



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF NEW ORLEANS

LEAGUE ESSENTIALS

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LWVNO & The Alliance for Affordable Energy
Present

TURBINES... Wind & Water
Affordable Sources of Energy? New Industry for LA?



Learn What the Experts Say...

Monday, October 11 at 7 pm
New Orleans Port Authority Building

Dr. Doug Meffert

Tulane Professor of River & Coastal Studies
and

Carlton Dufrechou

GM Greater New Orleans Expressway Commission &
Former Dir. Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation

Located behind the Convention Center next to
Mardi Gras World on the other side of the railroad tracks
free parking in front of the Port building

Thanks to Chris Bonura and the PORT Authority



Letter from the President:

Welcome to our many new members and also our renewals! After listing last month our programs for the year we had the opportunity to show the documentary "Tar Creek" an environmental disaster. Thanks to Wendy King, our Environmental Chair, for connecting us with The Sierra Club and providing us the opportunity to see the EPA at work. This Superfund site has been in mediation since 1983 with no end in sight. Let's hope the BP disaster will have better and timelier results.

Two great programs are coming soon. Many thanks to the Voter Service committee and their tireless efforts. Coming next will be our tribute to the 90th anniversary of the League with the future in mind. Being a League member is a tribute to those strong women who fought for our right to vote. Don't let them down! These programs are designed for you, so please come and learn with us.

Lea Young



WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

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Changes/Corrections

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(*editor's bad)



"Tar Creek" Film Review

By Wendy King, Environmental Chair

On September 23rd, the League and the New Orleans Sierra Club co-sponsored a screening of "Tar Creek" at the Audubon Zoo's Dominion Education Learning Center. The film, narrated by director Matt Myers, traces the history of Tar Creek and its Superfund site. There are large lead tailings mounds everywhere, left over after the mines were closed and then abandoned. The nearby creeks and rivers are now contaminated and devoid of fish or live plants. Children playing on the sand-like mounds risk getting lead contamination.

The film traces the discovery of large lead deposits at Tar Creek, the mining of those deposits from the 1930s to the 1970s (for use in weapons in WWII and Vietnam), and the contamination of the land and homes of nearby residents. After its designation as a Superfund site, Tar Creek's residents then demanded a buyout and a relocation. The film shows the town's decline, how poorly the town fared after the mines closed, and the residents' sense of being trapped by not getting enough money to relocate their families. Much of the site is on the Quapaw reservation. Tribal leaders interviewed in the film told of the impact of having tribal members declared "incompetent" when they refused the government's demands to lease their land for mining. Subsequently it was leased and then left worthless for agriculture or housing, too contaminated for any use and then returned to the Quapaw.

After the film ended, LWVNO member Linda Walker, a former Oklahoma resident and visitor to the Tar Creek contamination site, reminded us that the rivers and creeks running throughout this Superfund site are part of the Mississippi River basin, and that the lead contamination flows into the rivers joining the Mississippi River on its way to the Gulf of Mexico.

Five Years after Katrina: Public Education in New Orleans

By Ann L. Meese, PhD, Education Chair

At the beginning of the current school year, there were 88 schools and over 38,000 students. This included – 27 traditional schools (23 Recovery School District (RSD), 4 Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB); as well as 61 charter schools (46 RSD charters, 12 OPSB charters and 3 Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) charters. Over 90% of public school students are African American, 82% qualify for free and reduced lunch (as of October 2009) – Louisiana’s average for the lunch program is 66%, the national average is 41%. With 61% of the schools having charter status and with a high percentage of low income minority students, New Orleans is receiving national attention for the progress its schools are making in academic achievement.

The Cowen Institute in its 2010 Report (March 2010) combined interviews, public data and public opinion surveys to report the 5 major successes and 5 major challenges discovered in that process.

