



# LEAGUE of WOMEN VOTERS of NEW ORLEANS

Volume 58, Issue 2, May 2016

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## League Essentials

### **SAVE THE DATES**

#### **Women's Health Day and Retreat 2016**

Wednesday, May 11, 2016  
Louisiana State Capitol  
8:30 am-3:30 pm

#### **Orleans Sierra Club**

Sunday, May 15, 2016  
Dominion Auditorium, Audubon Park Zoo  
6:30 pm - 8:30 pm

#### **Suffragette Movie**

Tuesday, May 24, 2016  
6:00 pm

#### **LWVNO Annual Luncheon with Guest Speaker Congressman Cedric Richmond**

Saturday, June 11, 2016  
11:00 am - 2:00 pm

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## **Message from the President**

Dear Members,

I am sure that as a member of the LWVNO, you are frequently asked, "...and what exactly does that local League do?"

Well, over the last few months, the question might be reframed, "...what have we not attempted to do?"

With the current session of the Louisiana Legislature plowing ahead at full speed, our members have been walking the halls of the Capitol, talking with representatives, writing letters and emails, making phone calls concerning policy issues and bills that are congruent with positions of the state and national Leagues, collaborating with a coalition of local groups and proving that oftentimes strength is indeed in numbers and visibility. Our members have participated in a variety of Lobby Days. We were quite excited about joining, sharing, and pooling information at the recent LWVLA Legislative Day and Advocacy Workshop.

Before the start of this legislative session, many of our interested members expanded their knowledge of social media by attending a how-to session on engaging effectively through social media, hosted by the state League and moderated by Michelle Erenberg, League member and the National Council of Jewish Women's Louisiana Policy Advocacy Chair. After learning more about the pull and influence of social media, LWVNO is looking forward to a more powerful presence on both Facebook and Twitter.

Members of our local and state League recently visited the Orleans Justice Center. Sheriff Marlin Gusman provided our group a personal tour and narrative. The new facility, which has been so much debated in the media, is without a doubt, a shining physical specimen of a brand new lockup; however, the new building has not solved staffing problems and other difficulties. Debate rages on about what needs to be done in the future.

On a brighter note, we are proud to announce that our local League's current Vice-President, Jessie Nieblas, has been named the LWVLA's very first Leadership Initiative Trainee. I have the privilege of knowing and working with Jessie in several capacities over several years, and I am convinced that the state has made an excellent choice; she will be an awesome

liaison between our local current chapter and the young people of our community. We look forward to expanding our membership. I am thrilled that Jessie and I will be attending our first LWVUS national conference in Washington, D.C. in June, and looking forward to extending our lobbying efforts to the U.S. Capitol.

**Rosalind Blanco Cook**, LWVNO President

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## Suffragette

Join us at Café Istanbul, 2372 St. Claude Ave., NOLA 70117, Tuesday, May 24, 2016, 6:00 PM, for a social networking event to "get to know your local League" with a showing of the movie *Suffragette*. Invite your friends to join us. We will serve refreshments and invite leaders from other of our sister organizations and some of our legislators to say a few words about their efforts during this legislative session.



*Suffragette* is a 2015 British historical period drama starring Helena Bonham Carter and Meryl Streep. They lead the cast of a powerful drama about the women who were willing to lose everything in their fight for equality in early-20th-century Britain.

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## Annual Luncheon and Membership Drive with Guest Speaker Congressman Cedric Richmond

Mark your calendar and join us at Ralph's on the Park for our Annual Luncheon on June 11, 2016. It's a fun and informative event. Invitations will be mailed out in May.

June is our membership month. Clicking on the **"JOIN"** button below, will take you to our webpage where you can join or renew your membership. You can also print the membership form and mail it to us. Invite friends to join. It is now more important than ever to support the

JOIN

## LWVLA Day in Baton Rouge

LWVNO members Rosalind Blanco Cook, Jessie Nieblas, Felicia Kahn, Michelle Erenberg, Jane Jurik, Pat Bedenbaugh, Linda Walker, Annemarie Dewey and Joyce Corrington attended and participated in LWVLA's morning at the Capitol and afternoon workshop at the State Library of Louisiana. Joyce Corrington, LWVLA's President, welcomed us and introduced the speakers of our Advocacy Workshop "Working Together to Influence Public Policy."



Left to right: Jane Jurik, Caroline McCance guest/Tulane student, Joyce Corrington, Linda Walker, Linda Hawkins, Jessie Nieblas, Felicia Kahn, Rosalind Blanco Cook, Annemarie Dewey

Susan Bettinger, President, LWVCB, was facilitator for the workshop.

