

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS of NEW ORLEANS LEAGUE ESSENTIALS

Volume 57, Issue 1

January/February 2015

Save The Dates

Call to State Convention, March 14-15, 2015

Annual Meeting, June 6, 2015

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Message from the President ~1 Education Report and Voter Registration ~ 2
LAW Update, Voting Services and Senate Debate ~3 Sierra Club ~4
Pension Study ~ 5

Message from the President

As we enter 2015, the League of Women Voters of New Orleans resolves to work hard and fight for women to obtain equal pay, positional authority and equal opportunity. The League also resolves to continue advocating for reproductive rights for women and an end to domestic violence and sexual assault.

In Louisiana, women average only 67 cents for every dollar earned by their male co-workers. Many women stay in abusive relationships because of the inability to earn a paycheck to support themselves and their children. And yet women still receive less pay for their work than men do and women are not treated with the same positional authority. Such contempt towards women leads not only to the economic disenfranchisement of women, but also violence toward women both inside and outside of the home.

While domestic violence and sexual assault have been on the rise, the New Orleans Police Department's Special Victims Section has been the subject of the New Orleans Inspector General (NOIG) report dated November 12, 2014, indicating that five officers designated 65% of the 1,290 calls to the SVS that they received as miscellaneous, which required no follow up. Of the 35% of the calls designated as sex crimes calls (450 calls) an initial report was written indicating that there would be a supplemental report. Of those 450 calls for which an initial report was written, only 40% of them contained a supplemental report indicating an actual investigation (179 calls). The NOIG report clearly demonstrated that the Special Victims Section failed to protect and serve the women and children of New Orleans. Violence inflicts not only physical injury to women and children but also causes post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression in the lives of too many women and children. In an article by Kathryn E. McCollister, Michael T. French and Hai Fang published on April 1, 2011, and available on NIH Public Access, it was estimated that the total cost to the victim and society is \$240,776 per offense of sexual assault in 2008 dollars when considering investigative time by police (if police investigates), medical treatment of the person assaulted, lost wages and trauma of the victim. At the recent New Orleans City Council hearing I was encouraged by the effort made by Police Chief Harrison to make sure the SVS becomes effective and remains that way. The League will be participating in the SART meetings to work with the NOPD and other community groups to ensure that crimes against women and children are taken seriously and they are thoroughly investigated and prosecuted.

While advocating for these important issues, we will continue registering citizens to vote, providing information on candidates, and working to make sure that citizens are able to exercise their right to vote. With the courage shown by our foremothers in fighting for women to have the right to vote, we too go forward into 2015 to advocate for equal pay and positional authority for women in the workplace, women's right to make decisions regarding our own bodies, and a community free of domestic violence, child abuse and sexual assault. Our struggle has been long and hard fought but we must continue to make strides to better the lives of all women today and for our daughters and granddaughters in the future.

~Francine Giugno

Education Committee Updates

The Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) is an eleven member board. Governor Jindal recently appointed Mary Harris, a principal of an arts magnet school in Shreveport, to fill the 4th district vacancy until an election is held. The governor has 3 permanent appointee slots on the Board – the other eight members are elected. The governor may not remove any Board member. Ms. Harris told Times-Picayune reporter, Danielle Dreillinger, that she would like to see something replace the Common Core based benchmarks in mathematics and English on which are based the new third through eighth grade state tests (1/7/2015). Ms. Harris is considering running for the permanent position (the primary is March 28).

BESE held its first meeting of 2015 on January 13 and 14. A key order of business was submission of its annual budget request, the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP), to the state legislature.

An Early Childhood Task Force recently recommended a funding increase “if” the money is available. It is essential that the Louisiana League of Women Voters support a permanent source for the amount of money needed to implement the Early Childhood reforms in Act 3 passed in 2012. In 2013 and 2014 the Louisiana Department of Education issued start up grants for training and technology for community based pilots that provided for building

- a collaborative leadership structure
- financial support for helping teachers use new tools
- assistance in developing a coordinated enrollment system.

All New Orleans Early Childhood Programs that receive state or federal funding for at-risk children have been invited to join the pilot. Agenda for Children (8300 Earhart Blvd., Suite 201, New Orleans, LA 70118) provides the training and facilitation of “The New Orleans Early Education Network”.

