

VOTER IMPACT

The League of Women Voters of the Piedmont Triad

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January, 2004

LUNCH WITH THE LEAGUE
Tuesday, January 20, 2004
LUNCH 12:15 PM
HOLY TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH
607 North Greene Street - Greensboro
\$8.00 (Reservations 643-2131)

Speaker: Professor Robert Wineburg, Jefferson Pilot Excellence Professor of Social Work, UNCG. Wineburg will speak on his work, "A Limited Partnership: the Politics of Religion, Welfare, and Social Service.

Dr. Wineburg holds a PhD from the University of Pittsburgh. His research and practice interests include the relationship between federal domestic social welfare policy and service provision; the involvement of religious organizations in local service delivery and policy development.

POLICE DEPARTMENT 'RIDE A ROUND'

One of the many services that the Police Department of the City of Greensboro offers is the 'ride around'. This is an educational service that allows one citizen at a time to ride around with a patrol officer in the car and observe the day to day operations of a police officer on duty, answering whatever calls might come through at that time.

Following the luncheon talk by Chief of Police, Mr. David A Wray, we checked with the Department to see if the LWV might be welcomed to undertake such rides and what that might entail.

The Chief has agreed and we have been in touch with the Watch

Operations Group that organizes such things. Perhaps as many as 10/15 members of the League can participate.

Here is what is needed. First we need the names of persons interested in riding in a patrol car for about 4 hours...most of a shift for the officer. Then the Department will check to see that none of the names have any record of any kind with the Department. We will then be informed and work out dates and times for each person participating. Each participant can indicate the preferred time :



morning, afternoon, evening. The hours between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m. are excluded.

Nothing is staged. Each participant will observe a patrol officer on duty, responding to calls ... whatever they may be...from car accidents to domestic difficulties to other assorted things that happen in our city. Each participant will appear at the office of the Watch Operations Group in the Police Headquarters, fill out a form that absolves the Department from claims and be assigned to an officer for the shift.

Those who have participated report interesting and positive experiences.

If interested, please send email to that effect to David Haxton, dphaxton@aol.com, or drop a postcard with the same information to him at 909 Elizabethan Drive, 27410. We are trying to get dates from the Department for sometime in late February and early March. All of us cannot participate at one time, of course, so it will take a bit of scheduling.

Primary Season 2004 in NC

Primary season for the 2004 elections is upon us already, and there are a number of election activities with which the League of Women Voters of North Carolina (LWVNC) is involved.

1. Check It Out – The NC Supreme Court and Court of Appeals candidates will have the opportunity to accept public funds for their campaigns if they agree to funding limits. The catch is that there must be state funds to give to these candidates and a large part of the money will be coming from a check off on our NC 2003 Tax forms. Educating the public about the necessity of checking the box is vital to making this reform a reality. (see pages 5 and 6)
2. Community meetings on voter education - The LWVNC Board has been meeting with

the Director of the NC Board of Elections, Gary Bartlett, to develop a plan to involve a wide variety of groups in our community in getting out the vote. Diversity and media support will be emphasized. If you have any specific ideas, please pass them along to any



LWVPT Board member. There will be room for flexibility in the local activities.

3. Free Air Time – This is a general education effort to let people know that there is a bill in the US Congress providing for free air time. A forum was held by the Federal Communications Commission on Oct. 22nd in Charlotte, NC. LWVNC Co- President, Mary Klenz, participated. She noted that studies show most broadcasters typically fail to cover local issues and local candidates. “That really does our democracy a disservice. It becomes a self-perpetuating spiral downwards: less information, less voting, less information.” Kathy Walker, a new member of LWVPT, also

addressed the forum. You can hear her remarks at www.fcc.gov/localism. A video is available on this subject. Jane Aycock, Voter Service Chair, is taking it to GCTV to be aired. There is some grant money available through the LWVNC for the LWVPT to educate people in the Triad on this important issue.