Michelle Erenberg, LWVNO member and Founder of LIFT Louisiana, told us what advocacy is about - it's about taking action: speaking out on issues important to us, setting goals, establishing an agenda, and celebrating our achievements. We must know what is important to our members, what information is relevant and what our goals will be. An excellent way to achieve our goals is to work in like-minded coalitions. Also, meet with or contact your legislators (be concise and focus on important issues), write letters to the editor, write op-eds, and hold press conferences.



Michelle Erenberg, LWVLA Advocacy Workshop  
*Photo by Pat Bedenbaugh*



Ashley Politz, LWVLA Advocacy Workshop  
*Photo by Pat Bedenbaugh*

Ashley Politz, Executive Director, Louisiana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (LA AAP), also focused on advocacy - how bills are filed and amended, and how to follow bills in committee via live stream televised sessions at [legis.la.gov](https://legis.la.gov). Ashley's message to us all: your voice matters, you have the skills to advocate through a variety of ways that include contacting your representatives, going to their events and meetings, asking for a meeting in their local office (better before or after the legislative session), going to Baton Rouge and meeting with them on the floor of the legislature or in committee rooms, knowing what is important to you and leaving them with factual information about the issue or issues important to you. And ask them for their vote. Ashley left us with printouts of her presentation that will be on file in our LWWNO office for anyone to see. You can also call to request copies.

Linda Hawkins, LWVLA's representative on the Health Care Commission, and Alma Stewart, Founder and President of Louisiana Center for Health Equity, emphasized that their goal was Medicaid Expansion in Louisiana. Governor Edwards has accepted Medicaid Expansion and, as such, we will be the first state in the deep south to agree to take Federal dollars to increase the rolls of the insured in Louisiana. Opponents have filed bills to refuse Medicaid expansion so it's still timely to let your legislators know that the League supports Medicaid Expansion.



Above, Joyce Corrington, LWVLA President introducing Health Care Advocates Alma Stewart, left and Linda Hawkins.



*Photos by  
Pat Bedenbaugh and  
Joyce Corrington*

Linda Walker, Chair of Voter Services, Rosalind Cook, President of LWVNO and Chair of the Women's issues Committee, Joanne Pettit, Criminal Justice Committee Representative of LWVST, and Annemarie Dewey, Chair of the LWVLA Education Committee, each spoke on the priorities they set and the bills they are following for this 2016 legislative session. LWVNO will keep you informed via email on bills of great interest to our members.

Thetis Cusimano, LWV Lafayette, will send us jump drives with advocacy resources that we can use throughout the legislative sessions. Additionally, LWVLA is developing an online tutorial to help us follow bills through the legislature.

Please, contact your legislators, write letters to the editor, go to your legislators' meetings and let your voices be heard. We were told that as few as five (5) contacts from constituents could make a difference in a vote. And remember, facts matter.

**Pat Bedenbaugh**, LWVNO Board

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## 2016 Legislative Impressions

Mid-way through the legislative session it has become apparent that following bills mimics video games. Bills are scheduled in a committee, then the author withdraws and re-introduces them again at a later meeting. Bills arrive at the committee already morphed with amendments that are referred to only by statute reference without content. In the committee hearing, the author or supporters may be badgered with questions that are only remotely connected to the topic. This can go on for two hours or more; I suppose it's checking the commitment of the author to the subject. Bills may follow a straight path from committee to

floor to committee to floor with amendments at every turn until they reach the Governor. The

floor to committee to floor with amendments at every turn until they reach the Governor. The final product may be so weakened it is workable in title only. Sometimes they are diverted for a fiscal note or even sent to a second interim committee. There is no deadline for submitting resolutions so they can appear on an agenda at any time. The House website is more straightforward than the Senate's website, so what works for one does not track for the other.

Report on SB 434:

At the last moment to file bills, Senator J.P. Morrell filed SB 434, at the request of Mayor Landrieu, to delay the change in the New Orleans schedule of local elections from fall 2017 to fall 2021. The legislation passed in 2013 moved the elections in early spring back to the previous fall. The inauguration date of January has been set to begin in 2022 in the city charter by a vote of the electorate.

The spread, in the original bill, between the two election periods, was already a compromise the League made in drafting the bills that passed in 2012 and 2013. It was to accommodate the Mayor and the Council so they would finish their entire terms during the tricentennial celebration. We believe the original four-year delay is long enough and therefore oppose any additional delays. The original legislation was carried by Rep. Walt Leger, Rep. Jared Brossett, Sen. J.P. Morrell and Sen. Ed Murray. We have not received a clear reason from the Mayor's office for the change.

Members of the voter service committee have been talking to legislators, reaching out to the media,

[nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2016/04/mayor\\_landrieus\\_election\\_date.html#incart\\_river\\_home](http://nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2016/04/mayor_landrieus_election_date.html#incart_river_home)

and engaging Sen. Morrell to express our opposition. The bill will be heard in the Senate and Governmental Affairs committee. We will let you know the outcome.

