



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEW ORLEANS LEAGUE ESSENTIALS

Volume 51 Issue 1

Summer, 2008

## **Charter Amendment Support**

Lea Young

The League has joined forces with Common Good (an umbrella organization headed by Dr. Michael Cowan, Assistant to the President of Loyola University) to endorse and work towards passage of the City Charter Amendment listed on the October 4 ballot. It essentially amends Section 9-401 of the Home Rule Charter requiring that the City of New Orleans have an Inspector General's Office and providing a dedicated source of revenue to fund it. It would also authorize the hiring of an independent legal counsel along with an independent police monitor to work within its office.

Here is a short background for this amendment proposal. During the Marc Morial Administration, an Ethics Review Board (ERB) was established in 1996. By January 1997, Mayor Morial had appointed 7 members to serve. The group never met because the City Law Dept. insisted on assuming legal responsibility for its staffing but never took the time or the resources to implement it. Ten years later in 2007, the ERB was put into operation through the efforts of Councilwoman Shelley Midura. The Home Rule Charter Revision of 1995 provided that the Council had the right to create the Office of Inspector General once the ERB was functioning. The ERB then became the appointing authority for the Inspector General, hiring Robert Cerasoli in September of 2007. Our new IG, however, ran into a gauntlet of problems trying to install his own staff into his own office since Mayor Nagin did not include enough funding in his proposed budget for this purpose. For nine months, endless bureaucratic glitches rendered the IG office impotent and almost non-functional until the Council increased the funding by a majority vote.

This ballot proposition, if passed, will solve many of the challenges for future IGs, as it will guarantee adequate funding instead of an annual battle for politicized appropriations. The League has agreed to sign on in support of this Charter Amendment.

Remember to vote in the October 4 election and to pay your League dues!

### **Many Thanks For Your Generous Donations!**

Carolyn Clawson, Lin Emery, Julie Fishelson, Marietta Herr, Susan Hoffman,  
Jane Jurik, Althea Lawes, Wilma Longstreet, Dilia Montoya-Palgrave, Joel Myers,  
Elizabeth Rack, Carla Seyler, Betsy Walker, Ruth Weisler, Mark Winter,  
Jane Bories, Ina Davis, and Mary Zervigon

## President's Letter

This is my first column as LWVNO President. First, I thank former President (and new Treasurer) Lea Young, who did such a great job this past year. Her many talents and ideas engaged our members in meetings and LWVNO events as well as encouraged new membership. As president, I will try to continue Lea's focus and create new ways to build our membership and educate our area's residents. I also welcome our new board members, Linda Walker and Linda Santi, and our new computer Webmaster, Stacey LaFleur, to our board.

This year has many challenges and opportunities for LWVNO. We have a presidential election and national elections in 2008, and these bring the promise of new leadership. Here in the Greater New Orleans area, we face continuing challenges in our area's recovery from the 2005 hurricanes and levee disasters. Our medical, educational system, infrastructure, and public services are all still recovering.

The 2005 hurricanes, which wiped out our energy grid and damaged many offshore drilling platforms, reminded us that our energy grid (which is so dependent on oil and natural gas and to a lesser extent on nuclear and coal power) is always one step away from disaster, especially now during hurricane season. Our League position has always been on the side of energy conservation, as a way to lessen our area's dependence on oil and gas supplies and on clean and renewable energy sources. The new Energy Smart program approved in recent weeks is a strong step in that direction.

Our new Inspector General, Robert Cerasoli (who spoke at the Annual Meeting), is investigating wasteful spending and fraudulent use of taxpayers' money in New Orleans. He encouraged citizens to contact the IG's office and report what they know in this regard. The IG's staff now has the authority to investigate abuses of police power as well so that it will be an independent monitor of the NOPD.

Our city's voters, thanks to LWVNO, other civic bodies, and the New Orleans City Council, will vote in November to give the City Charter's Master Plan Amendment the force of law. LWVNO's long-time position supports this change to the City Charter. There will then be no more **spot-zoning, haphazard** or inappropriate building in our city, and all proposed buildings will have to meet the Master Plan's criteria before the plans and permits are approved.

For LWVNO, this is a new year. Since this is also an election year, LWVNO will also take an active part in co-sponsoring candidates' debates and forums, monitoring the election poll results, and advocating for issues New Orleans' voters are concerned about, whether it's the environment, clean energy, campaign finance reform, or candidate information.

