



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

SC Voter

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Volume 61, Issue 4

Spring 2012

LEAGUE ADVOCACY 2012

Deja Vu

ALL OVER AGAIN

Every legislative session in South Carolina brings its challenges.

In 2012 the League continues our laser focus on increasing citizen access to our democratic processes.

By JoAnne Day, LWVSC Vice President, Issues and Action

Voter Access

- *The LWVSC opposes the Voter Photo ID Act.* For the past 3 years the League has been involved in efforts to defeat the Voter Photo ID Act, which passed the legislature last year. South Carolina's Photo ID law was struck down by the U.S. Department of Justice and is the subject of a lawsuit filed by the state's attorney general, *South Carolina v. Holder*. The League has requested permission from a 3-judge federal panel to take part in a legal challenge on the side of the federal government.
- *LWVSC opposes H.4549*, a bill that would severely restrict third party registration of voters, an activity that is a staple of League voter access efforts. This bill was sent back to committee by the House bill sponsor after massive efforts by the League and other like-minded groups to bring public pressure against the bill. In defense of voter rights, League leaders across the state have published opinion columns and letters to the editor, and appeared on local and national radio and TV (including PBS) and local news programs.

- *LWVSC opposes S.304* that would require proof of citizenship for voter registration. The documentation required presents problems similar to those of the photo ID bill, and is therefore opposed by the League.

In recognition of our efforts in preserving voter access in South Carolina the S.C. Legislative Black Caucus presented the League with its *Building Bridges for Politicians to Cross Award* at their annual Business Roundtable Luncheon in March. The ACLU, a LWV partner in voter protection efforts, also received an award.

Education

- *LWVSC opposes H.4894/S.1325, Tax Deductions for Private Schooling, Home Schooling, and Contributions to Scholarship Funds for Both.* H.4894 passed the House on March 29, and the League will join the effort to defeat this bill in the Senate. This bill would give a \$4,000.00 tax deduction to parents who home school or send their children to private school and up to \$15,000 deduction for contributions to scholarship funds to assist poor

children with private school tuition. The total impact of the bill would be to reduce tax revenue by \$37 million in the first year of implementation alone. In fact, a \$4,000 deduction would only result in about \$280.00 of additional income to the average parent, certainly not enough to pay tuition at any accredited private school. There is also no guarantee that there would be private school slots available

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Barbara Zia
Co-President, LWVSC

Among the League of Women Voters' core principles are beliefs that voting is a fundamental right, and that our democratic government depends on citizens' informed and active participation in government. Ensuring access for all citizens to our nation's democratic processes has been the focus of the League's concerted effort since its formation 92 years ago. Indeed, suffragist leaders formed the League in 1920 directly out of struggle to secure voting rights for all women.

In her legislative advocacy update in this issue, JoAnne Day reports on the League's tireless work in South Carolina to protect and expand voter access. The League believes simply that government should be making participation in our democracy by eligible citizens easier, not harder. At the same time, the League is firmly committed to protecting the integrity of the state's electoral system. We do, of course, support progressive election law reform. In this issue you can read about League leadership in implementing post-election vote audits and recounting paper ballots, our support for a measure allowing voters to register on the Internet, opposition to restrictions on registering eligible citizens to vote, and involvement in a statewide campaign to register young voters.

South Carolina's photo ID law and bills to restrict voter registration are examples of a wave of restrictive voting measures that passed across the nation in 2011. Together, these laws could make it harder for up to 5 million people to vote, according to the Brennan Center for Justice's report

Co-President's Perspectives:

Supporting Voting Rights Is Not Partisan

Because the photo identification requirement chills and in some cases prevents voting, it is directly at odds with the League's primary mission of facilitating civic participation. – As stated in LWVSC's court filing asking to join in a legal challenge to South Carolina's photo ID law for voters

Voting Law Changes in 2011 (http://www.brennancenter.org/content/resource/voting_law_changes_in_2012/).

For several years the League fought against restrictive photo identification requirements for South Carolina voters. During a long public debate on the legislation we argued that there is no documented evidence of voter impersonation fraud, that the state already has strict, effective voter ID procedures in place, and that South Carolina's voter photo ID law could potentially deny the right to vote to thousands of registered voters who do not have and, in many instances, cannot obtain the limited forms of government-issued identification the law requires.

After the measure's ratification in May 2011, the League opposed implementation in letters to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) which must pre-clear changes to South Carolina's election laws. The DOJ blocked the law in December, echoing arguments advanced by the LWVSC and our voting rights partners. South Carolina is suing the federal government in the U.S. District Court in Washington, DC, to overturn the DOJ's rejection of the law.

In March, the LWVSC urged the federal court to reject the state's restrictive voter ID law, arguing the law erects unnecessary barriers to voting and could disenfranchise thousands of minority voters. Our motion asks the court to allow LWVSC to intervene in *South Carolina v. Holder*, the state's challenge to DOJ's decision. We state that the law is "directly at odds with the League's primary mission of facilitating civic participation." The panel already granted permission for the American Civil Liberties Union to intervene in the lawsuit.

