



The
Bulletin

League of Women Voters in Henderson County - Since 1966

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

MARCH 2010

"FOLLOW THE SUNSHINE...MAKING GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENT"

**March 18
GENERAL MEETING**

**Thursday 7:00-8:30 pm
Library - Kaplan Auditorium**

"Follow The Sunshine...Making Government Transparent"

**Coord. Sharon Burlingame and
Jeannette Cannon and the
Observer Corps**

Featuring a 4-Speaker Panel :
Tammy Drake: Clerk, City Council
**Sarah Zambone: Dep. Atty, County
Board**

Bob Staton, Mayor, Flat Rock
**Ken Butcher, BRCC Board
Member**

What do we know about the Sunshine Laws of 1979? Why were they passed? What needed protecting? What is transparency? What are our rights with respect to requesting information about the government? Can we citizens ask to see any document and expect to find cooperation? Why does it matter?

Gov. Beverly Perdue said recently "Only when the doors of government are open wide, and the sun truly shines in, can we be sure that our government by the people is working for the people."

"Sunshine laws are representative of a state's responsiveness to its citizens, and its commitment to maintaining ethics in government" said Exec. Director Jay Stewart of the Better Government Association.

In a 2002 study, NC was rated as the 43rd worst in the country with a "D-" and in 2009 another study ranked NC 23rd. Amazing improvement but with a ways to go still! What goes thru your mind when you read that data? Do we really understand how it affects us personally and collectively?

Transparency is important in five areas of law: open meetings (Sunshine Laws), open records (Freedom of Information), whistleblower protections, campaign finance, and conflicts of interest.

The NC Open Government Coalition (NCOGC) continues to make good progress in its efforts to improve education, awareness and ultimately, compliance with the state's open government laws. Since launching the Sunshine Center at Elon University in 2007, the work of the NCOGC has raised citizen awareness of open government laws in the state from 26% to 37%...only 63% remaining to reach!

What is the task then, for us citizens? Obviously we need to educate ourselves in order to act when needed. What are some ways that organizations and independent citizens can advocate most effectively for transparency and accountability in government? What bills have the NC legislature been working on recently that would improve transparency? How do our local government agencies comply with NC transparency laws?

The Observer Corps of the LWVHC will present a panel of speakers: Tammy Drake, Clerk, City Council; Sarah Zambone, Deputy Attorney, County Board; Bob Staton, Mayor of Flat Rock; and Ken Butcher, a former School Board member and a present BRCC Board member. An opening DVD about the Sunshine Laws will lead into panel input on various aspects and perspectives of the laws, and conclude with a Q & A with the audience. It's our time to learn, to become more aware, to understand why Sunshine Laws matter, and to know our role in holding our government accountable.

HELPFUL SITES TO KEEP MEMBERS INFORMED AND ADVOCATING 24/7

League of Women Voters of Henderson County - www.lwvhcnc.org

League of Women Voters (National) www.lwv.org

League of Women Voters (North Carolina) www.lwvnc.org

VOTE411.org (non-partisan election and voter information)

Factcheck.org (non-partisan; check accuracy of political ads and allegations)

- internete-mail@ncleg.net (readable by all Legislators)
- ncsenatemembers@ncleg.net (readable by all Senators)
- nchousemembers@ncleg.net (readable by all House Members)

SUNSHINE PROJECT SEARCH WARRANTS ... Lee Luebbe and Jeannette Cannon

Did you know that Search Warrants are public records? Do you know where to go to locate search warrants?

Jeannette Cannon and Lee Luebbe followed the instructions of the League State Board and carried out the research project as requested as part of this Statewide Sunshine Project. Here is what we learned. Not all states make search warrants public records; North Carolina does.

Go to the Clerk of Courts Office, Criminal Division. You will need to know either the case file or the person's name. All search warrants are ordered by either a judge or a magistrate – often requested by the police or sheriff department staff. Once served, they are then filed in the Clerk of Court's office, Criminal Division, and become public record.

Do you think search warrants should be public records? We're curious to hear what members think. What are the pros and cons? How do you think this public information is used?

THINK SUNSHINE! AND FLOWERS! WHY BUY BULBS NOW? Coord. Gwen Hill

You asked ?? Well, the bulbs we buy in the fall are beautiful and a great way to transition out of the winter blahs into spring. But just as you get used to all that color and beauty, the flowers wilt. The **SPRING BULB SALES** provides bulbs that last throughout the summer.

