



Tennessee Voter

League of Women Voters of Tennessee, P.O. Box 158369, Nashville TN 37215-8369
<http://www.lwv-tn.org>

Winter 2008

From the Board

At its January 26 board meeting, the LWVTN adopted the proposed Health Care position. It is printed in full in this newsletter. Our thanks to JoAnne Deeken, Brenda Parker and Karen Weeks for their comments, suggestions and assistance in drafting the statement. Many Leagues indicated that they wanted to continue to look at other health care issues. We will refine that list and have recommendations ready for our 2009 program planning process.

The board also set the legislative priorities for our lobbyist this session. The priorities are open government, opposition to IDs required for voting, and opposition to legislation which would reduce or remove the protection for headwaters/run-off ditches/seasonal streams. Open government will be the lead issue for active lobbying.

Marian Ott, LWV Nashville, is now the LWVTN's representative to the Tennessee Coalition for Open Government. This is one of the bodies debating potential changes to the Sunshine Law. Those of you who attended 2006 Council in Gatlinburg will remember hearing from Frank Gibson about the coalition's efforts.

Mark your calendars now for state Council on May 3. The location will be in middle Tennessee.

We want to thank those who have contributed to our support since our last Voter. They include Bee DeSelm, Sally Faulkner, Brita Clark, LWV of Nashville and LWV of Hendersonville.

Plan Ahead Dates

March 4: Legislative Day in Nashville

May 3: 2008 state Council in Middle Tennessee

June 14-17: National Convention in Portland OR

Pre-K Education

To demonstrate to legislators the broad-based support for pre-kindergarten education, the Tennessee Alliance for Early Education (TAE) is seeking to expand its membership. They are encouraging both organizations and individuals to join at no cost. The LWVTN is a member, as are LWV of Nashville and LWV of Oak Ridge. To join up, go to www.prekfortn.com and follow the link on the home page.

The website has information about the program and research on the benefits of early education. Whether or not you decide to join TAE, please consider contacting your legislator to indicate your support for early education.

Tennessee Needs a State Energy Plan

In concert with the TN Environmental Council and other organizations, the LWVTN has written to Governor Bredesen to urge him to begin development of a comprehensive energy efficiency plan for Tennessee that includes concrete targets for energy efficiency, implementation of renewable energy sources and consumer education.

Some of the points we make in the letter include the need for climate protection, clean air and clean water, the need for sustainable transportation that reduces the need for oil and new roads, and the need for a sustainable economy. Also, Tennessee needs to set clear, measurable and attainable targets for energy efficiency and renewable energies, and the state should lead by example.

For more information on a state energy plan, contact Tony DeLucia at delucia@mail.etsu.edu.

Legislative Day is Tuesday, March 4

We are again participating with the Nashville Women's Political Caucus for Legislative Day. The day will begin with a Legislative Breakfast at BONE MCALLESTER NORTON PLLC, located across the street from the Legislative Plaza at 511 Union Street, 16th Floor. The breakfast will begin at 7:00 a.m. More details will be sent via email as we learn them.

Updated Voting Publication Now Ready

Remember *How to Vote in Tennessee?* It's gotten its first update since 1998 and is now available on our website. The new version includes information on provisional voting and where to get registration forms on the web. Log on to lwv-tn.org and go to the Publications section.

Lobby with the League

One of the advantages of being a League member is having a voice in the state legislature. We are in the second year of the 2 year term, and the legislature has already begun meeting. Bills are already in the system, though new bills will be introduced. We have an active state action committee working with our lobbyist, Stewart Clifton, to review new bills to see if our positions allow us to work either for or against a bill. However, member action is needed for maximum effectiveness. Times when action is needed are listed in the weekly legislative report and alerts. The State Board has decided that our number one priority this session is Open Government (meetings and records). We will be opposing photo ID for voting and opposing the lessening of regulations governing headwaters. To find out more about these issues, please read the weekly legislative report. It is posted on the LWVTN web site (www.lwv-tn.org). You will receive weekly updates free via e-mail. Those of you without e-mail can receive the report via US mail if you send \$10.00 to the League office (PO Box 158369, Nashville, TN 37215-8369).

If you would like to serve on the state action committee for your league, please let me (Margie Parsley-Action Chair – mparsley99@comcast.net) know. You would be responsible for alerting your members to respond to the action alerts. We have found that even 8 calls, e-mails and/or letters on a bill can make up the legislator's mind towards the views expressed by those contacting him or her.