A scheduling conference in the case is set for April 13 in Washington. The League is represented by a gold standard voting rights legal team: the Brennan Center for Justice, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law,

and pro bono by the law firms Sullivan & Cromwell LLP and Derfner, Altman & Wilborn LLC.

Read our motion to intervene and supporting memorandum at http://www.brennancenter.org/content/resource/league_of_women_voters_of_south_carolina_urge_court_to_reject_restrictive_v/.

As restrictive voting laws continue to pass nationwide, we are pleased to see the Justice Department and state courts stand up for voters. In March, the Justice Department rejected a similar law in Texas and a judge ruled that Wisconsin's voter ID law violated the state Constitution. The DOJ also opposed Florida's law restricting voter registration and early voting.

For the nonpartisan League, every vote is precious, no matter who casts it and for which candidates. That fact is difficult for some people to accept. While the right to vote is guaranteed in both the United States and South Carolina Constitutions, voting is also a hot political issue. It's common knowledge that who votes and whether those votes are counted fairly have tremendous consequences.

The League has stood unflinchingly by our core principles in the face of heat coming from critics who claim we are favoring one party over another. We cannot say it too often: The League will oppose any election procedure that could potentially impede the ability of any voter to exercise her or his right to vote. Further, the League across the state is committed to registering all eligible citizens to vote, informing them about candidates and the issues, and encouraging turnout. Our 92 year old mission to protect voter rights applies to all citizens, whether they be Republican or Democrat, black or white, young or old, rich or poor.

Barbara

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for children. The League consistently oppose any public funding for private or home schooling. This is a backdoor method of shifting public funds to private and home schools.

- *LWVSC opposes “tax reform” proposals that would further reduce funding for public schools and local governments:*
 - o H.4993, Manufacturing Property and Business Personal Property Tax Reductions, would reduce the tax rate on manufacturing property from 10.5% to 6% over 4 years, reducing school district revenue by \$140 million dollars when fully implemented.
 - o H.4998, Commercial Property Tax Reduction, would reduce tax rate on commercial property from 6% to 5% in 8 years. It would reduce funding to school districts by \$508 million when fully implemented.
- *LWVSC opposes H.4610* that would require school districts to operate their own bus service, thus privatizing the school bus system. While the League does not yet have a position on privatization per se, we have concerns over the real potential impact of passage of this bill on school systems already reeling from 3 straight years of budget cuts. A 3-year study by the State Department of Education showed that it would cost more money to privatize than it does to run the state system. The two districts that currently partially privatize their buses, Charleston and Beaufort, say it is more expensive to do so. Smaller and rural districts fear privatization would be impossible. To the extent that this change has not been thoroughly researched, that no pilot work has been done, and that the outcome could further exacerbate the gap between rich and poor school districts the League opposes this bill.

- *LWVSC opposes S.604.* This bill would repeal the Board of Education and the Education Oversight Committee’s adoption of the Common Core Standards. Common Core Standards are educational standards for English and mathematics, developed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, in collaboration with key professional associations such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the National Council of Teachers of English to provide a common platform of core knowledge enabling comparison across states and among countries. 44 states including South Carolina have adopted these standards. They are rigorous, in some cases more rigorous than SC’s previous standards. As the League supports a high quality public education for all children, we oppose this bill. Passing would lower our standards.
- *LWVSC supports H.4317.* On a positive note, legislation to strengthen early childhood home visiting has been introduced by Representative James Smith and others.
- The League is also pursuing partnerships to address early childhood education and intervention measures.

Criminal/Juvenile Justice

LWVSC supports H.3757 a measure to strengthen efforts to curb human trafficking in South Carolina. The League offered testimony at the subcommittee hearing in the House. Attorney General Alan Wilson and South Carolina law enforcement agencies support this bill. Wilson has noted that both Georgia and North Carolina have enacted tough human trafficking laws, causing increased activity to flow through South Carolina.

Natural Resources

- *LWVSC opposes H.4654/S1126.* The League has joined conservation partners in opposing H.4654 and its companion bill S.1126, which would end the Pollution Act’s private right of action and leave citizens without recourse to the courts under that act. This bill has passed the House, and has been

referred to the Senate Medical Affairs Committee. LWV opposes this bill.

- *LWVSC supports S.461,* the Alcoholic Beverage Recycling Act (S.461). It has passed in the Senate, and has been referred to the House.

Healthcare Reproductive Rights

The League is opposing bills that would have negative impacts on women’s health and reproductive rights, working with other groups that are also interested in these issues.

- *LWVSC opposes H.3408.* The “freedom of conscience” bill, would allow medical personnel to refuse to provide services and even information on health care options on the basis of personal beliefs, and would provide legal immunity to those employees.
- *LWVSC opposes S.102.* This bill would prohibit qualifying health plans under the federal Patient Protection Act from offering abortion coverage.
- *LWVSC opposes S.1149,* the “born alive” bill, that mandates care for infants meeting the statute’s standards for life regardless of gestational age, and intervenes in the decision-making of families and their physicians. The South Carolina Medical Association also opposes this bill as potentially dangerous to both medical care providers and to patients.