Do You Concur with the Proposed New LWVUS Position on the Selection of the President? (LWVUS)

The League of Women Voters has long been among the staunchest supporters for the direct election of the President. The League has testified and lobbied for legislation to amend the Constitution to replace the Electoral College with direct election. The measure, which passed the House and nearly passed the Senate in 1971, has been revived in each Congress. In 1997, the LWVUS again called for abolition of the Electoral College and for direct election of the President and Vice President in testimony before the House Subcommittee on the Constitution. The League has also supported national voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections to ensure equity for voters from all states and to

facilitate the electoral process.

The proposed updated position continues to support direct election of the President and the abolition of the Electoral College. However, in the past 30 years, much has changed in the presidential selection process and we need to define and

measure our values against other factors that appear to have dramatically altered the process. Today, the process of selecting the president is dominated by questions of campaign strategy and campaign finance, the role of the parties in the primaries and caucuses leading up to the convention, the role of the media and the effect of developing technologies. If the League's concerns include encouraging the best candidates and promoting the highest participation by informed voters, we need to understand the impact of the process on those values.

Convention 2002 adopted a process to update the Selection of the President position in order to address these gaps and examine other changes that have taken place since the League's last study on this subject over 30 years ago. A task force of state and local League representatives has been

working with the LWVUS Board and staff to guide the update process. **Now your input is needed!**

Every member's opinion counts.

A proposed new LWVUS position on the Selection of the President has been developed, and the LWVUS Board

is seeking concurrence directly from individual League members. You will find the proposed position, along with a response form, in your January/February 2004 *National Voter and* online in the Position Update section of the LWVUS members' site.

It's easy to participate.

We are being asked whether we strongly support, accept, or do not accept the proposed position. After you have studied the position and formed your opinion, send in your concurrence response to the LWVUS office, preferably online in the Position Update section of the LWVUS members' site, <http://www.lwv.org/concurrence/>. Or you may respond by mail.

Postmark deadline is March 1, 2004. Online deadline is March 4, 2004.

If you want to do more to prepare . . .

- Reread the articles on the presidential selection process that have appeared in the recent issues of the *National Voter*. These are available on the LWVUS website at <http://www.lwv.org/positionupdate/>.
- Explore additional background information posted in the Position Update section of the LWVUS member' site.

Observing at the Polls, 2003

By Ellen Olson

To date, I have received 12 observation forms from the Greensboro City Council primary and election October and November 2003. Two were lacking the second page, and one was from early voting. Briefly, the findings were as follows:

1. Ten marked that all campaign signs and workers were fifty feet of more away from the polling place. Two said that they were not. One of the two remarked that the polling place was probably less than fifty feet from the street.
2. Ten marked that all the voting machines in the polling places were in working order. Two said there was a broken

Your opinion matters. Express it.

machine. In one case the screen was not readable.

3. Only one person marked that a voter was told that his/her name was not in the polling book and was clearly directed to the correct polling place.

4. Ten did not observe a voter filling out a provisional ballot. In one case, a voter was not listed as a voter at any precinct and was allowed to fill out a provisional ballot.

5. One observer saw a voter having problems with the voting machine. This was a new voter who did not understand how to use the machine. The voter was instructed by one of the precinct workers.

6. The maximum number of people in line was 4. Most of the precincts had no one in line. The longest wait was two minutes. Two people spent three to four minutes voting, the rest spent a shorter amount of time.

7. The comments were very interesting. Observers found a friendly atmosphere, smoothly running process, experienced workers, helpful and efficient workers, clear directions at all machines and good instructions. The door to the polling place was too heavy for voters in one precinct and another wished that the candidates'

names would be closer to the boxes to be checked on the voting screen.

8. There was one concern about the status of LWV members as observers. There are official observers, appointed by the parties, who can challenge the voting process in the precincts. Since this was a non-partisan election, there were no official observers. However, any person can go in to any polling place and spend a few minutes observing.

Many thanks to those of you who filled out the observer forms.

Book Review

By Sue Jezorek

I highly recommend Barbara Ehrenreich's book, Nickled and Dimed. Ehrenreich decided to find out if she could live on low wages of \$6-7 an hour by taking jobs in different cities as a waitress, hotel maid, house cleaner, nursing home aide, and Wal-Mart salesperson. Her experiences reveal a lot about the millions of Americans struggling to survive often working two or three jobs without benefits many of us take for granted.