The variety is spectacular and as you probably know, the bulbs are guaranteed. All you have to do is buy them and plant them by the directions provided. Bulbs make great gifts, potted or ready for the yard. The best part of the bulb sales is that it supports our League. For more information about the bulbs available or for order forms, contact Gwen Hill at 696-6677. Hurry, in order to receive bonus bulbs, sales end March 14th. That's right! **SALES END MARCH 14TH ! CALL GWEN NOW! TIME IS SHORT!**



HOW LEAGUE WILL HELP THE CENSUS EFFORT

Our League pledged to acknowledge that "it's in our hands" to help make sure that the upcoming Census count is as complete as it can be. A correct count means funding to states and communities based on the researched data. It ensures a fair representation all the way from Congress to the State Legislatures, to the County, City councils, and voting districts. Our Diversity Dialogue group shared how some Hispanics are afraid to be counted because of being 'hunted down'...others had heard variations on that theme or some just not understanding it well enough. Apparently the public schools are sending home information with the young people and letting them be the 'educators'. We know that many groups in the community are doing their part.

League will be educating through our column "The League View" and PSA's to the community. But, on a personal level, each of us can stay alert to conversations we hear or engage in; listen to the fears or concerns and try to address them factually and if the answers are unknown to us, try to get answers and correct any misconceptions. As we educate ourselves, we can be of help to others! Help people feel SAFE!

FROM THE LEADERSHIP**Nancy Glowacki, Pres.**

Saw a robin today..."bob-bob-bobbin' along" as the song goes! (very old song) Having just recently returned from a 3-week trip to NZ to see family and grandkids, I'm more than ready to "spring" into action again for our spring activities which are also "bobbin along" at a clip! We just enjoyed a turnout of 65 or so to the Immigration Program which received very favorable feedback...and the joint ECO-League Recycling Progress Report Forum brought out about 90 citizens. Our Observer Corps leadership is so engaged in bringing a strong educational program to us on March 18 re: Sunshine Laws...then we're celebrating our 90th Birthday with the Cinema fundraiser in March. On to another exciting General Meeting in April (to be announced), and our BIG 90th PARTY at our Annual Meeting May 8 held on a Saturday so everyone can attend!

Ongoing discussions continue to float issues that might need our attention. Our various committee groups are always hard at work... new officers will join the Board in May and we'll say "huge thank you's" to those who have served so amazingly. There is the State Council in April, and the US Convention in Atlanta in June! It's been an amazing year so far...and we'll keep on "bobbin' along" thru Board Training in June!

Through it all, our Media Team of Rudi Simko (Public Information Officer) and Renee Kumor (Column writer) have worked diligently with program leaders to produce a high level of the written media, as well as PSA's, which in turn has raised League's profile in this community even higher and brought people out to our programs! Renee produces our weekly educational column "The League View in the Times-News Sunday paper! The educational value of our Public Relations is vital to the public gaining an accurate and positive understanding of League, what we do and how we work! Their ongoing valuable contribution deserves a rousing "thank you" from all of us!

At our request, on the 14th day of February, the Board of Commissioners and each Municipality issued a Proclamation for the 90th Birthday of the LWVUS as "LWV Making Democracy Work Day" to pay tribute to all League members everywhere who have worked to keep citizens alert and informed of their personal responsibility to preserve our Democracy! We are grateful to them and proud of League!

PROGRAM PLANNING : WHAT DID MEMBERS SAY? Submitted by Lee Luebke, V.P.

Renee Kumor and Diane Rhoades partnered to facilitate our League's Program Planning for National and Local Programs at our January 25th General Meeting. Read on to become informed if you were not present.

NATIONAL PROGRAM

The review of the existing positions in "Impact on Issues" gave new members an idea of how many positions have been reached on the National level in the past 90 years. Suggestions made for new studies included Federal Funding of Public Education, Privatization of Services, and Creating a Department of Peace. No consensus was reached on any one topic. Therefore, delegates to the National Convention in June are going without specific direction from the Board/members. In other words, they will go uncommitted and will be free to cast their vote for whatever proposed study they believe to be the best of all proposed.