Ethics and Transparency

LWVSC supports H.3235 that would require responses to Freedom of Information Act requests to be provided promptly and at a cost consistent with the market value of document production costs.

In summary, our advocacy efforts are many and varied, and the volunteer lobbying work at the Statehouse is only one of those efforts. Citizen education on issues has always been a hallmark of League work. Strength is also in numbers and fostering partnerships with like-minded coalition partners is one of the keys to success in influencing legislation.



South Carolina League Notables

- **LWVSC** was honored by the South Carolina Legislative Black Caucus with its prestigious *Bridges for Politicians to Cross Award* at LBC's annual Corporate Roundtable Business Luncheon in Columbia on March 23. The award recognizes the League's advocacy to protect voting rights. JoAnne Day and Lynn Teague accepted for LWVSC.
- **Marty Hucks**, LWV/Florence Area member and Francis Marion University Department of Nursing professor, was appointed LWVSC Healthcare Director by the LWVSC Board.
- The LWVSC Board accepted the resignation of **Carole Cato** as Advocacy Director. We are grateful to Carole for her outstanding service as a League leader, advocating for our positions, teaching us about citizen advocacy, and educating citizens about voting. Carole remains an active Leaguer and is off on new adventures, including a radio talk show in Columbia.
- **Mary Ann Burt**, member at large from Colleton County and former LWVSC president, has been appointed a LWVUS Shur Fellow for the Membership and Leadership Development project.
- **Shayna Howell**, LWV/Charleston Area Board member, has completed an exciting 2-year term as LWVUS Shur Fellow as part of the LWVUS National Membership Recruitment Initiative.
- **Peggy Appler**, LWV/Charleston Area member and former LWVSC vice president, is nominated to serve on the LWVUS Board. Election will take place at LWVUS Convention in Washington, DC, in June.
- **Mary Ann Deku**, LWV/Spartanburg County president, was named as one of the 107.3 JAMZ 2012 Upstate Black History Makers during February. As local League president for 3 years, \$18,000 in grants were awarded to the League due to her efforts and those of energetic League chairs Helen Bennett and Linda Bilanchone.

Healthcare News

By Marty Hucks, LWVSC Director, Healthcare

As the attention of our nation focuses on the Supreme Court's handling of the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act, the accessibility, safety and quality of healthcare continues to be of utmost importance to all of us. Here in South Carolina, the Stroke Prevention Act (S 588) has been enacted, after the General Assembly united to override Governor Haley's June 14, 2011 veto, and addresses these areas of concern by providing the following:

- the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) is required to identify hospitals as primary stroke centers and stroke enabled centers through telemedicine;
- a Stroke System of Care Advisory Council is appointed by the DHEC director;
- the Council, in consultation with DHEC's Division of Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention and the Division of Emergency Medical Services, is responsible for developing and

implementing a statewide system of stroke care;

- and a method for developing protocols for coordination and transportation with the Division of Emergency Medical Services is established.

Stroke is the third leading cause of death in South Carolina, killing 2,460 here in 2007, and the disability that often occurs in those that do survive is devastating to the individual and his family. Despite media campaigns such as "Time Lost is Brain Lost," many people fail to receive timely treatment, either because they wait too long to seek help or because of inefficiencies in the system. Eighty-seven percent of strokes are the result of a clot that blocks blood flow to brain cells. In this situation, there is an area of tissue that dies, but there is also a penumbra of damaged tissue surrounding this that can be saved in certain persons by the administration of a medication called *tissue plasminogen activator* if it is given within three hours of the onset of the

stroke. Determining who is a candidate for t-PA is complex, and many hospitals do not have the resources to carry out the process.

While South Carolina has eleven Primary Stroke Centers certified by Joint Commission, the Stroke Prevention Act will increase the use of telemedicine in Stroke Enabled Centers to facilitate the early treatment of stroke and will help assure that a stroke victim gets to an appropriate facility as quickly as possible. A similar state-wide, coordinated approach has been used successfully for victims of trauma for many years.

Despite the significance of the legislation, early recognition of a stroke will likely depend on the individual's or family's knowledge of symptoms. The acronym FAST is useful in identifying the most common of those: F stands for unilateral facial drooping; A stands for inability to raise one arm; S stands for slurred or confused speech; T stands for time- if any of the symptoms are present, call 911.



Around South Carolina . . .

WITH *The* LEAGUE

LWV/Charleston Area partnered with the Berkeley County School District to sponsor voter registration drives at six Berkeley County high schools in 2012. Participating high schools included: Berkeley, Stratford, Goose Creek, Cane Bay, Hanahan and Timberland. League members and friends of the League volunteering included: Jane Pulling, Mary Lou and Doc Ardrey, Cheryl Malone, Auvo Kempainen, Diane Urig, Booker and Peggy Manigault, Edna Green, Mary Harden, Margaret Rush, Carolyn Simmons, Mary Hardin, Wanda and Bob Haight, and Ben Richardson. 647 students were registered. The Berkeley County Board of Education recognized the League at their meeting on March 11. League president Julie Hussey accepted this recognition. This is the third year of LWV partnership with Berkeley County Schools. More than 2,000 students have been registered in that period of time.

