaverbrook until you see a two story house - cream colored with brick corners and a banner with tulips on it - on the right.

Session 2 consists of two meetings at 6 pm to 8 pm on January 14th and 24th at the home of Leah Karpen, 400 Charlotte Street, #803. PLEASE NOTE; This session will not include dinner – but participants are encouraged to bring a brown bag dinner.

Directions: Drive north on Charlotte Street almost to the end and turn into the Apartment complex on the left. Once inside the entrance, follow the parking lot road to the left to building #8 on the right side and park in an unmarked space. Call 254-5489 for additional directions.

These meetings are very important so please plan to attend. Pre-registration is essential for the committee to plan for facilitators and recorders. Please let me know if you plan to attend either the noon (10:00-12:00) sessions or the evening (6:00 to 8:00) sessions by sending me an email at mestickford@charter.net with the words "Consensus Meeting" in the subject line. If you do not have email, call and leave a message for me at 258-0210 to reserve your time slot.

SUMMARY OF IMMIGRATION ARTICLES FROM LWV/US

prepared by Yvette Wessell, member of Madison Co. LWV and participant in LWV-A/BC Immigration Study Committee

Two years ago at the biennial LWVUS Convention in Minneapolis delegates approved the first national study since 1992. The following attempts to summarize nine research papers provided by the National League of Women Voters which are available on their website. The material is meant to provide information on which League members can begin to base their answers to the forthcoming consensus questions. The results, due in Washington by February 2008, will permit the National Board to formulate a position on the issue of Immigration.

WHO IS COMING AND WHY

Over the past three centuries, immigrants have come to America escaping religious persecution, political oppression and/or economic hardship. They have sought and continue to seek what America offers - religious freedom, freedom of thought and speech and economic opportunities. The legal and illegal immigrants of today are, for the most part, fleeing the dearth of employment opportunities in their homelands. The Internet and television have opened the world's eyes to the quality of life it is possible for an ordinary American to enjoy. The most fundamental reason for so much illegal immigration is the difficulty and most often the hopelessness of entering legally. Federal policies with respect to the reuniting of families and the shortage of personnel to process visa applications can (and usually does) result in a waiting time of 20 to 30 years, the full length of a generation.

The 1965 Immigration Act eliminated the national origin quota system that favored European immigrants over those from other countries. It imposed a quota system applicable to all countries and was directed toward the following goals: family reunification (which accounts for 50 to 70% of immigrant visas granted) for both citizens and legal residents; to meet employer needs (including high level professionals); asylum for refugees (only 5-10% of recently arrived immigrants are in this category); provision of temporary visas for tourists, students and guest workers.

Family reunification is governed by a "family preference" quota system. This is how it works. Spouses, minor children and parents of US citizens, receive visas and are not subject to "preference categories." These visa applications are usually processed within a year. However, it must be understood that all other applications, whether by citizens or legal immigrants, are subject to the "preference categories."

There is a ladder of four "preferences" - each with its numerical quota: First: unmarried adult children of US citizens; Second: spouses, minor and unmarried adult children of lawful permanent residents; Third: married sons and daughters of US citizens; Fourth: siblings of US citizens.

The number of applicants in the family preference category so far exceeds available quotas and the number of available personnel to process applications that by June 2006 officials reported a backlog of over a million petitions. And approval of the visa application simply puts the applicant on a "priority date" list for receipt of the visa. The visa is not issued until the "anchor relative" proves his or her ability to support the family member. The process for legal immigration routinely takes a long time and is thought to increase the number of immigrants who chose to enter the country illegally.

No one knows the total number of illegal immigrants in this country, but the estimate is 10 million, of which perhaps 20 to 40% are individuals whose temporary visas permitting them to work have expired.

FEDERAL IMMIGRATION POLICY - ENFORCEMENT

Passage in 1986 of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) was Congress' first attempt to address unauthorized immigration. It named 3 illegal activities on the part of employers: 1) knowingly hiring those unauthorized to work in the US; 2) continuing to employ them; and 3) hiring without verifying the worker's status. Since 1986, a series of legislative measures have become ever more punitive, weighted on the side of enforcement and stricter requirements for entry. The USA Patriot Act of 2002, a reaction to the events of 9/11/01, extended criteria for denial of entry; the following year, the functions of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) were transferred to the newly formed Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The present labor situation has created tension between strict enforcement (border control and pursuance of offending employers) and labor's need for a larger labor pool. Just last year, the Secure Fence Act authorized \$ 9 billion for construction of a 700-mile border fence between Mexico and the US.

