



The League of Women Voters of Nashville

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THE VOTER

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Calendar

Candidate Forum for Contested Judicial and County-wide Offices

April 19, 2006, 7:00 to 8:30pm at the Howard School Auditorium, 700 Second Ave, South.

How is the Health Care Safety Net Working in Davidson County?

April 20, 2006, 6:30 to 8:00pm at East Literature Magnet High School, 110 Gallatin Pike.

Annual Meeting: May 3. Invitation follows

LWV Tennessee Spring Council: May 5th to 7th, Gatlinburg, TN. (See LWVTN voter, April 2006).

School Board Candidate Forum, June, 2006.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS ANNUAL MEETING

Join us for Breakfast

Wednesday May 3 from 7:30 to 9:00 am

Adventure Science Center, 800 Fort Negley Blvd.

Speaker, Mary Frances Lyle

**RSVP by email at info@lwvnashville.org
or phone at 297-7134**

Mary Frances Lyle, an attorney, has been an articulate spokesperson on women's issues. A former President of the Nashville League of Women Voters, Mary Frances served as lobbyist for the Tennessee Women's Political Caucus from 1982 to 2006, concentrating on issues affecting women, children and families. The Caucus worked hand in glove with the League of Women Voters of Tennessee to draft and obtain passage of the legislation which established the Tennessee Economic Council on Women.

Current League president, Karen Edwards, will provide a review of this year's League activities; Board Members will present budget and nominating committee reports (see the following pages) for approval by the members; and membership handbooks will be distributed. Following the regular business meeting the Molly Todd Award will be presented. The cost for the breakfast is \$15.00.

Candidate Forum for Contested Judicial and County-wide Offices

Curious to know more about all the names you see on the yard signs? Come and join the League as it hosts a Candidates Forum for the May Primary on Wednesday April 19 at the Howard School Auditorium, 700 Second Avenue South, at 7:00 p.m.

All candidates in contested judicial races and county-wide races (County Clerk, Public Defender, Juvenile Court Clerk and Criminal Court Clerk) have been invited to participate. Channel 3 will tape the forum for later re-broadcasts. Anyone interested in helping with the forum please contact MarianOtt at 356-1752 or marian.ott@comcast.net. The organizing committee is particularly interested in people who can serve as timers.

League Works on Key Legislative Issues

The League has been following and advocating on behalf of a number of issues consistent with national, state and local League priorities. In order to be successful, we need you to contact your state Senators and Representatives (see contact information below).

The League **supports** the following issues before the 104th General Assembly:

- Pre-K early childhood education for at-risk children: \$25 m. budget expansion.
- Container Deposit Bill: SB 3616 McNally/HB 3350 Johnson R.
- Food Tax/Cigarette Tax Swap: SB 3626 Jackson/HB 3611 Odom.
- Sunshine in Gov't Improvement Act: SB 2471 McNally/HB 2495 Fowlkes.
- Voter Owned Elections Act: SB 7015 Jackson/HB 7022 Buck.

The League **opposes**: Constitutional Amendment SJR 0127 Fowler.

PRE-KINDERGARTEN. Working with the Tennessee Early Education Alliance, the League supports the continuation of \$25 million in lottery funds for early childhood education and the Governor's proposed expansion of the program by \$20 million using general revenues. High quality early learning and early literacy opportunities for at-risk children pay dividends down the road in improved reading skills, improved academic achievement, higher graduation rates and reduced delinquency. For additional information see www.prekfortn.com.

CONTAINER DEPOSIT. The bill establishes a deposit and recycling program for beverage containers, including those holding alcohol, tea, coffee and soda. By January 1, 2008, all deposit beverage containers sold in Tennessee would have a refund value of 5 cents. Redemption centers would be established and retailers would not be required to take back empty containers. Implementation of the program would decrease litter and conserve resources by recycling. Eleven states representing nearly 1/3 of the US population have bottle bills and there is no evidence that such legislation causes border communities to lose significant sales to neighboring states. For more information about the bill, see the Tennessee Bottle Bill Project www.tnbottlebill.org.