LWV/Clemson Area wanted to focus more on action this year, so scheduled an extra meeting each month just to talk about legislative and other issues that offer opportunities for action. They started in the fall with a weekly meeting, but that was too often, so now have a casual lunch meeting on the third Tuesday. It creates an opportunity to participate for some of members who don't like to go out at night for the League's regular Tuesday evening meeting, and it has generated a lot of conversations, letters and phone calls to public officials, and letters to the editor about a broad range of issues, especially taxes, education funding, women's issues, redistricting, and protecting voting rights. The Program and Action Team always brings at least a couple of issues with talking points and bill numbers, but other people show up armed with newspaper articles or issue information from other organizations and they pool information and promise to take action.



LWV/Columbia member, Carol Medich, registering students at A.C. Flora High School in Columbia.

LWV/Columbia Area has been registering young people at schools of various levels throughout the area. Richland County School District One conducted its own voter registration program early in the year and League members were able to work with them on their final school, A.C. Flora High School. Over 40 students were registered at that event.

They also teamed with students from USC to conduct a drive in front of the student union. An outdoor concert helped attract students to the area and over 100 students were registered.

LWV/Florence Area usually observes the annual Women's Equality Day (August 26) with a modest reception for members and prospective members. The gathering also kicks off a new year with announcement of meetings, topics and speakers scheduled throughout the following months.

For the current year, that focus was expanded to include honoring the first-

ever- Florence-LWV-member-to-be-elected to-state-presidency, LWVSC Co-President Peggy Brown, and to honor three of the Florence League's original founding members, former League president Dolores Miller, Probate Judge (Ret) Patsy Stone and S.C.'s Order of the Palmetto recipient Barbara Sylvester.

A champagne reception was held at Florence Museum on August 25 at which Co-Presidents Frances Elmore and Hannah Reig presented the honorees with awards. Brown was given *"The Evolution of Authority"* showing a footprint of an ape beside a print of a man's bare foot, followed by a man's shoe print and finally, the print of a woman's dainty high heeled slipper – the evolution of authority. Miller, Stone and Sylvester received awards worthy of the League's traditional no-nonsense approach to public life – refrigerator magnets, bearing a drawing of a primly attired lady of the 19th century, one hand clutching a fan while the other

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wields a yo-yo, and the words, "Oh, yeah, this is so much better than the right to vote." Even a 42-year old local League needs a laugh now and then.

LWV/Greenville County

had a busy March. On the 6th they celebrated Women's History Month with a presentation by Phyllis Martin, Director of Community Investment for United Way of Greenville County, who shared thoughts on the subject "Is there room for the feminine in feminism?" A lively discussion followed. At a rally in Cleveland Park for Trayvon Martin (17-year-old killed in FL), they registered 25 new voters. And 12 more voters were registered at Truine Mercy Center for the homeless.

LWV/Hilton Head Island/ Bluffton Area

members delivered the news in person to senior Leaguers residing at the Cypress and Seabrook retirement communities as part of the *Have League - Will Travel Caravan* project. On January 19, Barbara Swift hosted a lovely luncheon at the Cypress for residents Nancy Cherry and Ann Robinson with Ginny Ghirardelli, Karen Wessel and Julie Wittig also attending. At the Seabrook on February 23, they enjoyed coffee and cookies with member Peggy Downward, former HHI League President Dorothy Anderson and 5 other guests. A mini-program and discussion



On Women's Equality Day LWV/Florence Area honored local women of distinction. From left, Barbara Sylvester, Dolores Miller, Patsy Stone and Peggy Brown.

on the latest League news were presented by Karen Wessel, Fran Holt, Janet Law, Sally McGarry, Joan Kinne-Shulman, Ann Coffin, Ginny Ghirardelli and Julie Wittig. The *Have League - Will Travel Caravan* is an opportunity to connect with members who support the League but are unable to attend meetings. It was a hit with everyone involved. The League plans to take the caravan on the road again and involve more members.

LWV/Horry County

MAL Unit has taken on the challenging project of "Empowering the Voters of Tomorrow." They ambitiously decided

to contact each of the nine high schools in Horry County. As the training manual warned, many repeat phone calls are necessary to receive a "yes" and then to set up a date that works for the school and for League volunteers. They mailed letters in December and began calling in January. Only one school turned them down. As of the end of March, they have registered almost two hundred eligible high school seniors to vote in four high schools: Loris, Green Sea Floyds, North Myrtle Beach and Myrtle Beach. On April 4th, they will be at Conway High School. A reporter from The Sun News will be there to cover the event. They are setting up dates for three more schools with a goal of finishing this project by the end of April.