Wendy King

**The League Education Committee** will be carefully monitoring academic progress in all of the charter schools since they have a legal mandate to raise LEAP scores within a certain period of their beginning date. If you would like to join this committee or have questions, contact Ann Meese, 218-8985.

If you're on the LWVNO email listserv, you will get the Essentials by email. If you want to receive it in print, please contact League Essentials editor Anne Redelfs, by calling her at [504-232-9787](tel:504-232-9787), writing her at 2917 Constance Street, New Orleans LA 70115, or by email at [readsong@juno.com](mailto:readsong@juno.com).

# **LEAGUE SPONSORED CANDIDATE EVENTS ATTEND AND BRING GUESTS**

**SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES DEBATE  
OPEN COMMUNITY MEETING  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23**

**URBAN LEAGUE BUILDING, 2322 CANAL ST.**

**Doors open at 6:00 pm, Debate from 6:30-8:00 pm**

**SPONSORS: League of Women Voters, Urban League of New Orleans, Cowen  
Institute of Public School Initiatives**

**U.S. SENATE CANDIDATE DEBATE  
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC  
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15**

**5:30 pm**

**Broadcast Live by WDSU 6 from 6-7 pm**

**PERFORMING ARTS CENTER, UNO LAKEFRONT CAMPUS**

**Stay and watch the Presidential Debate on TV from 7-8 pm**

**SPONSORS: League of Women Voters of New Orleans, National Council of Jewish  
Women New Orleans Chapter, WDSU 6. Hosted by UNO**

**IN ADDITION:**

**ORLEANS PARISH DISTRICT ATTORNEY DEBATE**

**To be taped Friday, September 26 by WDSU**

**Broadcast Time TBA**

**Co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters of New Orleans, the National Council  
of Jewish Women New Orleans Chapter, WDSU 6**

## **LWVNO SPONSORS VOTER REGISTRATION EVENTS HELP US PROMOTE VOTING**

Patty Andrews, Voter Registration Chair, has announced the sites for voter registration events. Call Patty at 899-0079 or email [pandre@lsuhsc.edu](mailto:pandre@lsuhsc.edu) to volunteer. We can use volunteers from both Orleans and Jefferson Parishes.

Saturday, Sept. 13, K-Mart, 7000 Veterans Blvd, 10 am-2 pm

Saturday, Sept. 20, Winn-Dixie at 4600 Chef Menteur, 10-am-2 pm

Sunday, Sept. 21, Rouse's, North Carrollton, 12 pm-4 pm (to be confirmed)

Saturday, Sept. 27, Rouse's, Franklin Avenue at Leon C. Simon, 10 am- 2pm

Saturday, Oct. 4, Oakwood Mall, 10am - 2 pm

**WWW.LWVNO.ORG**

**COMPLETE ELECTION INFORMATION**

**READ ABOUT YOUR ORLEANS AND JEFFERSON CANDIDATES**

**PLUS**

**SUPREME CT. JUSTICE, DISTRICT 1**

**PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT 1**

**U.S. CONGRESS, DISTRICTS 1 & 2**

**STATE SENATE, DISTRICT 9**

**Read about the open/closed primaries, the inactive voter roles and other election information.**

**SHARE THIS INFORMATION WITH YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS.**

**THE MOST ACCESSED WEBSITE FOR CANDIDATE INFORMATION FOR ORLEANS PARISH**

**VOTER SERVICE SEASON ISN'T EASY**

Normally, any election season is full of surprises, usually from the candidates. We haven't experienced such a "normal" election for several years, certainly not since Katrina. This fall election season has been doubly complicated with the introduction of the closed primaries for federal offices coupled with open primaries for state and local offices. To make the system even murkier, the two major political parties adopted different policies to determine who could vote in their primaries. Then we had Gustav, and the Governor and Secretary of State did a shift in the election schedule, attaching the federal primaries to the state and local elections. We will extend the election season into December, yet the issues this raises have not been resolved. For instance, what will happen to the votes that were cast early for the original September election? We are waiting for those answers.

The League's website, [www.lwvno.org](http://www.lwvno.org) has grown in size, stature and reputation, and most of the candidates seek to place their information here. We have 84% participation from the Orleans Parish candidates and 73% participation from the Jefferson Parish candidates. The last election cycle saw 40,000 visits to the website, and we expect greater participation this fall. It has taken dedication from a large number of League volunteers to make this possible.