We could not be nearly as effective without the services of Stewart Clifton, our lobbyist. His salary, while very modest by lobbyist standards, is the largest line item in our state League budget. We need all of our members to help fund our lobbyist. Please consider sending donations to the lobbyist fund. Mail your check, made out to LWVTN with Lobbyist Fund on the memo line, to our PO Box in Nashville and it will be forwarded to the treasurer.

IRS Unveils E-Postcard

Hundreds of thousands of organizations that are exempt from paying federal income taxes are facing a new reporting requirement this year. Previously, organizations with revenue of under \$25,000 did not have to file a tax return. Now, all organizations must file an E-Postcard by the 15th of the fifth month after the end of their fiscal year. That's May 15 for most groups and November 15 for LWVs with July 1 to June 30 fiscal years. This new requirement affects a lot of other groups Leaguers belong to, also. Friends of the Library, PTA, golf clubs, you name it. The penalty for not filing for three years is revocation of the group's tax exempt status. For more information, visit the IRS website (charities or small exempt organizations) or contact Judy Poulson, LWVTN Treasurer.

LWVTN Health Care Position Adopted January 26, 2008

POSITION: The League of Women Voters of Tennessee believes that affordable access to healthcare should be available to all Tennessee residents. The League supports health care which covers disease prevention, health promotion and education, primary care, behavioral health care, acute care, and long term care. Tennessee health care policy goals should include the equitable distribution of services; efficient and economical delivery of appropriate health care; and a reasonable total state expenditure level for health care. Until the goal of a national health insurance plan is reached, responsibility (including, but not limited to, fiscal responsibility) for health care starts with individuals and families; extends to educators, medical and assistive care providers; and should be shared by local, state and federal governments and medical insurance carriers including managed care entities.

Prevention and Education: LWVTN supports a strong emphasis on preventive healthcare and widespread health education efforts as the most cost-effective way to serve all Tennesseans.

Preventive care includes:

- Disease prevention and immunizations;
- Health and wellness promotion and education through schools and the media;
- Age appropriate physical education and family life education including education on reproductive health and disease prevention;
- Family planning and disease prevention services; and
- Support for WIC, school lunch programs and other targeted outreach programs.

Primary and Acute Health Care: LWVTN supports the availability of affordable care including:

- Primary and acute health care, including the most cost-effective prescription drug treatment for illness and injury;
- Reproductive, maternal and child health care;
- Behavioral health care including mental health services and services to promote recovery from substance use disorders; and
- Treatment and management of chronic diseases or conditions, such as diabetes, hypertension, serious mental illness and developmental disabilities.

Long Term Care: LWVTN supports long term care accessible to all in home- and community-based settings. Long term care includes:

- Medical care and supportive services for individuals with chronic illnesses or disabilities;
- Custodial and non-skilled help, such as assistance with activities of daily living, as well as services provided by licensed professionals; and
- Provision of care in homes, adult day care, hospitals, nursing homes, long term care facilities, or other supportive housing.

LWVTN supports the availability of hospice (including palliative) care for all who need it. If an individual, in consultation with his or her physician and family members, chooses to enter a hospice program, that program should be covered by current insurance programs and ultimately funded by a

national health insurance program.

Covering Those Who Are Uninsured: LWVTN supports programs aimed at decreasing the number of individuals lacking health insurance, including:

- Expansion of Tennessee's Medicaid eligibility;
- Development of group insurance pools for employers with few employees and for the self-employed;
- Portability of commercial insurance for those who have changed or lost jobs;
- Implementation of an affordable insurance plan for individuals with catastrophic illnesses; and
- Establishment of a fair system of reimbursement of health services for people who are medically indigent.

These programs should continue and grow until a national health care system is implemented.

On the Web

LWV of Tennessee www.lwv-tn.org

LWV of Blount Co www.discoveret.org/lwvbc

LWV of Jefferson Co

www.discoveret.org/jcleaguewv

LWV of Knox Co www.discoveret.org/lwv

LWV of Memphis www.lwvmemphis.org

LWV of Nashville www.lwvnashville.org

LWV of NE TN www.lwvnetn.org

LWV of Oak Ridge www.lwvor.com

Business Tax Fairness Can Cut Food Tax

Raising the subject of taxation in Tennessee will stimulate a vigorous discussion anywhere, anytime it is mentioned. Dissatisfaction with Tennessee's tax system comes from many quarters, particularly from people who believe the current system is unfair and inadequate.

Tennesseans for Fair Taxation (TFT), of which the League is a founding member, works for a fairer system of taxation that will provide adequate resources for the state. During the last legislative session TFT succeeded in lowering the food tax by half a cent. That modest reduction was a good start, but the remaining food tax of 5 ½ percent still remains as third highest in the country, and is unfair to Tennesseans.