The successes were:

- Improved school culture and increased expectations for students (more orderly).
- Stronger focus on improving instruction and student learning.
- Progress on facilities planning and construction.
- Improving relationships between the districts and their charter schools.
- Sustained leadership at state, local and school levels.

The challenges were:

- Quality maintenance and control of school facilities (unclear plans for temporary buildings and reassignment to permanent sites)
- Financial sustainability of public education (current and coming year budgets tight – the need for state and city to increase the percentage of support) and the high costs of transportation because of school choice.
- Establishment of a permanent governance system.
- Data access and transparency.
- The relationship between the RSD and the OPSB.

Public interest in addressing these successes and concerns is growing. This summer, the Orleans Public Education Network (OPEN) conducted seven public sessions featuring different stakeholders in public education. On September 23–25, an Educational Research Conference, “Five Years of Post Katrina”, held at the University of New Orleans featured national and local educational researchers. Much discussion centered on the following issues:

- The renewal process for BESE authorized charter schools: The legislatively prescribed timelines have not been met. To date, schools have not been provided with the renewal application, the timeline for submission, review and public hearing. (Paul Pastorek, State Superintendent of Education, recently announced a plan to BESE and a **PUBLIC HEARING ON OCTOBER 14 AT MCDONOGH 35 HS**).
- The right to choose a school citywide appears to be a valued right. Many constituents have voiced a desire to see all schools have a common application form and a common due date.
- Many special education advocates have expressed concern over the unequal enrollment of special education students. The RSD traditional schools serve a higher percentage of these students and school choice is more limited.
- Concerns have also been voiced about some schools having too high a percentage of first and second year teachers without adequate training and in-school guidance from a master teacher.
- Charter School researchers are asking about sustaining results long-term, about the ethics of private corporations profiting from running public schools, and the lack of adequate data to measure all areas of performance from year to year in comparison with all other schools.

In summary, much progress has been made but to insure its continuation and the elimination of low performing schools, oversight must be coordinated among the governing bodies and the results reported to the public.

LWVNO presents a Panel Discussion on
“Public Education in New Orleans Five Years Post Katrina”

Thursday, October 28th at 7:00 p.m.

Unitarian Universal Community Church
318 38th Street, New Orleans 70124

Panel

Deirdre Johnson Burel - Orleans Public Education Network (OPEN)
Wanda Brooks - Principal, James Weldon Johnson School, 1800 Monroe St.
Mickey Landry - Principal, Lafayette Academy of N.O., 2727 S. Carrollton
Moderator - Ann Meese, LWVNO Education Chair

[Directions to church: W. on I-10, exit on West Blvd., left at Filmore to U-turn on Pontchartrain Blvd, right on 36th Street, right on Fleur de Lis Drive, then left on 38th Street.

The web address is www.communitychurchuu.org]



Study on Spring Election Schedule

by Linda Walker, Committee Chair

Every four years the elections for New Orleans municipal offices and for Orleans Parish officials occur during the most busy season of the year for activities. It starts just before the December holidays and extends through the Mardi Gras season. These local elections are the only ones in Louisiana to follow this schedule. All the other major metropolitan area of the state hold their municipal elections in the fall. All the Parish elections in Louisiana occur two months later in the spring with most of the office holders assuming their duties at the first of July. Some of the small communities also hold their municipal elections in that spring cycle.

Election Schedule Study Committee Meeting, Saturday, October 16, 10:00 a.m.

Borders Bookstore at the corner of Louisiana and St. Charles Ave.

All League Members are invited to participate.

The study committee for LWVNO has started work to document the impact of the early election schedule on the candidates, election officials and resources. The study will also examine the applicable laws and reasons for the unique schedule. The study kicks off with a survey of the 57 candidates that ran for office in the Spring of 2010. Come to the committee meeting if you want to help with the survey, interviews or research or contact **Linda Walker at 899-2582.**



Just a gentle reminder ~ Forgot to pay your dues?

Don't worry ~ just slip \$60 in the mail with your current name, address, phone & email.