Under the LWVNC Natural Resources position, Barbara Barnett raised Duke Energy's proposal to construct nuclear power plants. Barbara requested LWVHC take action by conveying to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission the LWV position on nuclear power and the concern regarding the cost, water consumption, radiation contamination and the transportation of nuclear waste. The members at the planning meeting supported this request. **Only approval of the board is required to take action on this request.**

LOCAL PROGRAM

All existing local positions were reviewed and retained. The goal to rewrite the positions by the Annual Meeting, May 8, in a consistent format will record the progress made in achieving the positions as well as suggest what needs continued monitoring and attention. This will be especially insightful for new members and give a good review for those established League members.

A NEW Local Study Item Proposed and Supported: *Do appointed public bodies in Henderson County encourage citizen participation/ democracy? This study will attempt to evaluate the transparency of decision making in Henderson County's appointed boards and councils based on laws of NC and League principles.*

Rationale: The Observers Corps of the League is currently observing primarily city councils and the County Board -- but few appointed boards. Most appointed boards make recommendations to the elected bodies. For that reason the decision-making in the appointed boards is equally important. League principles to advocate for democracy should also drive League to evaluate these bodies as well as knowledge of the laws which govern these bodies. Budget Request: \$100.00

Suggested Work Plan:

If supported by the members at the annual meeting and a minimum of five league members agree to **coordinate** this project in the next year, the following timeline is suggested.

August – 2010 - The Committee will familiarize themselves with N.C. statutes related to transparency of public bodies, learn what makes a meeting public; and obtain the regular schedule of meetings of appointed public bodies.

September 2010 - The Committee will develop for Board approval a criteria which can be easily used by observers who attend meetings of appointed bodies and consensus questions to be used in April.

October 2010 - Training session will be conducted for league members who choose to observe the appointed bodies.

October – March - League members will be engaged to attend the meetings of appointed bodies and provide the feedback to the Coordinating Committee based on the established criteria and the laws of the State of NC. Committee will meet regularly - once a month - to compile results and interview observers.

March 2011 - Committee will compile results to share with all League members in April.

April 2011 - General meetings will discuss compiled report and explore consensus with membership.

May 2011 - Publish an easy-to-read report of findings and consensus if one is reached.

June 2011 - Make findings public and determine how best to communicate to the advisory boards

This proposed local program will be on the agenda for action at the May 8 Annual meeting.

In adopting any new study, the League always asks the questions: Is it timely? Can League manage the study in a professional way? (People power is needed as well as money.) Does the study gain visibility for League?

If you are interested in serving on the Core Group to guide this study, please give Lee Luebbe a call, 694-3710, or send an e-mail to lluebbe2@morrisbb.net.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

Priscilla Burch, Chair

From the thorough, hard work of our Nominating Committee, Priscilla Burch, Chair; Charlyne Coleman, and Sharon Burlingame, comes the following Slate of Officers on which to vote at our Annual Meeting, Saturday, May 8, 2010 at the Hendersonville Country Club:

- Vice President: Diana Richmond-Campi
- Treasurer: Stan Kumor
- Director: Carol Ward
- Nominating Committee: Priscilla Burch, Chair; Sharon Burlingame

Our League is so special in the way that leadership steps forth to learn, to fill 'big shoes', and to put their own 'touch' on this dynamic endeavor for democracy! Thank you to the Nominating Committee and to those who said "yes"!

FROM THE SOCIAL POLICY NETWORKING GROUP ...Martha Sachs

The Social Policy Networking Group met on January 25th, and it was once again apparent how different aspects of social policy impact and interact with one another.

It seems that we are way behind Transylvania County in providing Affordable Housing. The median income in Henderson County is \$67,000, which would suggest we don't have a problem. However, since one out of five children in our public school is eligible for free or reduced price lunches, there is likely a greater need than our community wishes to acknowledge.

With the issue of Mental Health, the administrative agencies to oversee referrals to private practitioners has been a failure, but they don't seem to know how to fix it. At a recent board meeting of Western Highlands MLE (which serves Henderson County and 7 others), the C.E.O. did most of the talking. The good news is that Henderson County has hired an individual to screen the mental health history of those who are arrested – which should result in more treatment and less incarceration. It should be obvious that all – Affordable Housing, children in poverty, Mental Health, inappropriate incarceration – have an impact on, and are impacted upon, by the Immigration issues we have studied.