There have been unintended consequences of federal policies. To mention a few: most of the DHS budget is being diverted from anti-terrorist efforts to border patrol and the border fence. Stepped-up border control and the fence may be keeping more immigrants in the country than out. In the past, many were accustomed to going back and forth. Corn subsidies in the US freeze out corn production in Mexico, thereby increasing the poverty and disparity in living standards that spurs migration.

(Continued on Page 5)



Metropolitan Sewerage District

Board Meeting

Wednesday, December 19, 2007, 2:00 p.m.

Absent were Mayor Bellamy, David Gantt, and Glenn Kelly. About 12 observers were present, mostly staff. The town of Weaverville has appointed Steve Metcalf as their representative starting in 2008. The Board paid tribute to Don Venable, who is retiring, for his service. The auditor, Kendall Fields of the firm Cherry, Bekaert & Holland presented the annual audit. Mr. Field, who works mainly on water and sewer systems, found the MSD financial statement professional and well-done, with no weaknesses in financial reporting. He looked at procedures in place and at financial ratios. He found all of MSD policies and procedures well-documented. Thanks were given to Martha Ziegler, financial officer for MSD. MSD received letters of thanks from third graders who visited the facility. The Right of Way committee presented recommendation of estimated compensation expenses for the Reems Creek Master Plan interceptor extension. The report stated that the Reems Creek area is considered very desirable at this time. The Board approved items on the consolidated motion agenda, which included bids for Shawnee Trail, Winding Road and Northwood Road. In two cases the lowest bidder was not accepted, as allowed by law, because of the poor reputation of the bidder. The Board accepted developer constructed sewer systems for Springs of North Asheville, Mill Creek Utilities, and North Buncombe Middle School Sewer extension, among others. The Chair, Mr. Aceto stated that a date would be set for a meeting early in the year to review goals previously set at the retreat.

submitted by: Leah Karpen, Observer

CONCERNED CITIZENS FORM NEW ORGANIZATION

Vance Policy Institute (VPI) is a newly formed think tank dedicated to identifying problems and providing effective policy solutions for issues in Asheville and Buncombe County. The group includes Jim Barton, Cecil Bothwell, Michael McDonough, and B.J. Snow, who is also a past LWV board member and provided the Voter with VPI's mission statement.

"The Vance Policy Institute's mission is to explore, propose and advocate sound public policies. We are committed to enlightened, systemic changes in both Asheville municipal and Buncombe county governments through a process that identifies significant problems, considers solutions from all stakeholders, then proposes only those policies that will result in the greatest good for the greatest number."

These citizen volunteers are in the process of presenting their first "white paper" to Buncombe County Commissions and Asheville City Council members. Because the group believes that all business conducted by the government is the electorate's business, they decided to begin their policy offerings by proposing a sunshine law similar to the one that has been used successfully in Florida for over forty years.

VPI: "Exclusion of the public from discussions that substantively affect the public wealth and future taxation prevents meaningful citizen contributions and creates an unfortunate and often untrue appearance of insider-deal making and non-accountability."

This nascent organization hopes to develop in a way that will provide research and positive support for government officials on any number of issues and will serve as a voice for community stakeholders.

submitted by: B.J. Snow

SAVE THE DATE

Please keep the evening of February 27 open on your calendar. That's when the League will be sponsoring a fund-raising performance by the N.C. Stage Co, of the hilarious farce-comedy, "Moonlight and Magnolias" featuring those sterling actors, Charlie Flynn-McIver and Scott Treadway. Tickets are now available from Hal Hogstrom.



(Continued from page 3...Immigration Articles from LWV/US)

ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF AUTHORIZED AND UNAUTHORIZED IMMIGRATION

It is estimated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics that between 2002 and 2012 fifty-six million new jobs will have been created in the US. During that same period 75 million people will have retired. This factor, combined with a birth rate approaching replacement levels, points up the need for locating new sources of workers for a growing labor market. Even the number of authorized immigrants cannot meet the country's demand for labor. The US currently issues 5000 visas to unskilled workers, but 400,000 to 500,000 are needed. The shortfall in that category is showing up in sector after sector. One-half of American jobs require minimal education. In 1960, one-half of American men who dropped out of school looked for unskilled work. Today, fewer than 10% do.

