



**Save the Date:**

- **Membership Meeting**  
Monday, 10/21 @ 6:30PM  
First Baptist Church  
Healthcare Meeting, Part 1
- **Board Meeting**  
Monday, 10/28 @ 5:30PM  
660 East Lane, Auburn
- **Hot Topics Lunches**  
Thursdays, 11/7 and 11/21  
@ 11AM, location TBD
- **Membership Meeting**  
Monday, 11/18 @ 6:30PM  
First Baptist Church  
Healthcare Meeting, Part 2

See Calendar on Page 5 for more information

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## League of Women Voters of East Alabama

<http://lwv-eastalabama.org/>

### From the President: Oh, yeah...now I remember why I care!

I do care. Really, I do. But I'll get back to that.

As the days roll by, I find myself more and more concerned with today's political landscape. When did people stop talking to each other? When did they stop compromising? I have a three-year-old son at home and I am teaching him things like fair sharing, taking turns and saying "please" and "thank you." It is amazing how many people (in politics and in general) have forgotten these simple concepts. Politeness. Civility. What are those? The old adage goes, "You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." The problem today is that honey doesn't get you re-elected and it doesn't bring in the big bucks. The day most politicians are elected they have to start thinking about their re-election, bringing in the donations and making sure their constituents don't get mad at them for voting against their beliefs. Of course, with so much gerrymandering it isn't too hard to offend one's constituents since many officials are now elected with 60% or more of the vote. Most of this information is enough to make your head explode and the 24-hour news outlets just keep churning it out.

I just returned from one of our Hot Topics Lunches where eight of us gathered to chat about the issues of the day. The conversations were meaty and ranged from healthcare in Alabama to the recent government shutdown to "perceived political polarity vs. most of us are somewhere in the middle" to Dante's Inferno (in particular, the punishment of hypocrites in the Sixth Circle!). I was particularly struck by the breadth and depth of knowledge of these women as we ventured from topic to topic. Then it hit me...

*(Continued on Page 4)*

## LWVAL Healthcare Consensus - Important Update

### **Two meetings planned for healthcare discussion.**

After consideration of the complexity of the healthcare study, we will have two meetings dedicated to the topic. LWVEA director Jan Widell has agreed to walk us through the details of the study on Monday, October 21st, and then lead us through

the consensus questions on Monday, November 18th. Consensus questions and background information are available at [www.lwval.org](http://www.lwval.org).

The League of Women Voters of Alabama (LWVAL) has been gathering information, formulating questions and studying the issue of healthcare for four years.

Now is the time to participate in the healthcare consensus put forth by the state League.

The meetings are at the Auburn First Baptist Church starting at 7PM. Social time will start at 6:30PM. Please plan to attend these important meetings.

## *Dr. Gerald Johnson Speaks to the League*

On September 23, 2013, Gerald Johnson, PhD, and Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Auburn University presented the program for LWVEA in Auburn. He spoke on Alabama public policy with an emphasis on various hindrances to sound public policy.

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*...having one political party in full control of the legislature has a detrimental effect on democracy and public policy.*

In acknowledgement of the League's non-partisan policy, Johnson stressed that he would try to present his information in that context, but noted that some realities come across as partisan. He started off by talking about how good public policy has been difficult under the legal and constitutional hindrances which plague the state. Despite them, we have made some incremental progress.

He then discussed some of the factors that have contributed to Alabama's unsound public policies: the 1901 Constitution, which is "evil in intent and destructive in application;" a regressive tax structure which makes inadequate revenue a persistent problem; and a generally uninformed public. He also believes that the current super-majority in the legislature will have detrimental effects on both public policy and the political party it represents.

Regarding the problems associated with the outdated constitution. Johnson reiterated its well-known purpose of disenfranchising black and poor white voters and its focus on protecting those with higher incomes while extracting most revenue from those with lower incomes. He highlighted the results of Alabama's tax structure with well-known statistics. Alabama's taxes are the lowest in the United States, and our taxes are the most regressive. Johnson also enumerated the polls that show Alabama regularly ranked at the bottom, when compared to other states, in quality of life issues. He pointed out that the state is at the top on various conservative ideologies: we are the most religious and the second most conservative state.

