

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS of NEW ORLEANS LEAGUE ESSENTIALS

Volume 57, Issue 2

May/June 2015



Save The Dates



“Bring A Buddy” Spring Social

Please join LWVNO for lively conversation and fun.

Wednesday May 20, 2015, 5:30 pm-7:30 pm

Columns Hotel, 3811 St. Charles Avenue, New Orleans, Louisiana 70115

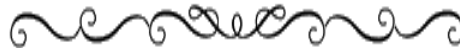
Bring guests for a relaxing evening on “The Avenue.” Food and Happy Hour Drink Prices available.

LWVNO Annual Meeting and Brunch

June 6, 2015, 10:30 am-1:00 pm

Ralph’s on the Park, 900 City Park Avenue, New Orleans, Louisiana 70119

Please RSVP by May 28, 2015 lwwno@bellsouth.net 504-581-9106



Message from the President

Serving as President of the League of Women Voters of New Orleans has been a privilege and an honor and I want to thank all of you for entrusting me with your confidence. I also want to thank the board and each LWVNO member for contributing to our successes. With the November 4 election, we accomplished local election schedule reform with the passage of PWHR Amendment Section 3. Starting in 2022, the inauguration for the mayor and city council will be in January. The elections in Orleans Parish will be moved from spring to fall in 2017. We regularly register new citizens to vote every week at the naturalization ceremony conducted by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Office. In 2014 we registered seven hundred new citizens to vote. Our website provided candidate information for the November 2014 election and it was visited 42,699 from September 28, 2014 to November 6, 2014. We also participated with LWVLA and other organizations to hold a Senate Candidate Forum on October 9, 2014 and we partnered with other organizations to host a Juvenile and Criminal Court Candidates forum on October 22, 2014. LWVNO participates in the Legislative Agenda for Women (LAW). This legislative session, LAW is focusing on Equal Pay, Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, Medicaid Expansion, Reproductive Rights for Women, and Sex Education. In 2014-2015, our members visited many legislators to forward the LAW agenda. We are also participating in the New Orleans Sexual Assault Team.

LWVNO is a strong organization with wonderful, smart people providing invaluable community services and I am very proud to belong to an organization with amazing people who make a difference in our community.

~Francine Giugno

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Louisiana Rising

The League of Women Voters of Louisiana sponsored a series of workshops at the Capitol Welcome Center in Baton Rouge, La. on Thursday, April 16, 2015. Called Louisiana Rising, the workshops brought advocates together to learn more about lobbying, using social media effectively and non-profit advocacy versus lobbying to name a few of the subjects covered. Jane Jurik, Rosalind Blanco Cook and Pat Bedenbaugh attended from the New Orleans LWV. Sandra Slifer did an outstanding job putting this event together. We hope this is the first of an on-going annual event in Baton Rouge at the start of the legislative session.

~ Pat Bedenbaugh



Photos by Pat Bedenbaugh

One of many display boards



Rosalind Blanco Cook and Jane Jurik

Voter Service Report

The Louisiana Legislature's House and Government Affairs Committee heard several election related bills on April 22, 2015. A statement from the LWVLA was submitted supporting the following three bills. HB 591 by Broadwater expands the time between qualifying and the primary elections and between the primary and general elections. It was sponsored by the Secretary of State's office and the registrars of voters. HB 242 by T. Burns was a comprehensive bill sponsored by the Secretary of State's office and the registrars also. It addressed topics from registration to ethics and absentee ballots. HB 131 by Berthelot expands the present law banning recalled public officials from being appointed or being a candidate for the same office in municipalities. All three bills will go the House Floor for a vote. The LWVLA opposed HB 290 Norton which would have extended voting hours in precincts where voting was delayed. It called for measures that were not enforceable. It was voted down.

At least four more election bills will be heard in committees as the session goes on. LWVLA will be following all of them.

Mark your calendars for the up-coming fall elections. Qualifying for the gubernatorial elections will be September 8-10. The primary will be October 24 with the general election on November 21. The voter service committee will be meeting in August to draft questions and plan for our table at the courthouse during qualifying.

~Linda Walker

Voter Service Committee Chair

Mark your calendar. The League of Women Voters of New Orleans, along with Louisiana Court Matters, Urban League of Greater New Orleans, Greater New Orleans Chapter of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women and Total Community Action, Inc., is co-sponsoring an exciting new program on the Voters Rights Act. The program will be held on May 19, 2015 at the Urban League of Greater New Orleans located at 4640 South Carrollton Avenue, New Orleans, Louisiana. The program speakers are Dale Ho, Director of Voting Rights Project of American Civil Liberties Union, and Ellen Buchman, Vice President of Field Operation, Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.