LWV/Spartanburg County

has put its LWV Education Fund Youth Voter Registration grant monies to good use and is completing Phase 1 of the project. Having registered over 700 seniors from 6 area high schools already in 2012, the local League expects to surpass the 800+ students registered in 2011. The League's Power Point has been presented to blocks and smaller classes and has elicited encore requests and pre-scheduling for the next school year. With 2 more high schools, 2 local colleges, and Spring Fling in the next 2 months, LWV/Spartanburg County will reach new heights.



LWV/Horry County husband/wife members, Gary Browning and Pat Shama, register students in North Myrtle Beach High School lunchroom.

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LWV/Sumter County's

February 13th meeting topic was the First Amendment. The speaker was Dr. Jacob E. Butler, Jr., Associate Professor of Political Science and Chairman of the Division of Social Science at Morris College. He discussed two provisions of the First Amendment: "...the right of

the people peaceably to assemble..."; and "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." Dr. Butler reminded the audience that in our Pledge of Allegiance we promise "liberty and justice for all." The question is, "Whose freedom? Whose liberty? Whose justice?" On the first issue, the concept of "Freedom" and "Justice" frequently clash. The issue is the right of the 'people' to assemble and demonstrate

and the duty of the 'government' to protect the rights of other citizens and insure that all citizens have access to free and uninterrupted use of public land. The courts struggled with this dilemma from 1870 to the 1960s. On the issue of restriction on religious freedom, the U. S. Supreme Court has recently ruled that the government has no role in determining a church's employment policies. There was a good debate among those present and Dr. Butler.



LWV/Spartanburg County members help citizens register to vote.

UPDATE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS BOOK: We have discovered that some members are not receiving email from LWVSouthCarolina@gmail.com. PLEASE ADD THIS ADDRESS TO YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS BOOK SO YOU WON'T MISS ANY IMPORTANT EMAILS FROM LWVSC. *Thanks.*

The League of Women Voters and Natural Resources

By Jan Hammett, LWVSC Director, Natural Resources

Do you suppose Susan B. Anthony or Elizabeth Cady Stanton thought much about the environment when they fought for women's rights?

According to the fourth United States Census in 1820, the total population was 9,638,453. Between 1820 and 1860, the U.S. began to see dramatic economic, social and environmental changes. There was a demand for timber production, ships were being built and railroads laid. In 1859, the world's oil industry began in Titusville, Pennsylvania.

In the early 19th Century, women's rights were being debated. Environmental sustainability was not in question. The mega-diverse United States was rich in natural resources. Population growth was not a concern.

Today with globalization and over 7 billion people in the world, (313,232,995 in the U.S.; approximately 4,645,975 in South Carolina), the use and sustainment of natural resources is a major concern. The act of merging human rights with environmental decisions will be necessary to ensure a healthy place for all people to live and to reinforce a thriving democracy.

One of my favorite people, Bella Abzug, became concerned with global women's issues and the environment. Bella believed that direct participation is absolutely necessary for any social change. She also believed the environment to be a key issue saying "we believe that the continuance of the earth and the maintenance of its health is fundamental to life itself."

For the League of Women Voters, this is a "natural" place to begin. We understand that clean and safe water, clean air and healthy food are the fundamental basics of life. Pollution and misuse of resources are like parasites that do not always destroy life, but hinders the quality of life.

As the S.C. Legislature will continue to be lobbied with environmental provisions, the LWVSC will continue to lobby for common sense recycling, protection of clean drinking water and clean air and protection of our waterways. We will continue to work hard for women's rights, for the equality of all people and the protection of our natural resources.



How the U.S. Can Develop A World-Class Education System: Recommendations from PISA

By Peggy Huchet

This report is part of the research by the committee participating in the LWVSC study, Evaluating and Retaining Effective Teachers in our Public Schools. Study Committee members: Sally Huguley and Janelle Rivers, LWV/Columbia Area; Pat Borenstein, LWV/Greenville County; Pamela Hollinger, LWV/ Hilton Head-Bluffton Area; Paula Egelson, LWV/Charleston Area; and Jon Butzon and Peggy Huchet (co-chairs), LWV/Charleston Area.

According to an international study conducted by PISA in 2009, the United States is 2nd highest among 34 countries in spending per pupil. When compared with students in those countries, U.S. students rank 14th in reading, 17th in science and 25th in math.

PISA is the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), part of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The 34-member OECD is “a forum where governments work together to address the economic, social and environmental challenges of globalization.”

Every three years since 2000, PISA has evaluated education systems in over 70 participating countries/economies by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students. PISA assesses the student’s ability to apply knowledge and skills in key subject areas; to analyze, to communicate effectively, and to solve problems in everyday life. (<http://pisa.oecd.org>)

Some further statistics from the PISA study, ranking the 34 OECD member countries:

- Student performance is ranked on a 6 point scale. Level 2 indicates basic level of proficiency needed to participate productively in life. The percentage of U.S. students who scored below level 2 is 18% in reading proficiency, 23.4% in math and 18.1% in science.
- In reading, 1.5% of U.S. students scored at the highest level, Level 6. This is higher than average but below 7 other countries. 10% of U.S. students achieved level 5. This score also is above average but below 5 other countries.
- In math, 2% of students reached level 6. The OECD average is 3%. In

comparison, in Shanghai-China, 27% of students are at level 6.