Check out the website for election information and be proud of the League's role in providing fair and non-partisan information through the forums and website and for registering voters.

Linda Walker

**Our Sympathy**

Margaret Follett "Peggy" Repass, a longtime LWVNO member, died Sept.6th, at her home, after returning from Hurricane Gustav's evacuation.

## Medical Care Reform

Health Care Reform has received a mountain of “lip service” since the late 1980s and serious study by a variety of groups, including the LWVs in the 1990s, but changes have been few. Costs for government and the privately insured, however, continue to rise to unsustainable heights. The federal employee insurance program, for example, was heralded as a model for offering choices from a large number of companies and plans; yet the cost for the employer/government and employee has risen so much that many lower-paid employees cannot afford the premium and are among the uninsured. The current political emphasis is on assuring *insurance*, (not healthcare) for everybody, but continuing the same profit-driven system that is bankrupting us.

I believe no amount of “tinkering” of this system will suffice. The business, free-market, profit-driven model is inappropriate for medical care because:

1) “consumers” (patients) most often do not have adequate knowledge to make “choices”,  
2) patients cannot delay or omit “purchases” that do not fit their budget (their lives are at stake!),  
and 3) this system is contrary to our most basic values - the infinite worth and dignity of each human being.

A tenet taught every medical and nursing student is that care is provided according to need without regard for race, creed, social status, or ability to pay. Our society rejects the notion of rationing medical care, yet the most cursory examination shows that ability to pay (with insurance, personal wealth, or governmental benefits) drives “resource allocation”. One example of profit supplanting need/choice is that of the nursing home lobbies which prevent equitable allocation of resources for need-based home care programs. Although home care is often more desirable for patients and their families AND is shown to be less expensive, the bulk of governmental funds are currently allocated for nursing home treatment.

Another problem posed by the business model in medicine is the use of financial incentives and other rewards to motivate doctors in their treatment choices. Increasingly, economically based decisions are controlling the medical arena, leaving physicians liable for any negative results. Genuine health care providers are leaving the profession because of the stressful working conditions where quality medical care is withheld or altered in service to the dollar.

Unless and until there is overwhelming demand from the grassroots for a rational, ethical, needs-driven medical care system and appropriate attention to government’s role in health promotion and protection, we can expect piece-meal change sponsored by the insurance, drug, medical equipment and other self-interest lobbies that assure their continued profits and our continued lag behind other industrial nations on critical health indicators.

**Flora Blackstock**

If you are interested in learning more about healthcare and/or want to become involved in our local community in this area, please contact Flora at 251-1544.

### **Food for Thought**

Health and Sickness are two sides of the same illusory coin.

The Disappearing Universe, by Gary Renard



**LWVNO BOARD 2007-08**

President: Wendy King, 1<sup>st</sup> VP: Pat Kimmel, 2<sup>nd</sup> VP: Joan Francis Smith, Secretary/ Treasurer: Lea Young,  
Directors: Linda Walker (Voter Service), Renee Smith, Ann Meese, Linda Santi, Francine Giugno.  
Essentials Editor: Anne Redelfs. Phone & Fax: 504-581-9106, Internet Address: [www.LWVNO.org](http://www.LWVNO.org)

**A warm welcome to our new members:**

Katherine Cecil  
and  
Dr. Linda Carroll

\*\*\* All Leaguers are invited to attend \*\*\*

**"Health Care vs. Health"  
The Steps We Can Take to Claim a Life of Well-Being**

**Featuring guest speaker Kim Watson**

Kim is a wellness consultant living in Slidell. She moved here from Australia in 2001 and has been a student of natural health and wellness for more than 20 years. With a Master's in Social Work, she spent many years as a counselor in the medical system and also endured a recurring health challenge that was treated for a decade with pharmaceuticals. After learning to take specific actions that allowed her to reclaim her own health, she resolved to spend her life learning and sharing with others how to achieve vibrant health, steering clear of the doctor's office and prescription pad. Please join us for this interesting talk and discussion at our next meeting of the new Health Care Committee: **4:30 PM September 29<sup>th</sup> at 3213 Grand Route St. John.** If you plan to attend, please contact Flora Blackstock at 251-1544.