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*In the absence of legislative debate which might have allowed public scrutiny, many of the laws so passed are now under judicial scrutiny.*

Dr. Johnson discussed how having one political party in full control of the legislature has a detrimental effect on democracy and public policy. He offered the observation that while Democrats did at one time have what looked like a super majority on paper, in reality there were factions within the party representing different interests (urban, rural, the black caucus, etc.) that fostered compromise and debate. The current majority does not have these various factions. The demographic of those now controlling the legislature is 95% male and 100% white, which is unrepresentative of the state's population. Following a real super-majority coming into control, debate and discussion have nearly ended, and laws are passed without the full airing that is the hallmark of democracy, with cloture used extensively to prevent debate. In the absence of legislative debate which might have allowed public scrutiny, many of the laws so passed are now under judicial scrutiny.

Johnson narrowed his list of topics he considers to be representative of the failure of good public policy in the state to four: the voter ID law, the new gun law, Medicaid, and the school accountability act. *(Continued on Page 4)*

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## ***National Voter Registration Day - September 24, 2013***

The League of Women Voters of East Alabama participated in the National Voter Registration Day (NVRD) which was officially on September 24. We held two events in Opelika that day--one at Wrights Market and one at Dollar General next to Piggly Wiggly. Since that was election day in Auburn we eschewed the idea of registering persons in Auburn that day.

We did however participate earlier in three events in Auburn. We registered persons during the orientation of new faculty members on campus on September 19. On August 30 we had fun talking with students and employees and registering some at the "Tailgate at the Library" on campus. On September 9 we registered persons at the Kroger store on Dean Road.

Many thanks to the 16 people who volunteered to work at these events. We registered a total of 25 persons and gave forms to many more to be taken to family and friends for their submission. Please thank the merchants who so generously gave us space to set up a table. We will be looking for other locations to register folks in the future. If you have suggestions, let me know.



I anticipate that we will again have some registration events after the first of the year. Primary elections will be held in June throughout the state and there will be heightened interest in becoming politically active. New Voter Identification rules will be in place and the LWV will be active in making people aware of the new requirements. You may be called on to help.

Marilyn Garrett  
Voter Service Chair

**Volunteers for NVRD included Glenda and Carolyn Coker (top photo) and Colleen and Jeffrey Bastuscheck. Other volunteers for NVRD were Charlotte Ward, Judy Lechner, Marilyn Garrett and Phil Garrett. A BIG THANK YOU to each of you for your help and dedication!**

## From the President (*Continued from Page 1*)

...this is why I care about what happens next! The women I interacted with today (and, quite frankly, all of our LWVEA men and women) are so engaged and so interested in making things better that you can't help but join them. I admit that I often have to take a step back and reassess what I perceive as futility in getting anything done in government. It frustrates me when I read about another bill or proposal that just doesn't make sense to me. It helps to know that I am not alone in this and that LWVEA members have seen a lot more than I have yet they keep going! If you ever get a chance to join us, these lunchtime meetings are just wonderful for making connections and getting energized.

I think about my son and what his life will be like in the years to come. Will he agree with my politics or will he embrace the polar opposite of what I believe (like I did with my parents)? In this respect I hope I won't care too much, as long as he is a free thinker and has an open mind. And he says "please" and thank you."

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Kristen De La Fuente  
President, LWVEA*

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## *Dr. Gerald Johnson Speaks to the League (continued from page 2)*

Now that preclearance under the Voting Rights Act has been struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court, Alabama's Voter Photo ID Law, which passed in 2011, is scheduled for implementation during the June 2014 Primary Election. Although efforts are now being made to prevent havoc on election day, agreement on what measures are permissible or even logistically possible is problematic. The process for providing IDs to those who need them is still being determined.

Johnson described the state's new gun law as a policy mess. It contradicts Federal laws and itself. Law enforcement officials are unclear on how to enforce it. Rulings from the Attorney General's office will be needed for clarification.

He discussed how he saw the state's refusal to accept the waiver for Medicaid expansion as detrimental to the economy. The Federal funds could generate a significant number of jobs and add to the tax base.

His greatest concern was directed at the School Accountability Act, SB 310, passed ostensibly to provide local flexibility in public schools. It provides tax credits to families that transfer students from failing schools to a non-failing one. Johnson called it "the worst piece of public policy in modern history." He discussed how the changes to the original bill were adopted in secret. He is concerned that the law provides little guidance in determining how a school is determined to be a failing school, transfers funding from public schools to private schools (including religious ones), and siphons Education Fund dollars to cover the tax credits. Johnson does not believe the law solves any of the problems that exist in public education and suggested that it is another step in a continuing effort to undermine public schools.