- In science, 1% of U.S. students scored at level 6, the OECD average.
- Although the scores of U.S. students are improving, other countries are surpassing the U.S. in the rate of improvement in their education systems and the ability to reach all children. On average 80% of young adults achieve a high school diploma in OECD countries. Only 8 countries have graduation rates lower than the U.S. (p. 15)

In 2010 Arne Duncan, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, commissioned PISA to examine the education practices of countries highly ranked in the 2009 survey and make recommendations about how the U. S. can develop a high quality education that will put it into the top tier internationally. The resulting report is, “*Lessons from PISA for the United States: Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education*”, (OECD Publishing, 2011). The high-performing education systems that are examined in detail are Canada (Ontario), China (Hong Kong and Shanghai), Finland, Japan and Singapore. Brazil and Germany are examples of rapidly improving systems. Very briefly, here are some recommendations from the report.

Commitment to education and conviction that all students can achieve at high levels: “Placing a high value on education may be an underlying condition for building a world-class education system...” (p. 231) The U.S. should foster widespread acceptance of the concept that all students are capable

of achieving high standards. Set the same academic goals for all students and devote attention and resources at an early age to students who fall behind. “It has taken most countries time to get from a belief that only a few students can achieve to the point where most educators embrace the proposition that all can do so.... But no education system included in this study has managed to achieve sustained high performance without developing a system that is premised, in detail, on the proposition that it is possible for all students to achieve at high levels and necessary that they do so.” (p. 233)

Core Standards: The report endorses the value of core curriculum standards that establish rigorous, focused and coherent content at all grade levels. These standards clarify the society’s notions of what students need to know and are able to do. Core curriculum standards can reduce variation in what is offered and expected in classrooms across the country, facilitate coordination of policies and reduce inequities among social and economic groups. (p. 233)

Student Incentives: “One of the most striking features of the American education system, in contrast with the education systems of the most successful countries, is its failure to provide strong incentives to the average student to work hard in school.” (p. 243) U.S. high school students may be led to believe that whether they take easy courses and get D’s in them or take tough courses and get A’s, they can get into the local community college and get on with their lives.

In high-ranking countries, the expectations are clear and universally

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PISA:

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accepted. Many high-ranking countries have high-stakes examination systems that provide strong incentives for students to take tough courses and study hard. Students know they must demonstrate proficiency to qualify for good jobs or higher educational opportunities.

Distribution of resources: Although the U.S. has the second highest per pupil funding, there is little correlation between the overall amount spent on education and student performance. The U.S. is one of only 3 countries in which schools in socially disadvantaged neighborhoods have less favorable student-teacher ratios than schools in advantaged neighborhoods. “Socio-economic disadvantage translates more directly into poor educational performance in the United States than is the case in many other countries.” (p. 34)

If the U.S. is to move to the top ranks in performance or keep from sliding further down the scale, it has to spend its education funds more efficiently with attention to providing all students with access to resources they need to meet high standards. “It is hard to see how the United States can succeed in matching the performance of the world’s highest-performing countries unless it levels the playing field for its students in the way that almost all of its competitors have already done.” (p.249)

Use of Test Data: Whereas some people claim that performance data in the U.S. are often used for accountability purposes, other countries tend to use test data to reveal best practices, identify shared problems and encourage teachers and schools to develop more supportive and productive learning environments. OECD countries are moving to “multi-

layered, coherent assessment systems,... that: support improvement of learning at all levels of the system; are increasingly performance based; add value for teaching and learning by providing information that can be acted on by students, teachers, and administrators; and are part of a comprehensive and well-aligned learning system.....” (p. 51-52)

Teacher Quality: “[U]nwavering support for excellence in teaching and school leadership is perhaps the key element of the policies and practices that drive high-performing education systems....” (p.229) High-performing countries are committed to professionalized teaching. They recruit teachers from the top 10% of graduates, assess the quality and relevance of teacher-education programs and provide heavy support to new teachers. They assign their top-performing teachers as master teachers and coaches, offer incentives and support and strengthen them with training.

To compete successfully, the U.S. needs to attract a pool of highly qualified candidates. This requires elevating the professional status of teachers and compensating them accordingly. An important step is to raise the bar for entry into schools of education and to be more selective in admitting candidates for training. That training needs to be high quality and should include much more clinical education. (p. 239)

Teacher Accountability: Every high-performing country has an effective accountability system for teachers. It may be a system in which student performance results are used by administrators to reward or punish teachers. However, a far stronger motivation for success derives from a teacher’s feeling of professional responsibility to parents, students and

fellow teachers in systems that foster collegiality, innovation and trust.

A school system can promote a culture of individual and collective responsibility by giving school administrators some discretion in guiding their school coupled with accountability for school performance. Good teaching methods are institutionalized in an environment where teachers pay attention to instructional practice, learn from one another and share best practices.