THIS MONTH'S OBSERVER CORPS REPORT: MENTAL HEALTH

Carol M. Ward

The Board of Western Highlands Network (WHN) has recently been added to the governmental meetings monitored by the LWVHC's Observer Corps. WHN is the local management entity (LME) responsible for administering publicly funded mental health, developmentally disabled, and substance abuse services in Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, and Yancey counties. State "mental health reform" legislation initiated in 2001 ended the provision of services by local mental health centers and set up a system of LMEs to manage services provided by private, community-based providers. Some of the specific responsibilities of WHN are program budgeting, provider training, handling claims and reimbursements, and client screening and referral.

WHN's Board is unique in both its size and composition with the county manager or designee serving as a permanent member and one other person appointed by each county's board of commissioners serving a three year term. Monthly WHN Board meetings are preceded and followed by committee meetings, some of which include non-Board members, to minimize members' travel time. Most attend regularly and demonstrate an impressive knowledge of the workings of NC's complex mental health services system. Adequate funding, creation of more cost effective services, and clarification of Board term limits are topics of primary concern at present.

Meetings of the WHN Board provide time at the beginning of each session for both public and provider comments. Minutes of the general meetings are posted on WHN's web site, but not the minutes from the Board's finance or other committees, with copies also made available to meeting attendees. Additional written material distributed to Board members during the meetings is not given to audience members, but has been provided upon request when not related to a topic addressed in closed session.

The general atmosphere is cordial among Board members even during occasional differences of opinion; tolerant and polite toward attendees. Observation of one Quality Improvement Advisory Council meeting included an invitation to sit among the members and eat pizza!

ON CLIMATE CHANGE...THE COPENHAGEN CONVENTION

Barbara Barnett, our Natural Resources State/National Chair submitted a report by LWVUS Delegation Chair, Carole Conors who was part of a LWVUS group of eight delegates. Some key points are shared here.

In spite of delegations coming with different agendas (i.e. some scientific, some political), an accord was produced of some substance. The agreement states eleven acknowledgements. Every country except four (Cuba, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Venezuela) intend to sign on. Some of the points are:

1. the need to reforest; to stop deforestation and forest degradation
2. the need to commit specific amounts of money to address damage already caused by climate change
3. that emissions must be reduced
4. that there will be a reporting every two years by countries with regard to their emissions reductions, financial contributions and other efforts to address climate change'
5. specific amounts of money needed to bring energy efficiency to developing countries
6. that climate change must be kept below 2 degrees Celsius rise

7. that developed countries must help least developed countries and small island nations in a predictable way
8. the need for technology transfer
9. the need to recognize the scientific information provided by the Intergovernmental Panel on climate change
10. the need for developing countries to make commitments and contribute
11. a re-look in 2016 including consideration of reducing the 2 degrees Celsius to 1.4 degrees Celsius.

A SPECIAL INVITATION as a follow up to Barbara's article on the Copenhagen Climate Accords:

The Four Seasons Sierra Committee invites the public to their March 25th meeting, a forum on the Copenhagen Climate Accords. Our speaker is Ellie Johnston, a delegate of the Southern Energy Network Steering Committee and student at UNC Asheville. Meet & Greet is 6:30 pm at the Henderson County Main Library, Kaplan Auditorium, March 25, 2010.

**HURRY HURRY! STEP RIGHT UP! TICKETS ARE SELLING FAST
FOR OUR MARCH CINEMA FUN-DRAISING EVENT!**

“IRON JAWED ANGELS” is a ‘must see’ film....several times over! The first time takes your breath away and surfaces a variety of feelings...the second time brings a deeper understanding of the underlying issues that still are in existence in our society today...and maybe the third time brings you to your feet to act on these issues. So get your ticket/s and find friends and neighbors and elected officials and high-school-ers and parents and everyone to buy tickets too and experience this educational piece of history that needs to be comprehended fully and then cherished and valued !

Tickets must be purchased from League Members (NOT AT THE CINEMA) for either the 12:30 or the 7:15 showings. (They are different colors.) This is a great fundraiser for League at \$10.00 per ticket... call Lee Luebbe 694-3710 (**or Joe or Nancy Glowacki 693-5257 or 606-5201 from March 6 thru 14** while Lee is away for a week) Plan to come 45 minutes early to enjoy the Bistro food available and to socialize !