In every city she found affordable housing to be the

biggest obstacle to surviving. She was forced at times to pay daily rates for the cheapest motels since she couldn't come up with a month's deposit for a room or apartment. She acknowledged that she did not have it as bad as many of her co-workers since she allowed herself a car, and she was not trying to support a family.

Her revealing experiences show us some of the contrasts in our society-saying everyone deserves a living wage but demanding cheap prices; wealthy people having their homes cleaned by people they never need to see or meet. She felt the degrading experiences of drug testing, managers guarding against "time theft", and the condescending attitude of bosses. She also found that discrimination is still very much a part of the employment equation. She also found out that these jobs are very difficult and demanding physically and often require people to work while sick or injured.

Her attempts at seeking help were not very positive. I hope we have a better support system in Greensboro with the Salvation Army, Greensboro Urban Ministry, the Interfaith Hospitality Network and other groups. However people who need help often don't know where to go and face the challenge of transportation to the places for help. Even making phone calls is difficult



if you don't have an address and phone. Reading the book

can make us all more aware of what the life of the working

Prague Revisited

By David

Ellen and I were once

Prague after a brief visit two

and a three

five years ago. Our two week visit was built around a conference on post-communist parliaments held at the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Science.



Prague is a more prosperous looking city than ever before. The shops are more upscale, the cars more recent (and numerous) and restaurants greatly improved. The floods of two years ago still leave their mark. While building interiors have been renovated, the flood level (up to the second floor) is still visible on some buildings now under repair.

Beyond the downtown and the medieval-baroque center, however, streets and buildings

look more as they have previously. But still, there are new housing developments and new shopping centers scattered around the periphery and in the suburbs.

The three party coalition government has a one-seat majority in parliament against two parties in opposition, each

of which is violently opposed to the other. Not only do the three coalition parties have a hard time sticking together in government, but each of them is internally split. While the Czech Republic happily joined NATO and the EU, there may be some difficulties in continuing to participate with us in Iraq, and in deciding to support the recent proposals for a new EU "constitution".

Our conference on parliaments went very well, largely because

the social sciences of former communist countries are now able to function at an international standard. Our participants from both eastern and western countries could interact and contribute as professionals with one another. I have been privileged to not only witness, but to participate in these developments.

ACTION ITEM

Say Yes to Judicial Fairness
See page 6 for information you can share about the Public Campaign Fund for N.C. Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals . Thanks to Peg Chapin for preparing this sheet.

It is important for each member of the organizations working to publicize the check off on the 2003 NC Tax Forms to inform other taxpayers. Copy page 6 and post it near your desk at work, give it to your friends. Bring up the topic in conversation. Let's work to make public financing of the N.C. Supreme Court and Court of Appeals a reality.

Remember to inform the person who prepares your taxes that you want to check YES.

The League of Women Voters extends condolences to member Bonita Olds on the death of her husband, John Roger Olds.

You will get a chance to support fair courts and fair elections – without it costing you anything!

Just say "Yes" to the Public Campaign Financing Fund when you fill out your 2003 North Carolina income tax form.

Check It Out, Check It Off . . . Say "Yes" To Judicial Fairness!

A new law in North Carolina is creating a new way for voters to learn about the candidates who want to be judges on the N.C. Supreme Court and Court of Appeals. It also gives those candidates a new way to finance their campaigns, using money from a Public Campaign Fund, so they don't rely on the companies or lawyers who appear in their courts!

Fair elections and fair courts go together.

But this new law will only work if you mark the "check off" box on your income tax form "Yes" and show your support for the Public Campaign Financing Fund.

This box will appear on your 2003 income tax form

By saying "Yes", you will:

- get a nonpartisan voter guide that helps you cast an informed vote;
- give all candidates, regardless of their personal wealth, a chance to run a fair and effective campaign*
- help keep special-interest money out of our judicial elections and courts

N.C. Public Campaign Financing Fund

This Fund pays for a nonpartisan voter guide and helps fund judicial candidates who accept strict fundraising and spending limits. Do you agree that \$3 should go to this Fund? Filling in a circle below will not increase your tax or reduce your refund.