“These are very important issues in the United States right now. Through the previous several administrations, both major political parties have strongly favored administrative forms of accountability over professional or familial forms of accountability...But if the United States aspires to world-class education performance, it will need to staff its schools with world-class classroom teachers and, when that happens, if the experience of the best-performing countries is any guide, it will need to shift the balance in accountability at some stage more towards professional accountability systems...[T]eachers will expect to be treated the way other professionals are treated. The Obama Administration has made a start by encouraging states and districts to move in this direction by using evaluation and support systems to provide teachers with the information and feedback they need to take greater responsibility for the progress of their students, and to create a professional culture in schools focused on collaboration and peer learning.” (p. 245)

In order to make this quantum leap forward, the U.S. has to be able to do something it cannot do now: identify who the great teachers are and are not and make policy, strategy, and support decisions accordingly.

Presidential Debates in 2012

LWVUS President Elisabeth McNamara in early February informed state League presidents that LWV would not be pursuing a request to support an effort entitled “Road to 21 Presidential Debates in 2012”: <http://www.opendebates.org/theroad.html>. LWVUS decided not to support this proposal stating the reasons below.

Elisabeth stated in her letter, “We had two major concerns about this proposal. One stems from the anonymity of the donor who has pledged to provide the initial funding for this effort. We found this lack of transparency both inherently worrisome and a source of potential risk or embarrassment for the League. Secondly, there is no assurance, or commitment to assure, that the debates would be conducted in ways that the League would feel appropriate or in full compliance with federal and state laws. We felt that these were limitations that presented unacceptable levels of risk to the League and to our public reputation for high quality debates.”



Election Verification in South Carolina

By Duncan Buell, PhD, LWVSC Off-Board Director

Perhaps the League can take some credit for improved quality in South Carolina's elections. The analysis of the vote data from the November 2010 general election showed a large number of errors in procedure as well as votes that had gone uncounted. Subsequent to the League's audit, the State Election Commission began requiring similar audits and has posted the election data on its web site.

It would appear that this oversight and the requirement for collection of the audit data has improved the process. The January 2012 GOP Presidential Preference Primary was a much smaller (and thus much less complicated) event

than the November 2010 general election, and thus we would expect to see fewer problems with the primary. Nonetheless, it is good to see that in fact there were relatively few problems. Duncan Buell, a computer science professor at USC, and Skylar Smith, a USC undergraduate working with Dr. Buell, downloaded and analyzed the primary data, and their report is on the League website. Although there continue to be some problems, the number of problems is very much smaller. More importantly, the data for the primary is essentially all present. In 2010, many counties did not collect the HAVA-required data until the SEC asked for it,

and in some counties large parts of the data were missing. In the GOP primary, nearly all the data has been collected, so that an audit is in fact possible.

LWVSC supports S1025, co-sponsored by Sen. Chip Campsen and Sen. John Scott, which would require county election commissions to routinely conduct post-election audits. The bill passed unanimously in the Senate and is currently in the House Committee on Judiciary.

Dr. Buell was invited to present a summary of his work on forensic audits in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on March 30 at the annual conference of the Election Verification Network.

Ensuring The Future Integrity of the Vote

By Eleanor Hare, PhD, & Duncan Buell, PhD, Co-Chairs, LWVSC Alternative Voting Technology Task Force

Auditing Voting Machines

The use of post-election vote audits of the electronic data files by the South Carolina State Elections Commission (SEC) has vastly increased confidence that the certified vote is correct. These post-election audits would have detected the errors found in the 2010 General Election before the totals were certified. The LWVSC supports S.1025, which requires post-election audits; the legislation has been passed by the SC Senate (38-0) and is now (April 1, 2012) in the House Judiciary Committee.

Auditing and Recounting Paper Ballots

Once progress is made in ensuring the integrity of votes cast on iVotronic machines, it becomes necessary to examine the accuracy of counting and recounting paper ballots. Currently, only a small percentage of votes are cast on paper ballots, but it is likely that any future technology will be almost entirely paper ballots.

The SEC has instructed counties to perform recounts of paper ballots by scanning the ballots a second time. When

the same scanner is used to recount the same paper ballots, it is expected that the second scan will give the same results as the first scan. The Audit Task Force of the LWVUSⁱ reports that "a well-conducted, transparent hand count of paper ballots almost always uncovers a few additional votes where the voter intent is clear, but the votes were not detected by a machine count. This is to be expected."

Technical problems have been identified with scanners. In December 2011, the Election Assistance Commission (EAC), noting major flaws in the DS200 optical scanner,ⁱⁱ issued a notice of noncompliance. Tests of the ES&S Model 650 scannerⁱⁱⁱ used in some counties in SC, ignored marks that a person would interpret as a vote. As long as computers are used to count votes, not only will technical glitches present problems, software bugs, or a malicious election-rigging code, can be inserted into the vote recording and tabulating process. Post-election manual random audits are necessary to detect these problems.

The Election Audits Task Force of the LWVUS recommends that both audits and recounts be performed.