THE FORUMS ARE COMING! INDEED THEY ARE ! Carol Cleveland, Voter Service Chair

Now that the filings to run for office are complete, we can begin to schedule the forums before the Primary. Early Voting begins April 15. (Same date as the **Tax deadline** too...be sure to **Check “YES”** to designate \$3 of taxes to N.C. Public Campaign Fund)

Our TWO (2) forums will most likely fall between March 23 and April 8 and will be held at the City Operations Building most likely. **WATCH FOR PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS AS WELL AS ALERTS FROM LINNEA.** Tentatively, we will attempt to have County Commissioner Candidates and Sheriff Candidates at one forum, and Clerk of Deeds and School Board at the second forum.. The House race forum/s will be considered further with Asheville-Buncombe County League to explore collaboration; more later.

FROM OUR MEMBERSHIP CHAIR....Gayle Kilcoin

The Membership Committee is in the process of regrouping! We are updating the materials for the Prospective Packets and the New Member Packets and planning ongoing strategies to build and maintain our vibrant membership of 100+ ! Next month, we shall introduce some new members in the Bulletin; and we have quite a few prospective members on the horizon. Take time at each meeting to seek out people with the guest badges , introduce yourselves, and show them “League” in action! And keep your eyes and ears open to people you know or meet whom you can bring to a meeting!

Speaking of action...if you enjoy people and enjoy being organized, then please step forward and volunteer to be a vital part of the Membership Committee ! It's one of the most rewarding, nurturing,

LWVHC CALENDAR - MARCH REMINDERS AND APRIL-MAY-JUNE 'PEEK'S'

MARCH 4 THURS.	BOARD MEETING – WCCA Conference Room 11-1
MARCH 10 WED.	A Special 'extra' for interested Leaguers! "The Politics of Aging: Social Security, Medicare and Health Care". Free at BRCC, Blue Ridge Conference Hall. 10 am-12 and 7 pm to 9 pm Speaker: Laura Feldman, noted educator and advocate. Call 697-0209
MARCH 14	DEADLINE FOR ORDERING BULBS – GWEN HILL 693-1711 x111 or 891-8083 Forms are available from Gwen ...and Nancy 693-5257
MARCH 18 Gen. Mtg. 7:00-8:30 PM	Observer Corps presents "FOLLOW THE SUNSHINE...MAKING GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENT" see front page for details. Bring a friend !
MARCH 23 Tues. "IRON JAWED ANGELS"	12:30 noon show and 7:15 pm show of this great film! Buy a ticket, sell a ticket, fill all 150 seats for a successful fun-draiser but more importantly to celebrate women's right to vote and the women who got us there! Come 45 minutes early to enjoy some bistro food and to socialize with friends. Call Lee at 694-3710 for ticket info. And between March 6 and 14, call
LATE MARCH- EARLY APRIL	WATCH FOR CANDIDATE FORUM TIMES AND PLACES
APRIL 1, THURS.	BOARD MEETING – WCCA Conference Room 11-1
APRIL 15, THURS. PROGRAM TO BE ANNOUNCED	PLEASE....Watch for Program Announcement via an alert from Linnea and the Times-News
APRIL 16 FRIDAY 8 am-11 am Conference Hall, BRCC	"OUR KIDS...OUR FUTURE", a Town Hall Meeting to focus on early childhood development needs in HC and region. NC Lt. Gov. Dalton will deliver a keynote' Call Elisha Freeman or email elishaf@childrenandfamily.org to register. Spread the word and plan to attend and report back to League! Note: LWV State Council is also 4/16-17 Nancy and Lee will be in Pinehurst.
APRIL 24 SATURDAY	PLAN TO JOIN ECO FOR A VERY SPECIAL <u>EARTH DAY</u> 's 40th Anniversary PROGRAM 10-6 AT BRCC Field ! Battery recycling station, Electric car race, workshops, Solar Stage w/music, and more!
MAY 6 THURS.	BOARD MEETING – WCCA Conference Room 11-1
MAY 8 SATURDAY 11-1 PM	THE GRAND PARTY FOR ALL MEMBERS...THE ANNUAL LUNCHEON MEETING AND CELEBRATION OF LEAGUE'S 90TH BIRTHDAY! DON'T MISS IT! Hendersonville Country Club; Silent Plant Auction; Entertainment; Elections; Round Tables!
JUNE 3 THURS.	BOARD MEETING – WCCA Conference Room 11-1 to welcome new Board members. A late June Training Workshop for All Leadership Date TBA
LWVUS CONVENTION	JUNE 11, 2010 – JUNE 15, 2010 IN ATLANTA ,GEORGIA...Let's get a contingent from LWVHC going! Visit the US website ...we'll have more information too!