**Linda M. Walker**, *Voter Services Chair*

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### **Legislative Agenda for Women (LAW)**

Julie Schwam Harris is again advocating for women in Baton Rouge during this legislative session. She is keeping us informed and calling us to action on a number of bills, for or against, that affect the lives of women and children.

**Medicaid Expansion:** The League supports Governor Edward's implementation of Medicaid Expansion to provide insurance via Medicaid to over 300,000 uninsured people in Louisiana whose incomes were too low to qualify for the Affordable Care Act (ACA) subsidies. The governor also stated that Medicaid expansion will save the state \$100 million in the first year. It will reduce the state's share of uncompensated care from 40% to no more than 10% and it will also relieve a major financial burden on hospitals. Keep abreast of any calls to action if legislators try to change or stop expansion.

Women Are in the Red in Louisiana.

Equal Pay for Women: The League supports SB 254 (Senator J.P. Morrell), the Louisiana Equal Pay Act. This bill (as amended) passed the Senate Labor Committee on March 31, 2016. It has been assigned to the House Labor Committee. We will keep you informed on the progress of this bill. The amendments met many of the concerns of the legislators opposed to the bill.



Governor John Bel Edwards with Jane Jurik  
*Photo by Felicia Kahn*



Senator J.P. Morrell with  
Rosalind Blanco Cook  
*Photo by Joyce Corrington*

Minimum Wage: The League supports increasing the minimum wage in Louisiana. Equal pay for women and an increase in the minimum wage are both closely tied to working women living in poverty in Louisiana. It has been estimated that 80% of minimum wage workers in Louisiana are women.

SB 269 (Senator Karen Carter Peterson), the State Minimum Wage bill, passed the Senate Labor Committee on March 31, 2016. HB 370 (Representative Joseph Bouie), the State Minimum Wage bill has been assigned to the House Labor Committee. These bills establish a state minimum wage of \$8.00 to begin on January 1, 2017, with an increase to \$8.50 on January 1, 2018.

**Pat Bedenbaugh**, LWVNO Board

### **Voter Services Committee**

The House and Governmental Affairs Committee considered four bills dealing with election issues. The three good bills passed the committee and will be considered on the House Floor. Now is the time contact your House representative via e-mail or phone and ask them to vote yes on these three bills.



HB 598 Patricia Smith Would allow persons convicted of a felony on probation or parole, but not incarcerated, to retain voting rights or register to vote. Besides the positive influence for rehabilitation for this bill, it is a constitutional issue. Sentencing does not take away a person's citizenship.

HB 951 Gary Carter Would allow persons who register to vote through the Secretary of State's website (via cell phone) to be accepted 20 days prior to an election instead of the traditional 30 days. It acknowledges the ability to keep records electronically.

HCR 68 Danahay Would allow the Secretary of State's office to set up a toll free phone number that can be accessed state-wide during elections to report all election issues and problems.

**Linda M. Walker**, Voter Services Chair

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## Call for Volunteers

The Voter Services Committee is seeking volunteers to assist voter registration following the naturalization ceremony each Friday at the Office of Homeland Security at 1250 Poydras, 18th floor. The ceremony usually begins at 10:30 am. Contact Sue Dicharry at 504 210-9102 or [sdicharry@yahoo.com](mailto:sdicharry@yahoo.com).

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## Education Committee Report

The Education Advocacy Committee has positions on the following bills:

**Support** - HB 1 - Henry Provides for the ordinary operating expenses of state government for fiscal year 2016-2017. We want to protect the funding of Pre-k programs that is in this bill.

Pending House Appropriations

**Support** - HB 137 - P. Smith SCHOOL/CHOICE - Prohibits the state DOE from awarding vouchers to first-time students. Recently, *Times Picayune*, 2/24/16, reported on research from the Education Research Alliance at Tulane that indicates that vouchers are not helping the children the program should be helping. Pending House Education

**Support** - HB 543 - Hoffman Provides that the Value Added Model (VAM) used to evaluate teachers and administrators shall be optional instead of required for local public schools.

VAM are "highly unstable" indicators of teacher effectiveness. See research by Linda Darling-Hammond (2011). Pending House Education

**Support** - HB 170 - Morrish Prohibits Type 2 (BESE) charter approval in A or B districts and requires a public accounting of needs, evaluation and school board decision to deny application. This is about local control. Pending Senate Education

**Oppose** - HB 511 - J. Morris Higher Ed/Board Regents - (Requires Constitutional

Opposed - HB 511 - St. Monica High School/Board of Regents (Requires Constitutional Amendment) Provides relative to Board of Regents authority to coordinate programs. Pending House Education.