League of Women Voters of Louisiana State Convention Highlights

The LWVLA held its convention in Covington, La. on March 14 and 15, 2015. The convention had an agenda consisting of four main categories as seen in their welcoming statement:

- **ADVOCACY**

We use our positions at the state and national levels to press policy makers for changes regarding our environment, healthcare, early childhood education, social and criminal justice, equality, and voting rights. To better achieve our goals we often work with other like-minded organizations so that our voice is amplified.

- **EDUCATION**

Even when we don't have a position, we are asked to convene public meetings to discuss new ideas and issues. Policy makers and the community trust that we bring in experts and conduct well-organized meetings.

- **VOTER ENGAGEMENT**

We are second to none in educating voters, engaging with candidates, and registering voters! At the state League level, we have developed a robust online system for candidates and voters. Many of our local Leagues are established as the "go to" place for voter information.

- **MEMBERSHIP**

We are only as strong as our members! Our strength depends upon our grassroots organizing, our dedicated members, and our willingness to engage with a diverse cross-section of the public. As we move forward to our 100th Anniversary, it is imperative that we strengthen our relationships with our members, policy-makers, and coalition partners. Let's show we have "2020 Vision."

LWVLA CONVENTION

Elected Board for 2015-2017

Sandra Slifer, President, St. Tammany
Joyce Corrington, Vice-President, New Orleans
Rick Wilke, Treasurer, St. Tammany
Linda Walker, Director, New Orleans
Meg Fitzhugh, Director, Cane River
Alfred Doucett Jr., Director, Lake Charles
Joan Savoy, Director, Lafayette



*Sandra
Slifer,
President*

*Photo by
Felicia
Kahn*

Our New Orleans members in attendance were Felicia Kahn, Joyce Corrington, Jane Jurik, Francine Giugno, Linda Walker, Anne Meese, Wendy King, Dorothy Smith, Annemarie Dewey, Anne Middleton.

Three LWVNO delegates agreed to serve in state leadership positions and were elected by a unanimous vote: Joyce Corrington, Vice President; Linda Walker, Board of Directors; Annemarie Dewey, Nominations Committee.

As Chairman of the 2015 LWVLA State Convention Committee, I was grateful that so many delegates from the LWVNO agreed to participate in the Convention program. Annemarie Dewey, Wendy King and myself each led a morning workshop session on Women's Issue, Environment and Voter Services respectively. Rosalind Cook and Linda Walker offered an Introduction to Social Media and Leagues' Tools in an afternoon session."

Linda Walker said "the New Orleans members proposed that the LWVLA take up the state-wide survey of citizens to determine what changes to elections would increase voter turn-out. The Secretary of State's Director of Elections, Angie Rogers, and her staff asked the New Orleans Voter Service committee to undertake this project. The newly elected LWVLA board adopted the project because it involved a state-wide commitment.

~Continued on next page~

I was also extremely impressed with Colette Battle who led the session break-outs to workshop specific interest priorities. The workshop that drew the most avid attention was the one on criminal justice."

Jane Jurik said "I hadn't been to LWV State Convention in a number of years so naturally there were lots of members I'd not met before. I believe the most valuable part of the convention is hearing from other members as to how their local leagues have solved different problems. One idea came from the Lafayette League which has three co-presidents. This is something the New Orleans League may want to investigate. Another highlight was the technology session in which two of our New Orleans League members participated."

Felicia Kahn commented that the "LWV State Convention was fun, good people and a nice place to meet. Action was planned which always pleases me. An excellent facilitator for the advocacy workshop, Colette Picon Battle, made the workshop really special. I was glad to see the state LWV growing under president Sandra Slifer who feels by cooperation with others who share our interests we can get things done in Louisiana."

Anne Middleton said "this year's convention was somewhat different from the one I went to a couple of years ago. The attendees were divided into several groups to discuss pertinent issues of the day, focusing on environment, women's issues, criminal justice, voter service, and healthcare. Besides the group discussions Linda Hawkins from the St. Tammany league and Linda Walker and Rosalind Cook from the New Orleans League participated in a presentation on using social media which I found particularly relevant."



Many thanks to all who attended and participated in the state convention this year. And thanks to Felicia Kahn and Joyce Corrington for the wonderful photographs.

Shown left to right~Linda Walker, Ann Meese, Joyce Corrington, Felicia Kahn, Francine Giugno, Rosalind Blanco Cook, Jane Jurik, Annemarie Dewey

~Joyce Corrington

Photo courtesy of Felicia Kahn

Environmental Committee Report

The April meeting of the Sierra Club New Orleans Group featured Audubon Zoo staff member Joel Hamilton with a presentation on the Audubon Center for Research on Endangered Species (ACRES) property in Lower Coast Algiers. His presentation outlined future plans for the ACRES property, and he discussed which animals would be added to the property's breeding program, and which would be retired. In the Q&A he answered questions about the property's role in evacuating animals during Hurricane Katrina, how the property has been upgraded, and whether the property could flood; he told us it couldn't because of its elevation above sea level. Those of us interested in seeing the facility could sign up for a tour.