FOOD TAX--CIGARETTE TAX SWAP. The bill, which now has a large number of sponsors, is a revenue-neutral swap that will cut the state food tax in half, from 6 to 3%, replacing the lost revenue with an increase in the cigarette tax of 43 cents a pack. Currently, Tennessee has the nation's highest average food tax at 8.4% and the fourth lowest cigarette tax in the nation at 20 cents. The bill would add an additional 1 cent tax each year to account for anticipated decreases in smoking. In addition to reducing the food tax burden on low income citizens, the tax promotes better health by discouraging teen-

age smoking, and helps Tennessee border country grocers by keeping shoppers in Tennessee. For more information, see the fact sheet at Tennesseans for Fair Taxation www.yourtax.org.

SUNSHINE IN GOVERNMENT. The bill declares that the formation of public policy is public knowledge and should not be conducted in secret. It specifies that all meetings of any government body are to be open to the public at all times and establishes rules for notice of regular and special meetings. It defines terms such as governing body, proprietary information, trade secrets, and meetings and creates procedures for closing a meeting and going into executive session. The bill would greatly help citizens and organizations, such as the League, follow legislative proceedings. The law has not been updated since 1974.

VOTER OWNED ELECTIONS. The bill establishes the Tennessee Democracy Fund as an alternative campaign financing source available to legislative candidates in elections held in 2008 and after, and to candidates for governor in elections in 2010.

REPRODUCTIVE PRIVACY. On March 9, 2006, the Tennessee Senate passed SJR 127 requiring a constitutional amendment that would add new language to Article I of the constitution: "Nothing in this Constitution secures or protects a right to abortion or requires funding of an abortion." The addition of such an amendment would effectively reverse a ruling by the State Supreme Court in September 2000. The court held that several provisions in the Tennessee Abortion Statute were unconstitutional and that the Tennessee Constitution afforded women a right to privacy regarding their right to seek an abortion. The LWVUS has a long standing position on reproductive choices, stating that "Public policy in a pluralistic society must affirm the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices." We need to contact members of the House Health and Human Resources Committee and let them know:

- It is important to preserve the right of privacy of a woman to make reproductive choices with the assistance of her physician.
- The Tennessee Constitution has served the state well and has seldom been amended. The constitutional amendment process is not the appropriate venue for the debate on reproductive choice.
- If *Roe v. Wade* is overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court and the Tennessee Constitution amended, women in Tennessee would not be protected under the current state constitutional right to privacy, even in the case of rape or incest or when the health of the mother is at stake.
- We need to ensure that abortion is both safe and rare. The proposed amendment must pass the Tennessee House this year and must pass both bodies in the 105th General Assembly by a 2/3 vote. The earliest an amendment could appear on the state ballot would be 2010.

CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVES. It is crucially important for members to respond to action alerts contained in the League's weekly Legislative Report prepared by the League's lobbyist, Stewart Clifton, and to respond to other action alerts from the League.

For contact information go to www.legislature.state.tn.us and click on Senate or House. Click on 'members,' then 'your county', then the portion of the map that corresponds to your neighborhood to find contact information for your representative. Committee members are listed under Senate or House committees.

A Word About the LWV Nashville Voter

In an effort to provide more timely information to members, the League began publishing a monthly two-page voter in September, 2005. It is distributed at the beginning of each month electronically to members with email addresses and mailed to members without email. The present April Voter is a special 6-page edition mailed to all members and it contains important materials for the Annual Meeting May 3, 2006.

**PROGRAM OF SERVICE
THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NASHVILLE**

Proposed by Board of Directors: May 3, 2006

I. LOCAL PROGRAM 2006-2007

The LWV-Nashville will always emphasize voter services. In the 2006-2007 year, we will also focus on identifying and promoting quality public policy in the best interest of the citizens of Nashville and Davidson County.