Owners and managers of factories, restaurants, hotels, construction firms, hospitals, orchards, etc. need continued access to immigrant workers who tend to be young, mobile and hard working. What will happen if the influx stops? It is projected that in some regions, whole sectors of the economy would collapse.

There is global competition for the highly skilled and graduate students, a competition in which the US is losing. It is also known that foreign-born professionals, who bring skills often in short supply in the US, create new jobs, new wealth, and increase exports to their countries of origin. Entrepreneurship is fueled by immigrants. For example, the number of Hispanic-owned businesses has grown at 3 times the national average.

Immigration has had only a negligible effect on wages. One study concluded that the addition of more low-skilled workers has resulted in greater demand and higher wages for skilled construction workers. In North Carolina, immigrants contribute more to economic growth than to the cost of public services - \$61 million as opposed to \$11 billion in expansion. Costs associated with language problems are no greater than in the past with complete fluency achieved by the second and, at the latest, in the third generation. Crime statistics are inconclusive, but it is generally true that the first generation stays out of trouble.

IDEAS FOR REFORM

The system should be market-based. Legal intake should equal the flow generated by supply and demand. Quotas should be proportionate to the numbers who want to come from a particular country. Spouses and children of legal residents should be placed outside the preference quotas. Needed funding for additional staffing of processing centers must be provided.

CONCLUSION (verbatim from the text of the article to be found on the LWVUS Website)

The current immigration system is inefficient, with little accountability, and contradicts itself at every turn. Many businesses are forced to choose between breaking the law and closing down. Congress can pass laws that take months or years for immigration authorities to put into effect. The body of law is so big that even few immigration officers fully understand it, so it is almost impossible to apply without running afoul of some technicality. As a result, too many applicants have to file repeatedly, wasting everyone's time and energy. Furthermore, decisions made by harried, overworked consular officers may be capricious yet are not subject to review.

The only way to end illegal immigration is to implement a system that allows the people our economy needs to come here legally. An increase in legal immigration - not indiscriminate, but based on a carefully thought-out approach to matching legal immigration with our country's needs - will reduce the number of people coming illegally. By taking business away from clandestine traffickers and eliminating the tremendous waste of energy that undocumented workers put into getting around obstacles, such a policy would re-channel labor and resources into productive economic activities here and in immigrants' home countries.



Non-Profit
 Organization
 U.S. Postage
 PAID
 Asheville, NC 28801
 Permit No. 181

P O B o x 8 2 9 2 ,
 Asheville, NC 28814
 8 2 8 - 2 5 8 - 8 2 2 3
 www.abc.nc.lwvnet.org/

LEAGUE CALENDAR 2008

JANUARY

Consensus meeting for League members on Immigration Study at 10 am or 6 pm .
 Jan 14 and Jan 24

Board Meeting 5:30 at YWCA
 Jan 22

FEBRUARY

Program Planning Meeting - Potluck supper and local program planning meeting at the YWCA at 5:30 pm Feb 25

(Board Meeting 5:00 at YWCA prior to Program Meeting.)

LWV Night at the Theater- \$20 at North Carolina Stage Company
 Feb 27

MARCH

Board Meeting 5:30 at YWCA
 March 25

APRIL

Board Meeting 5:30 at YWCA
 April 22

MAY

Annual Meeting at Monte Vista Restaurant, Black Mountain - 5:30
 May 19

NEW YEAR TRIVIA

The name January is derived from the Roman god Janus, the god of gates and doors, and hence of openings and beginnings. January was the eleventh month of the year in the ancient Roman calendar. In the 2nd century BC, however, it came to be regarded as the first month. On January 1 the Romans offered sacrifices to Janus so that he would bless the new year.

JANUARY EVENTS OF INTEREST

Youth Celebration and Award Ceremony Presentation of Martin Luther King, Jr. Youth Award at Diane Wortham Theater at 4 pm. Jan 16

27th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Prayer Breakfast and Celebration at GrovePark Inn at 8:30 am.. Jan 19

Annual Peace Walk - Starting point: Gathering at 11:30 am at First Baptist Church, 5 Oak Street, to City County Plaza.. Jan 21

The League of Women Voters
 of Asheville-Buncombe County
 P . O . B o x 8 2 9 2
 Asheville, NC 28814
 8 2 8 - 2 5 8 - 8 2 2 3
 www.abc.nc.lwvnet.org/