



Charlottesville/Albemarle
League of Women Voters
Newsletter
January 2010

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Finance Drive Get-Together
Saturday, January 30, 9 am
at Ruth Wadlington's Home

Spend a morning of fun as we launch our 2010 Finance Drive, writing notes and stuffing the fund drive letters. **In these tight financial times, our fund drive letters are critical--we need your help on January 30!** Mark your calendar and join us--there will be lots of tasty goodies too.

Directions to Ruth's home:

From the 250 Bypass going east, exit at Dairy Rd./Meadowbrook Hgts Rd., turn left at the end of the exit and go over the bypass, turning left at the end of the bridge onto St. Anne's Rd., then turn left again at Keith Valley Rd. to No. 1620. From 250 Bypass going west, exit at Dairy Rd./Meadowbrook Hgts Rd., make a left at the four-way stop sign (Grove Rd.), then bear right onto St. Anne's Rd., and then left at Keith Valley Rd. to No. 1620.

Women's Pre-Legislative Roundtable Report December 2, 2009

Marge Cox, Liz Kutchai, and Gerry Kruger got a preview of the following issues confronting the Virginia General Assembly in the session beginning in January 2010.

Our armed Commonwealth: Andrew Goddard, representing anti-gun-violence groups, including the Virginia Center for Public Safety, told us there was no hope of closing the gun-show loophole this year. A bill introduced by Sen. Cucinelli was passed over Gov. Kaine's veto. It allows people to get certified to carry a concealed gun by passing a simple 20-question test *online*. Mr. Goddard said he has never touched or fired a gun, yet after taking this test he now has a certificate saying he is "gun-competent" and can be trusted to carry a concealed weapon. Another factoid: it is legal to take a gun into the House of Delegates Chamber, but not into the Senate. So why do we have to pass through metal detectors when we go into the building?

Virginia's Secretary of Transportation, Pierce Homer, noted that our major trading partners have shifted from Western Europe to the Far East, and that Hampton Roads has excellent rail connections to
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handle imports but poor roads. Due to the recession, “we need new and creative ways to finance infrastructure,” including public/private partnerships (to build toll roads and tunnels). He said VDOT has laid off 1000 people, but “the one issue that has gotten people’s attention is rest stop closures.” It costs half a million dollars to run one rest area per year, he noted, and added that there are private-sector alternatives near every closed rest area. VDOT is saving \$9M per year on closed rest stops. Watch your coffee intake.

License-plate politics: Both the ACLU and NARAL representatives, in response to last year’s approval of a “pro-life” license plate (the purchase of which funnels funds to “crisis pregnancy centers” which actually disseminate false information to women), are asking for approval of a specialty license plate which will say “Trust Women—Respect Choice.” It is proposed that funds generated by the purchase of these plates go to Planned Parenthood. Good luck with that.

Our wily businessmen: Now that payday loans have been regulated by the General Assembly, those clever lenders have found a new, unregulated way to make money by giving desperate people *car-title* loans of up to \$2500 at interest rates of 25 to 30% *per month*. The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy will lobby our legislators for an APR cap on these loans.

Environmental issues: The Sierra Club says they are going to ask for *mandatory* energy efficiency in this session--and a ban on mountaintop removal. So far, 67 mountaintops have already been removed in Virginia to extract coal. The Virginia Offshore Wind Coalition noted that Virginia is the #2 energy importing state, after California. With a lot of continental shelf off our coast, there’s room for a bunch of wind turbines out there.

Budget issues: The Secretary of Finance, Rick Brown, presented some truly scary figures. In FY 2009 and 2010, we will have back-to-back “negative growth” years for *the first time ever*—and the projections for 2011 and 2012 are for puny growth. Virginians haven’t yet seen the pain because federal stimulus money has made up for some of the cuts, but that money runs out this year. Robley Jones of the Virginia Education Association said, “We’ve always done education on the cheap in Virginia,” not paying teachers much, but keeping class size down. But with state revenues down 9.7% and localities facing declines in property assessments, “we are coming to a cliff.” Michael Cassidy of the Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis, a non-partisan think tank, said, “Virginia budgets are already lean and mean. Virginia ranks 48th in health and human services spending, 37th in education spending, and 46th in giving unemployment insurance to people. We don’t have a *spending* problem in Virginia; we have a *revenue* problem.” He noted that we need revenue growth of 6 to 8% a year just to keep up with population growth and inflation, and pointed out that thirty states have raised taxes since this recession began. Ben Greenberg of the Virginia Organizing Project said, “We can’t cut ourselves out of this recession. We’ve got to look at increasing revenues” and restructuring the tax code because “the poorer you are in Virginia, the greater percentage of your income you pay in state and local revenues.”