II. STUDY AND ACTION

The goal of the 2006-2007 study and action program is to promote broader, more diverse citizen participation in decision making affecting public policies in Metropolitan Nashville/Davidson County. The program focus will be:

A. EDUCATION

- Study and advocate for quality education. Advocate for equal access to educational opportunities, with special attention to children from diverse backgrounds and with special needs.
- Support adequate resources to meet the standards in the federal No Child Left Behind legislation and the recommendations made by the 2006 Citizen's Panel for a Community Report Card.

B. ENVIRONMENT

- Support a comprehensive coordinated approach to land use, growth and development, and transportation, with focus on encouraging efforts to expand efficient and accessible mass transit, continued improvement of the Metropolitan Transit Authority, and support the commuter rail project.
- Support implementation of Metro's Waste Management Plan, which includes refuse pick-up and disposal, recycling, and hazardous waste disposal.
- Provide information regarding state and federal issues that impact the local environment, including air and water quality, and public lands protection, including state parks and state forests
- Support and coordinate actions taken on state and federal environmental issues, consistent with national and local League positions.

C. ELECTORAL PROCESS

- Promote the equitable distribution of federal allocations for and all aspects of implementation of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 in Metropolitan Nashville/Davidson County.

- Work with the Davidson County Election Commission to facilitate voter participation.
- Support adequate resources for the election process, including acquisition of new voting machines and equipment.
- Support the Metro ADA Compliance Office to ensure compliance with The American with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the provision of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 related to voting rights for citizens with disabilities.

D. HEALTH CARE

- Support a system which consists of a basic level of comprehensive physical and mental health services, and which emphasizes cost effective preventive health care and widespread health education efforts for residents of Metropolitan Nashville/Davidson County.
- Provide information on the policy impacts of TennCare on Metropolitan Government and health care for residents of Metropolitan Nashville/Davidson County.
- Support the provision for the long-term care needs of elderly, frail and disabled citizens and advocate for home and community based alternatives to nursing homes.

E. HUMAN NEEDS

- Support equal access to education, employment and housing.
- Support programs and policies to prevent or reduce poverty and to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families in Metropolitan Nashville/Davidson County, including those newly immigrated and individuals with disabilities.
- Provide voter education activities with newly naturalized citizens.

F. METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT

- Educate citizens about their elected and appointed officials and about how Metropolitan Nashville/Davidson County Government works.
- Educate citizens about the budget process and finances for Metropolitan Government and support policies that provide adequate resources for public services, consistent with state and national League positions.
- Provide information to the Metropolitan Council and its committees regarding issues supported by the League.
- Support ethical standards in Metro Government.

Public Forum: Health Care Safety Net

How is the Health Care Safety Net working in Davidson County? On Thursday April 20th the Metro Council Health, Hospitals and Social Services Committee and the League of Women Voters of Nashville will co-host a Health Care Safety Net Forum in the auditorium of East Literature Magnet High School at 110 Gallatin Pike from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. Come and join us for this very timely discussion!

The forum will provide Metro Council Members with information about the health care safety net in Davidson County. Members of a panel comprised of safety net providers, advocates, and government officials will each make a statement about the impact of TennCare cuts on the residents of Davidson County. Councilman Erik Cole has been working with the League on this effort.

Audience members will then have the opportunity to submit written questions to the panelists. Members of the League will review and organize these questions. The moderator will then direct selected questions to panel members. For further information, or to help with the forum, please contact the League Office at 615-297-7134 or info@lwnashville.org or Joanne Rich, chair of the League's health committee at 615-383-9442 or joanne_r@tndisability.org.

LWVN Board: Karen Edwards, President; Deana Claiborne, Past President; Lucy Du 1st VP; Berdelle Campbell, 2nd VP and Environmental Chair; Mary McLennan, Sec'y; Marian Ott, Treasurer. Committee chairs: Carrie Hudson, Voter Services; Jennifer Cole and Rose Rodriguez, Membership; Jan Bossing, Education; Joanne Rich, Health Care; Karen Weeks, Metro Government, and Denise Carr, Voter Editor. Office Administrator, Jennifer Williams.

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