One of the Earth Day events was held on April 21st at City Park's Botanical Garden and Pavilion of the Two Sisters. The event was free and open to the public, with cooking demonstrations, art demonstrations, and food trucks. Gulf Restoration Network, Sierra Club, and Louisiana Bucket Brigade set up displays to educate the public on environmental issues.

In other environmental news, the Coast Guard has been preparing an environmental assessment on repurposing the Freeport Mc MorRan Species Survival Center. The LWVNO Board received a copy of the Coast Guard's letter outlining the environmental assessment.

On Friday, April 24th, Environmental Committee Chair Wendy King forwarded the letter via email to local Sierra Club leaders, and asked them for their views. We are waiting for their response.

The next Sierra Club New Orleans Group meeting is:

June 14th- Gen. Russel Honore: Topic: Battles with the Legislature.

Meetings are at the Audubon Zoo's Dominion Auditorium. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., and meetings start at 7 p.m. They are free and open to the public. Refreshments available before the meeting starts.

~Wendy King

Environmental Committee Chair



LWVNO Polly Guthrie Service Award Given to SUNO and UNO Students

On April 8, 2015 a LWVNO Polly Guthrie Service Award was presented by Awards Chair Joyce Corrington to Nathan Martin at the annual SUNO Honors and Awards Day Ceremony. Nathan is the youngest of seven children in a single parent New Orleans home. He has experienced homelessness, poverty, and crime--a murder occurred in front of his house. As a result he has dedicated himself to help change lives by tutoring young children and adults pursuing a GED and to raising awareness about life threatening issues such as AIDS, breast cancer, tobacco, and domestic violence. Nathan has previously been honored by being selected to participate in the Thurgood Marshall College/Wal-Mart First Generation Mentor Program and The Washington Center Internship and Academic Seminars Program. Nathan is graduating from SUNO with a major in Forensic Psychology and has been accepted into the Master's program at Chicago School of Professional Psychology.

Joyce Corrington and Nathan Martin

Photos this page courtesy of Joyce Corrington

On April 22, a LWVNO Polly Guthrie Service Award was presented by LWVNO President Francine Giugno to Eric Gremillion at the annual UNO Student Leadership Recognition. After graduating from LSU, Eric became an AmeriCorps volunteer in New Orleans. He helped open and staff Hagar's House, an emergency shelter for women and children, inside First Grace United Methodist Church. Working with an attorney, Eric formed the First Grace Community Alliance, a nonprofit, to support Hagar's House. By coordinating volunteers, writing grant proposals and raising funds needed to rebuild a two-story home, he helped Hagar's House move from the church and become a home rather than an overnight shelter for women and their children. A film student, Eric is graduating from UNO with a MFA. He has used his talent to create a promotional video for the shelter which can be seen at www.HagarsHouseNOLA.org.

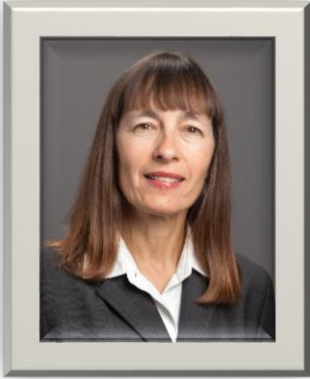
~Joyce Corrington Awards Chair



Francine Giugno, Eric Gremillion and

Dr. Brett Kemker, Vice President of Student Affairs

LWVNO Congratulates Julie Schwam Harris



Julie was recently honored by the National Council of Jewish Women with the Hannah G. Solomon Award for 2015 as a "tireless advocate and organizer in our community for decades. She is an outstanding leader of Legislative Agenda for Women (LAW) setting us on a path toward success in the legislature - something many of us thought was impossible. She is dynamic, inspiring, funny and, most importantly, a wonderful friend and mentor!"

Julie Schwam Harris
Photo courtesy of
Julie Schwam Harris

20th Annual Summit on Environmental Law and Policy

The 20th Annual Environmental Law Summit at Tulane University Law School was held February 27 and 28, 2015. The focus this year was on energy, water and wildlife, climate change, and, of course, environmental laws and justice. Presentations included natural gas fracking, the future of solar power in the energy grid, a forecast on the COP 21 climate change conference to be held in Paris later this year, wind power production, Arctic ice melt, attempts to regulate carbon emissions and more.