In short, we learned a lot going to Richmond and now have plenty of worries to keep us awake at night. When LWV Lobby Day comes (Jan. 27), we’ll be ready.

[See next page for information on LWV Lobby Day.]

LWV of Virginia hosts:

**League Lobby Day and Legislative Roundtable,
General Assembly Building,
Richmond.**

Wednesday, January 27, beginning at 8:30 am.

Travel to Richmond to lobby for League positions with our local legislators. The Lobby Day also includes the weekly LWV VA Legislative Roundtable, where Leaguers have a chance to attend a non-partisan forum for the discussion of problems and the legislation to address them. For more information about Roundtable and Lobby Day, go to the LWV-VA website:

<http://virginia.va.lwvnet.org/calendar.html>

If you would like to attend, please let the office know so that we can arrange carpooling. Call 970-1707, or President Marge Cox, 245-5228.

Welcome New Members:

New Local Members:

**Lee Willis
Jessica Hays
Mary Rose Curtis**

New National Members:

**Suzanne Semsch
Lily Tichenor**

Many thanks to

Becky Williams and
Mary Scott for end-of-the-year donations to the Education Fund.

International Relations Committee News by Gerry Kruger

The International Relations Committee of the League of Women Voters and the Charlottesville Committee on Foreign relations sponsored the Town Hall Meeting held at the Omni Hotel on October 30. Michael Kepon, who spoke on the topic “Better Safe Than Sorry—Still Living with the Bomb,” proved to be the expert on national security that we advertised. He warned against worrying so much about the threat of nuclear weapons that we could actually make matters worse. There have already been 30 accidents with weapons that have been put in place to protect us. He asserted that we have participated in unsafe practices in order to feel safe and emphasized that we should not let our anxieties rule.

Insisting that we are doing much to reduce the threat of nuclear danger, Mr. Kepon said that many tools have been responsible for avoiding another “mushroom cloud” since 1945. Diplomacy and strong alliances are keys to keeping us safe. One way to bring about arms control is to carve out the common interests among countries. Our own arsenal of weapons is shrinking, and at present our tax dollars are being used in 150 countries around the world to strengthen controls on imports and exports.

Although the speaker cited good fortune and divine intervention as possible reasons that we have not had to endure a nuclear holocaust in the last sixty years, he asserted that the steps our government is taking to avoid another disaster of these proportions are proving successful. The lives lost in the Iraq War were due to anxieties ruling, and actions based solely on fear of what other countries might do are a serious threat to the safety of our world.



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Newsletter Editor
 Michele Kellermann

Meetings and Events for January 2010: *Mark Your Calendars Now!*

Date/Time	Event	Place	Contact
Tuesday, January 12, 4-6 pm	LWV C/A Board Meeting and Program Planning	Virginia National Bank, Arlington Blvd.	For more information, contact the office, 970-1707
Wednesday, January 13, 9:30 am	International Relations Committee meeting	Home of Carol Jackson, University Village, Apt. 2501, 293-9766	For more information, contact Flora Patterson, 295-5532
Wednesday, January 20, 1:30 pm	Women's Issues Committee	[Please call the League office for location – 970-1707]	For more information, contact Mimi Bender, 220-4500
Wednesday, January 27, beginning at 8:30 am	LWV VA Lobby Day and Legislative Session Roundtable	General Assembly Bldg., Richmond	For more information, contact Marge Cox, 245-5228
Wednesday, January 27, 9:30 am	International Relations Committee meeting	Home of Marion Rothman, 2239 Shepherd's Ridge Rd., 973-4902	For more information, contact Flora Patterson, 295-5532
Saturday, January 30, 9:00 am	Finance Drive Get- Together	Home of Ruth Wadlington, 1620 Keith Valley Rd., 293-5261	For more information, contact the office, 970-1707