This year TFT is seeking to close some business tax loopholes by initiating the Food & Business Tax Fairness Campaign. In so doing, the tax system would end up being fairer to smaller, locally owned businesses. Resulting increases in revenue to the state could be used to offset a further reduction in the food tax.

Large multi-state companies can use legal loopholes to reduce their corporate taxes in Tennessee at the expense of small Tennessee-based businesses. They are able to charge some business costs, such as rent for their buildings, to parent companies chartered in lower business tax states. Thus their profits are reduced when it is time to pay business taxes in Tennessee. The Food & Business Tax Fairness Campaign would level the playing field between multi-state corporations and Tennessee-based businesses and also increase tax revenue in Tennessee.

TFT is committed to a fair system that produces adequate revenue for Tennessee.

For more information about Tennesseans for Fair Taxation and the Food & Business Tax Fairness Campaign, call 888/671-5188 or visit www.fairtaxation.org.

Save the Mountains! Brutal mining techniques threaten scenery and communities of Appalachia

An easy way to raise hackles and stimulate public outcry is to mention surface coal mining to Appalachian people who have seen the results of strip mining up front and close for many years. However, it is the latest wrinkle in the mining business that now is causing alarm and outrage in the communities of Appalachia.

Mountaintop removal (MTR), also known as cross ridge mining, is a technique of reaching slender coal seams deep in the earth. To remove this coal, tons of mountaintop earth is blown up to expose the coal seams. The remaining rubble is then pushed into valleys, many of which have streams running through them.

The explanation above does not adequately convey what really happens. After millions of tons of earth have been exploded and pushed or carted away, entire mountaintops are gone, leaving miles of barren, moonscape-like wastelands. Further, the stream systems are ruined, causing flooding. Mined

areas leak and seep toxic materials into whatever water is nearby, as well as polluting underground water sources. Not a pretty picture.

To date much of the MTR activity has taken place in West Virginia and Kentucky. However, there are many sites in Tennessee that have been proposed for such mining. These are concentrated in Claiborne, Campbell, Scott, Anderson, and Morgan counties, with several more in Marion County, outside Chattanooga. The time for action is now.

Legislation has been introduced in the Tennessee legislature that would address some of the problems caused by current mining practices. The Tennessee Scenic Vistas Protection Act, **SB 3822** and **HB 3348**, would call for a new Environmental Impact Study, make the Tennessee policy of 100 foot stream buffer zone a state law, and prohibit TDEC water permits for surface coal mining that would alter or change a ridge line more than 2000 feet above sea level.

Grass roots and environmental groups are working to pass this bill. Members should contact their own legislators urging support of this legislation. There are no Leagues in most of the threatened counties, so members are urged to think of friends and contacts in those other counties. The bill is under consideration during February, so immediate action is needed. Call and write to your representatives now.

More information is available on the Internet. A local group working on the issue is Lindquist Environmental Appalachian Fellowship (LEAF) and the website is www.tnleaf.org. Another source is the Tennessee Conservation Voters at www.conservationvoters.org.

LWV-TN Officers for 2007-2009

President the 4 officers

1st Vice President / League Services

Nancy Stewart 6611 Ridgerock Lane, Knoxville 37909
865/584-3834 nancys@knology.net

2nd Vice President / Program

Claudia Lever 132 Newell Lane, Oak Ridge 37830
865/483-8340 levercs@earthlink.net

Secretary / Communications

Janis Williams 109 Crestview Ln, Oak Ridge 37830
865/483-1219 shri@prodigy.net

Treasurer / Admin Judy Poulson jpoulson319@comcast.net
10038 Dayflower Way, Knoxville 37932 865/694-9117

Environment Tony DeLucia

902 Millercrest, Johnson City 37604 423/928-7783

oneajdone@earthlink.net

Action Margie Parsley mparsley99@comcast.net

6200 Vosswood, Nashville 37205 615/352-7551

Voter Service Kathy Edwards edwardskm@aol.com

12 Asbury Ln, Oak Ridge 37830 865/482-6299

Voter Editor (off board) Lucy Gibson lwgibson47@aol.com

7044 Lake Bluff Ct, Knoxville 37920 865/579-3052

Webmaster Alan Karp

3401 Sugartree, Johnson City 37604 423/282-4311

webmaster@lwvtn.org

The 4 officers plus Kathy Edwards constitute the Trustees for the Education Fund.

LWV-Tennessee 2007-2008

Date	Event	Location
March 1	LWVTN and LWVTNEF Board meetings	
March 4	Legislative Day in Nashville	
May 3	2008 state Council in Middle Tennessee	
June 14-17	National LWV Convention	Portland, Oregon



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