### **Additional Bills to Watch**

**Support** - HB 402- P. Smith (Surveying Youth on Sexual Risk Taking) Authorizes DOE and DHH to voluntarily and anonymously survey students regarding risk including sexual health risk.

**Support** - HB 174 - Donahue Provides for TOPS scholarship awards to stay at current level. If school tuition is increased student is responsible for increase. This bill maintains availability of the scholarship without increasing state's cost. Rebekah Allan reported this in the *Advocate*, 4/15/16, saying that this TOPS bill has the greatest chance of passing.

Committee Members: Annemarie Dewey, Chair, LWVNO, Melanie Bronfin, LWVNO, Ann Burruss, LWVNO, Kathleen Espinoza, LWVL, Thetis Cusimano, LWVL (Resource)

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## **Environmental Committee Report**

Sierra Club Monthly Meeting, April 17, 2016  
Maurepas Swamp Wildlife Management Area

New Orleans Group Chairman Vance Levesque opened the program. Barry Kohl updated everyone on his work on mercury. Wendy King talked about recycling. James Guilbeau talked about RTA's expansion of bus routes and hours. Dave Stets talked about his work on electric vehicles and solar power. Harvey Stern talked about the problems with cypress mulch, and the good alternatives available.

Forest Burks, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, talked about the Maurepas Swamp Wildlife Management Area. Visitors can see eagles, osprey, neotropical migrant birds. The nutria population is a continuing problem because of its impact on native vegetation. Other problems include invasive exotic plants such as floating fern, or salvinia. Burks said that the method used to control it is with herbicides and an introduced weevil. Two other important concerns for the wildlife area are ground sinkage and saltwater intrusion. People asked questions about the swamp's salinity, and how to address it. Burks said that there are various proposals, such as the Amite River Diversion Canal project.

Please join us for our next Sierra Club meeting Sunday, May 15, 2016, Dominion Auditorium, Audubon Park Zoo 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm.

**Wendy King, Chair**, Environmental Committee

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**Saturday, February, 27, 2016**

The New Orleans Parish Justice Center (as Orleans Parish Sheriff Marlin Gusman reminded us to call the facility, and not "Orleans Parish Prison") is a soaring glass-and-steel building, with cells, a clinic for sick and injured inmates, plenty of light. It has separate floors for female inmates, and for those who are mentally ill.

Our group included LWVNO President Rosalind Blanco Cook, board members Yvonne Mitchell-Grubb, Lisa Manning Ambrose, Wendy King, Barbara Lafleur, LWVLA President Joyce Corrington, LWVLA Criminal Justice Committee chair Bonnie Schmidt, LWVLA Voter Service chair Linda Walker, and LWVNO members Jane Jurik, Felicia Kahn, and Kathy Foulks.

The tour began in the building's front lobby with Sheriff Gusman and two of his deputies escorting us through the building. We learned about the building's design, its security features, and a wall-mounted computerized screen that (as one inmate showed us) could be used to order small items such as soap or a toothbrush and toothpaste or snacks for an inmate's personal use. We toured the facility's kitchen, where pre-packaged food trays are served for prison meals. The previous method of serving food frequently resulted in angry charges and shouts among inmates about who got more food. Sheriff Gusman and his deputies also answered questions about what activities (of which there are very few) were available for the inmates. Sheriff Gusman told us that the federal consent decree, and the city's compliance with it, meant that the city removed funding for welding and woodworking classes that previously provided inmates with job skills training.

**Wendy King**, Environmental Chair

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## **Annual League of Women Voters National Conference**

Rosalind Cook and Jessie Nieblas will attend the annual LWV Conference in Washington, D.C., June 16 -19, 2016.



Rosalind Blanco Cook, LWVNO President



Jessie Neiblas,  
LWVNO Vice-President

Congratulations also to our League and to Rosalind Cook. She was awarded a free round trip ticket to the LWV National Conference by Southwest Airlines through LANO, the Louisiana Association of Non Profits.

Jessie, LWVNO Vice-President, Graduate, Tulane School of Public Health, has been selected as the LWVLA Leadership Initiative Trainee. The trainee program is meant to provide mentoring to young women and encourage them to join and participate in the important works of the League.

*Photos by Pat Bedenbaugh*

## LWVNO on Facebook

Facebook and Twitter are two excellent ways to remain in contact with our members and to pass information along to other like-minded individuals. Please "like" and "share" our Facebook page. Send us pictures or information about events that could be posted to our page.

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## LWVNO Board of Directors 2015-2016

President.....Rosalind Blanco Cook  
Vice President....Jessie Nieblas  
Secretary.....Suzanne Dicharry  
Treasurer.....Yvonne Mitchell-Grubb  
Board: Lisa Manning Ambrose,

Pat Bedenbaugh, Wendy King,

## 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.

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