*Submitted by LWVEA Board Members Carol Daron and Laura Hill*

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## ***How did our elected officials vote?***

You can keep tabs on what our elected officials are doing (or not doing, as it were) in Congress at the following website: <http://projects.washingtonpost.com/congress/113/>. You can also search by bill or by elected official.

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## Calendar of Events

***We want to see you! Add these events to your calendars and get involved!***

**October 21 (Monday) - General Meeting** Healthcare Consensus Part 1. Please take a look at the materials online (<http://www.lwval.org/takeaction/health-care-2013-consensus/>) and join us for this important discussion. Auburn First Baptist Church, 128 E. Glenn Ave. Social time starting at 6:30PM with meeting beginning at 7:00PM. Light refreshments will be served.

**October 28 (Monday) - LWVEA Board meeting** Start time is 5:30PM, location 660 East Lane, Auburn. All members are welcome.

**November 7 and 21 (Thursdays) - Hot Topics Lunches** We will meet at Toomer's Coffee on South College from 11AM until 12:30PM. All members are welcome and encouraged to visit and chat.

**November 18 (Monday) - General Meeting** Healthcare Consensus Part 2. We will answer the healthcare consensus questions put forth by the LWVAL. Please join us for this important event. Auburn First Baptist Church, 128 E. Glenn Ave. Social time starting at 6:30PM with meeting beginning at 7:00PM. Light refreshments will be served.

**December 3 (Tuesday) - Holiday Social** We will gather this year at Zazu's on Magnolia Street at 5:30PM for some holiday cheer. Please plan to join us!

**Our Observer Corps is, at present, non-existent. Yes, the newspapers have nice write-ups of the meetings. Does that mean we should stop observing what our elected officials are doing? No! We need to be there to report what WE think is important.**

- [Auburn City Council](#) - 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays of each month at 7PM at 141 N. Ross St.
- [Opelika City Council](#) - 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays of each month at 7PM at 204 S. 7th St.
- [Auburn Planning Commission](#) - 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month at 5PM at 141 N. Ross St.
- [Opelika Planning Commission](#) - 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month at 3PM at the Public Works Facility, 700 Fox Trail
- [Lee County Commission](#) - 2nd and last Mondays of the month at 6PM (pre-meeting at 4PM) at the Lee County Courthouse

We also need observers for local school and water boards.

*If you are interested in becoming an Observer, contact [Kristen De La Fuente](#) for more information.*



**LWVEA**  
660 East Lane  
Auburn, AL 36830

E-MAIL:  
[president@lwv-eastalabama.org](mailto:president@lwv-eastalabama.org)

**We're on the Web!**

Visit us at:  
<http://lwv-eastalabama.org/>

Facebook:  
[League of Women Voters of East Alabama](#)

Twitter:  
[@lwveasta!](#)

<b>LWV of East Alabama Board of Directors, 2013-2014</b>	
<i>Kristen De La Fuente</i>	<i>President</i>
<i>Sandy Robinson</i>	<i>Vice-President</i>
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<i>Marilyn Garrett</i>	<i>Director - Voter Service</i>
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<i>Ann Moss</i>	<i>Director - The Voter Editor</i>
<i>Charlotte Ward</i>	<i>Website Management (off-board)</i>

**Dues are Due**

Your dues go towards the functioning of the League of Women Voters at local, state and national levels. Locally, we use our portion of dues to send members to state and national conventions and councils as well as funding for voter services literature and registration drives.

**Individual members \$55.00                      Household of two \$82.50**

Please send checks made payable to LWVEA to our Treasurer:  
Laura Hill, 1317 Clearmont Cir., Opelika, AL 36801

***About the League of Women Voters of East Alabama..***

The League of Women Voters is a grassroots, nonpartisan, political organization that "has fought since 1920 to improve our systems of

government and impact public policies through citizen education and advocacy." Membership is open to men and women 18 or older.

Individual, family and student memberships are available. Join us today and help make a difference in the East Alabama area!

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN  
VOTERS OF EAST ALABAMA**  
660 East Lane  
Auburn, AL 36830