<u>You</u>	<u>Your Spouse</u>
Yes	Yes
No	No

Please Join These Statewide Groups Who Ask You to:
Say "Yes" To Judicial Fairness

Support Voter-Owned Elections and Fair Courts

League of Women Voters

NC Black Leadership Caucus Democracy North Carolina NC Center for Voter Education
AARP Common Cause

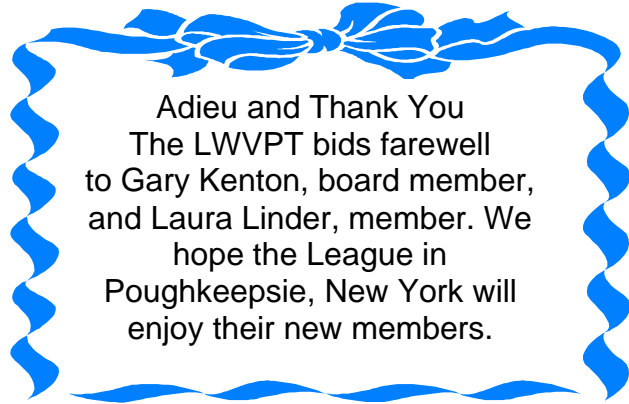
For more information, call 1-888-OUR-VOTE or go to www.ncjudges.org

*To be eligible for public financing, candidates must first get several hundred small donations from registered voters across N.C. to show broad support and also accept spending and fundraising limits.

One City One Book for 2004

Greensboro residents will read The Middle of Everywhere: Helping Refugees Enter the American Community by Mary Pipher.

Discussions and other events start October 1. Libraries and book stores will stock the book.



Adieu and Thank You
The LWVPT bids farewell to Gary Kenton, board member, and Laura Linder, member. We hope the League in Poughkeepsie, New York will enjoy their new members.

Excerpt from a letter from the LWVUS president, Kay Maxwell to The Honorable DeForest B. Soaries Jr., Commissioner, The Election Assistance Commission on December 17, 2003

"As you begin your work, the League is concerned about the emerging public controversy over the security of direct recording electronic (DRE) voting systems. We believe the Election Assistance Commission should provide guidance to the states on procedural and management steps that can be taken before the 2004 general election to provide additional safeguards for "touchscreen" voting machines, as well as for other voting systems.

"Severe problems in recent elections have shaken voter confidence in our election systems, so it is particularly important that immediate action be taken to reassure citizens that they will have a full opportunity to vote and will have their votes accurately counted.

"There are a variety of practices that would improve the security of electronic voting systems. Among these are a prohibition on wireless and Internet connections and the development and enforcement of statewide security plans for voting machines. Some states, Maryland for example, are already pursuing statewide procedural and management techniques to ensure the security of their electronic voting systems. We believe that all the states, and the nation's voters, would benefit if the Commission were to describe those "best practices," including polling place operations, that can be put in place for the 2004 election to improve security for each type of voting system.

"In addition to fundamental security considerations, there are two other areas where the public will expect improvements during the 2004 election process, and where basic guidance from the Commission would be helpful.

"First, every state must provide provisional ballot opportunities in 2004 pursuant to the Help America Vote Act. State and local practices on provisional ballots vary and we are concerned that a lack of uniformity may call election results into question. In addition, we are concerned that every voter who is eligible for a provisional ballot may not receive one, and that there may be instances where eligible voters will not have their provisional ballots counted. The League recently issued "A Guide to Implementing the New Federal Provisional Ballot Requirement" which sets out eight recommendations on this subject. The guide can be found at www.lwv.org.

"Second, voters in 2004 will expect that they will not have been erroneously purged from the voter rolls and that their voter registration applications will have been fully and properly processed. Reports from the 2000 election suggest that many eligible voters were erroneously purged from the rolls, largely due to mistaken or incomplete information on voters' identities. Further, reports continue that voter registration applications submitted through departments of motor vehicles and other agencies are not being processed in a timely fashion. Guidance from the Commission would undoubtedly assist election administrators in achieving more accurate voter registration rolls."

Read the complete letter on the Internet: http://www.lwv.org/join/elections/hava_eacletter_1203.html