Of interest to many people here in south Louisiana were two presentations on fracking: "Fracking Water: Where's It Coming From?" and "Fracking Preemption: Who Gets to Decide?" Both of these discussions were attended by a number of St. Tammany parish representatives, by members of the LWVLA, LWV in St. Tammany, and the Mayor of Abita Springs.



Pat Bedenbaugh and
Lt. General Russel Honore
Photo courtesy of Pat Bedenbaugh

The fracking process consumes enormous volumes of water, often taken from lakes and rivers and underground wells that are also important sources of drinking water. Additionally, many local jurisdictions have limited authority, if any at all, over State laws. Fracking is going to continue to be an important environmental debate here and throughout the country.

"The Children Speak: The Atmospheric Trust Cases" may be the boldest climate change cases ever attempted. Starting in 2011 youth across the US and abroad have filed unprecedented legal actions based upon the Public Trust Doctrine against their governments to secure the legal right to a healthy atmosphere and stable climate system.

Lt. General Russel Honore was the keynote speaker Saturday evening. He reflected upon the disasters of hurricanes Katrina and Rita and pledged his continuing commitment to New Orleans and the region with the creation of a citizen's action organization, The Green Army, whose agenda is to battle the powers that be in order to protect and improve the environment of Louisiana. He calls global warming or climate change exactly what it is – worldwide pollution!

Additional topics of discussion included solar power, the BP oil spill case in court, environmental justice, big bears and wildlife corridors, urban transportation, whaling, wind power, renewables, environmental justice in Lake Charles, and the Levee Board lawsuit to name a few more. ~ Pat Bedenbaugh

The League of Women Voters® of Louisiana State Pensions for Public Employees New Support Position

The four state pension plans included in the study are:

Teachers' Retirement System of Louisiana (TRSL)
Louisiana State Employees' Retirement System (LASERS)
Louisiana School Employees Retirement System (LSERS)
Louisiana State Police Retirement System (LSPRS)

The League of Women Voters of New Orleans, along with League members representing other local Leagues in Louisiana, participated in a State pension study for public employees. To briefly summarize the conclusions of the study, the LWVLA first and foremost believes public employers should provide sufficient incentives for their workers to compete with the private sector in the labor market so that competent and effective employees will be hired.

The conclusions stress that "the state has a constitutionally mandated contractual relationship with its employees regarding their pension benefits and the state has a constitutional obligation to maintain actuarial soundness and long-term solvency in meeting this contract, the League supports, when necessary, increasing state revenues to fully fund each state pension system through additional taxation, fees, thorough collection of revenues, and reducing tax exemptions, tax credits and tax rebates."

Additionally, the League "supports raising the retirement age for full pension benefits in the state retirement systems for the hiring of new non-hazardous duty public employees in keeping with the same age requirements as Social Security. The League has no consensus on retirement age requirements for hazardous-duty employees."

Please review the entire LWVLA position <http://lwvofla.org/key-information/positions/>

LWVNO pension study review, comments, recommendations and questions can be seen at our League office.

~ Pat Bedenbaugh

LAW Legislative Agenda for Women

LAW is a coalition of 16 organizations committed to advocating for women's issues during the Louisiana Legislative session. Our coalition consists of: League of Women's Voters of Louisiana (LWV of LA), American Association of University Women of Louisiana (AAUW), Louisiana Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc. (BPW), Hadassah-New Orleans Chapter, Institute of Women and Ethnic Studies (IWES), Independent Women's Organization (IWO), Louisiana National Organization for Women (LA NOW), American Civil Liberties Union of Louisiana (ACLU of LA), Equity Louisiana, Louisiana Progress, Law Students for Reproductive Justice-Tulane Chapter (LSRJ), National Coalition of 100 Black Women-Greater New Orleans Chapter, Inc. (NCBW-GNO), National Coalition of Jewish Women-Greater New Orleans Section (NCJW-GNO), New Orleans Abortion Fund (NOAF), Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast (PPGC), Women with a Vision (WWAV).

Representatives from LAW are meeting with our Louisiana senators and representatives to educate and inform them on our agenda which includes Medicaid Expansion, Equal Pay, Increase in the Minimum Wage, Voting Rights, Family and Medical Leave, Appropriate Sex Education in Schools, Violence Against Women, Reproductive Rights and Justice.

Our thanks to Julie Schwam Harris for her commitment and hard work at the legislature in Baton Rouge and in helping all of us learn how to advocate in our districts and in Baton Rouge for women's rights.

~ Pat Bedenbaugh

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

lwwno@bellsouth.net

lwwno.org



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.

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	

*A special THANK YOU to
Kathy Muse and Joan Smith
for arranging the location
of this year's annual meeting.*

Welcome New Members

Elise Diament
Karoline Schleh-Gerowin