Members who would like to observe BESE meetings, meetings of the Orleans Parish Board of Education, or of Orleans Parish Charter Schools should contact me at ameese@cox.net. If members have questions about education issues, I invite them to email me or call 504-218-8985.

~Anne Meese PhD



Happy Mardi Gras 2015

Voter Registration Service Resumes

On Friday, December 12, 2014, League members resumed voter registration service following the weekly naturalization ceremony conducted by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Office.

In 2013, Cynthia Swan spearheaded the drive to win permission from the U.S. State Department of Homeland Security for volunteers from the LWVNO to register new citizens after the naturalization ceremonies. In December 2013, Stanley Crockett, the Field Office Director, granted the group permission to proceed at the Metairie location. Joyce Corrington immediately began scheduling LWVNO volunteers to register new citizens. Sue Dicharry, Ann Middleton and Cynthia Swan joined her as regular volunteers.

Because of state regulations, Dr. Sandra Wilson, Registrar of Voters for Orleans Parish, determined that we also needed a staff member from her office present to verify the new citizens' naturalization certificate numbers, and she sent Barbara Castine to assist us. We typically registered 15 new citizens weekly or about 700 in 2014.

Continued on next page.

In the fall, the Office of Citizenship and Immigration relocated to its current facility at 1250 Poydras, Suite 1800. The LWVNO resumed registering voters after their weekly 10:30 am Friday ceremony. Linda Tran from Dr. Wilson's office has joined the efforts.

Linda Duerson has joined the volunteer group and anyone else interested in helping with this project may contact Sue Dicharry at sdicharry@yahoo.com.

~Joyce Corrington and Sue Dicharry

Voting Service Report

From September 26, 2014, the release date for the candidate information, through November 6, the date of the general election, **our website was visited 42,699 times**. The website continues to be a valuable asset to elections affecting Orleans Parish.

The passage of the ballot proposition changing the inauguration date to January for the mayoral and parish elections was a definite victory for the League's advocacy. It completed the measures necessary to reform the local election schedule.

Looking forward to 2015, we will be preparing for the state elections for the legislature and the governor in the fall. Qualifying will take place September 8-10 with the primary election October 24 and the general election November 21.

~Linda Walker

Volunteer Opportunity

The League of Women Voters of New Orleans participates in the Legislative Agenda for Women (LAW). In 2015, LAW is focusing on Equal Pay, Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, Medicaid Expansion, Reproductive Rights for Women, and Sex Education. Advocacy is an important part of ascertaining that legislation is passed that protects women's rights. Fighting for these issues important to women is an important part of the League. Accordingly, we are forming a League LAW subcommittee of volunteers to advocate for the legislation that LAW is supporting. If you are interested in joining the League LAW subcommittee, please contact Anne Marie Dewey at annedewey@gmail.com, Jane Jurik at jjurik@bellsouth.net, or Francine Giugno at francinegiugno@yahoo.com. If you do not have e-mail, please call the League of Women Voters of New Orleans at 504- 581-9106.

~Francine Giugno

LWVNO October 9, 2014 Senate Debate

League of Women Voters New Orleans and League of Women Voters of Louisiana partnered with seven other civic organizations and WDSU-TV to host the **2014 U.S. Senate Candidate Forum on Thursday, October 9, 2014 at Dillard University**. The forum was the second set of debates sponsored by LWVNO in 2014. Debates with candidates for mayor, city council-at-large, and sheriff were televised by WDSU in January, along with a non-televised debate for district city council candidates.

The taping with a live audience was done on October 9, with broadcasts on Friday, October 10th at 6:00 PM and Sunday, October 12th at 10:30 PM. The debate was also available for viewing on www.wdsu.com. Incumbent Senator Mary Landrieu and USAF Ret. Col. Rob Maness were the participants. Rep. Bill Cassidy declined the invitation to participate, as he did with all but two debates during the campaign.

Continued on next page.

The non-profit, non-partisan organizations collaborating with League of Women Voters were: African American Women of Purpose and Power; Committee for a Better New Orleans; National Coalition of 100 Black Women; National Council of Jewish Women, Greater New Orleans Section; Crescent City Chapter, The Links Incorporated; The Tulane Public Law Center and Urban League of Greater New Orleans.



LWVNO President Francine Giugno and Vice President Yvonne Mitchell-Grubb represented LWVNO in developing the debate format and questions. Sandra Slifer represented LWV of Louisiana. Each organization submitted its questions in agreed upon areas, including child care, health care, education, economic development and wages, immigration and the federal budget. The questions were then combined, prioritized, and submitted to WDSU.