Post-election audits differ from recounts. Post-election audits routinely check voting system performance in contests, regardless of how close margins of victory appear to be. Recounts repeat ballot counting in special circumstances, such as when preliminary results show a close margin of victory.^{iv}

South Carolina does not audit paper ballots, and the procedure for "recounting" the paper ballots is not an acceptable recount. Because of the way computers work, the "recount" is highly unlikely to be different from the original count. South Carolina needs to initiate procedures for auditing scanned ballots in every election and to improve procedures for recounting paper ballots.

ⁱ <http://lww.org/content/report-election-audits-task-force>

ⁱⁱ http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9223613/U.S._Finds_Flaws_in_ES_S_DS200_Voting_Machine

ⁱⁱⁱ Jones, Douglas & Simons, Barbara (2012). Broken Ballots, Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications, Figure 4.8.

^{iv} <http://lww.org/content/report-election-audits-task-force>



Legislature Should Encourage, NOT Discourage, Voting

Op-ed article from Victoria Middleton, Executive Director, ACLU of South Carolina, and Barbara Zia, Co-President, LWVSC, published in *The State* and other South Carolina newspapers

A recent PEW report (“Inaccurate, Costly, and Inefficient,” February 2012) exposes systemic inefficiencies and errors in the process by which we elect those who govern us. It confirms shocking facts – 51 million or more eligible U.S. citizens, over 24 percent of the eligible population, are not registered to vote. The PEW study charges that the voter registration process is riddled with clerical and human errors. What it does not reveal is any evidence of voter fraud. Voters die, they move across precinct and state lines, they serve in our armed forces overseas, they lose their homes due to foreclosures, and their voter registration may not always be accurate, but there is no credible evidence that they are stealing other citizens’ votes.

The PEW study shows that clerical errors (committed by volunteers who register voters but also election commission officials and even DMV voter registration offices) are of urgent concern. It recommends an overhaul of the system to improve records, streamline processes and save money. One recommendation, establishing new ways voters can register online, would make the process easier and less susceptible to error for many in our state.

For many, but not all.

Many voters in our state would not be helped by enhanced technology. According

to the last Census, of those who voted in our state in November 2010, 0% of African-American voters in South Carolina registered via the Internet or online, compared with 31,149 or nearly 2% of white voters. Minority voters in South Carolina registered through community voter registration drives at twice the rate of white voters. Voter registration drives help citizens who face the biggest barriers to voting: the elderly, the disabled, those who move frequently, lower-income voters and minority communities, all of whom may lack access to a county voter registration office in South Carolina. Many of these voters are also less likely to be able to register on-line.

Instead of analyzing and remedying the real problems plaguing our elections system, our state legislators are compounding them with voter suppression measures. Given the importance of community voter registration drives in South Carolina, our legislators should not be debating H. 4549, which would impose fines and burdensome bureaucratic requirements on volunteers who help people register. This bill would stop organizations like the League of Women Voters, the NAACP, and faith groups from assisting people to register.

In 2008, South Carolina was an abysmal

42nd in the nation in voter turnout.

Instead of encouraging participation in our democracy, our legislators are wasting time erecting barriers and wasting scarce resources on non-existent problems. To accommodate our mobile population and working people, we need election-day registration, weeks of early voting, enhanced training of poll workers, and proper audits of our electronic voting machines that assure voters that their ballots are counted properly.

When it passed the National Voter Registration Act, Congress deemed it a national priority to make it convenient for voters to register. The legislation recently passed and currently being debated in our state represents a concerted effort to undermine that resolve.

Note: In November 2010, 2,304,324 South Carolinians voted. Of those, 1,646,359 were white and 615,623 were black. Of the 1,646,359 white voters, 60,712 registered using voter registration drives (3.7%). Of the 615,623 black voters, 43,249 registered through voter registration drives (7.0%). Even though nearly 70% of registered voters in South Carolina are white, fewer white voters registered through voter registration drives than African-American voters.

IMPORTANT LEAGUE DATES:

April

22nd Sunday, *Earth Day*

May

1st Tuesday, *Law Day*

1st Tuesday, *Annual Conservation Lobby Day* – 9AM-5PM, Conservation Activities, SC Art Museum & Statehouse; 5:30-9PM, Oyster Roast, The Seibels House. LWVSC is a co-sponsor.

12th Saturday, Last Day to Register to Vote in June 12th

Primary

June

4th Thursday, *119th Session of the South Carolina General Assembly adjourns*, Statehouse, Columbia

8th-12th

LWVUS Convention, Capitol Hilton Hotel, Washington, DC

12th Tuesday, 7AM-7PM, *State Primary Election*

26th Tuesday, 7AM-7PM, *State Primary Runoff Election*
(if needed)



LWV SC Voter

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The SC Voter

Spring 2012
Volume 61 Issue 4

Established in 1951, the League of Women Voters of South Carolina is a nonpartisan, political organization that encourages citizens to play an informed and active role in government. At the local, state, and national levels, the League works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. Any citizen of voting age, male or female, may become a League member. All members receive the National Voter, the SC Voter, and a newsletter from their local League.

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Website: www.lwvsc.org

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