Dillard's Georges Auditorium was filled with interested members of the public, as well as supporters of both candidates. WDSU anchor Scott Walker served as moderator. After their introductions, Landrieu and Maness began the debate with a handshake. Their different stances on the issues were quickly made clear in the two minute opening statements. The format allowed for 60 second answers to questions. Though Bill Cassidy was not present, he was the elephant in the room, with his absence often noted.

The format allowed rebuttal responses which sometimes seemed to go on and on. This resulted in enough time to cover only about half of the prepared questions. Though the audience was to respond only with applause at the beginning and end of the forum, some reacted with boos or cheers that occasionally got a bit out of hand.

Despite the minor issues, the forum was a successful event. It gave the public an opportunity to vet the candidates while publicizing the goals and mission of LWVNO. We plan to work with our partner organizations and WDSU to continue this winning collaboration in the future.

~ Yvonne Mitchell-Grubb

Sierra Club Meeting

The New Orleans Group of the Sierra Club hosted Dr. Shirley Laska from the University of New Orleans on Sunday, January 11, 2015 for her presentation "Gulf Coastal Communities: Can They Survive Until Coastal Restoration Is A Reality?"

Dr. Laska is an environmental sociologist and disaster recovery and resilience specialist. She used New Orleans as an example of post-hurricane citizen engagement and action. She noted the challenges of the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal and the Lake Borgne Surge Barrier and pointed out that "sinking levees need major upkeep." The risk presented by these levees, and the failure to maintain them, increases every day.

One of her most interesting concepts was the "cultural resistance to staying focused on any particular task." An example she gave was the need to stay prepared for any possible disaster, and the failure to keep disaster preparation and awareness a top priority when there are so many other priorities competing for our attention.

Continued on next page.

There is a “limited appreciation of the importance of recognizing all approaches to risk reduction.” These include non-structural defenses such as barrier island and wetlands, followed by levees, elevated structures and evacuations routes.

Dr. Laska reminded the Sierra Club about Appendix B of the New Orleans proposed Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance. She said this appendix, as currently written, is flawed because of its negative approach to elevated buildings. Such an approach is detrimental to a safely-oriented approach to living in flood-prone parts of New Orleans. She urged us to remain prepared, as residents in a flood-prone city, and to be advocates for changing the city’s proposed Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (CZO).

~Wendy King, Chair, LWVNO Environmental Committee



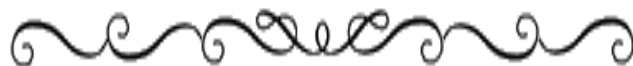
**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF LOUISIANA PUBLIC
PENSION STUDY**

These informative and lively discussions about what may happen with our teachers, state employees, school workers and law enforcement retirees took place Saturday January 10 and Saturday January 17, at the Smith Library in New Orleans.

Anne Middleton (left) and Linda Walker.

A special Thank You for all your hard work and Thank You to all that attended.

**A full report will be included in the next
League of Women Voters of New Orleans newsletter.**



Return Service Requested

The League of Women Voters of New Orleans
1215 Prytania Street, Suite 224
New Orleans Louisiana 70130

Office Hours
Tues, Wed & Thurs
9 am to 1 pm

504-581-9106

lwno@bellsouth.net

lwno.org  Find us on
Facebook



MISSION

The League of Women Voters,
a nonpartisan political organization,
encourages informed and active
participation in government, works to
increase understanding of major policy
issues and influences public policy
through education and advocacy.



CALL TO CONVENTION

March 14-15, 2015

Opening Reception Friday, March 13, 2015
Clarion Inn & Suites Conference Center
Covington, Louisiana

LWVNO is eligible to send delegates to the
State Convention. Please contact Rosemary at
504-581-9106 or lwno@bellsouth.net
for more information.

LWVNO Board of Directors 2014-2015

President	Francine Giungo
1 st Vice President	Rosalind Blanco Cook
2 nd Vice President	Yvonne Mitchell-Grubb
Secretary	Anne Middleton
Treasurer	Judy Fisher
Board:	Pat Bedenbaugh, Suzanne Dicharry, Annemarie Dewey, Wendy King

Welcome New Members

Anna Mahoney
Elyce Picciotti