



Charlottesville/Albemarle
League of Women Voters
Newsletter
November 2010

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LWV C/A November 2010 Community Dialogue

The State of the Constitution: What Americans Know
Tuesday, November 16, Noon (11:30-12 noon arrive and pick up lunch, if ordered)
Monticello High School, Independence Way - The Forum

Presenters: Sean T. O'Brien, Ph.D., Executive Director, Center for the Constitution, James Madison's Montpelier and Kelly Carmichael of Montpelier. They will be joined by Monticello High School teachers and students to share the state of civic education in local public schools.

In 2010, the Center for the Constitution at James Madison's Montpelier conducted a nationwide survey entitled *The State of the Constitution: What Americans Know*. The survey was designed to gauge Americans' understanding of constitutional principles as well as several specific facts about the US Constitution. Respondents were also asked about several civic activities and the importance of these activities to being a "good citizen." In general, Americans admire many core principles of the US Constitution, but their knowledge of the content of the document that defines our nation is severely lacking. Most Americans have not read the entire Constitution and many are ignorant of basic ideas in the Constitution. Sean O'Brien will present an overview of the survey findings, discuss constitutional concepts and principles, and the challenge of civic education.

Sean T. O'Brien, Ph.D., is the executive director of the Center for the Constitution at James Madison's Montpelier in Orange, VA. The Center designs and runs seminars about constitutional principles and ideals for teachers, judges, elected officials, law enforcement officials, and international visitors to the US. To increase its impact and reach, the Center partners with many nongovernmental organizations in the US and in other countries. The Center's programs are hosted in classroom and residential facilities located adjacent to the at one of the most historic site in the United States, the home of James Madison, father of the US Constitution. Sean was previously the executive director of the Sorensen Institute for Political Leadership at UVa.



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A Message from our President

Dear League Members,

I am proud to say that the third of my four children is now registered to vote---which he accomplished before he even turned 18 last week, in an effort to ensure that this important task would be completed well before the registration deadline. I am equally proud that my college age children are either registered to vote in the states where they attend school or are active in the process to vote absentee. This recognition prompts me to remember a dinner table conversation that we had several years ago when our oldest child was still in elementary school. At that time, he informed us that the school he attended had conducted a mock election that day, which mirrored an impending, hotly contested midterm election here in Virginia. Much to our (his parents) regret, he confessed that he “knew” who he was “supposed to” vote for in three of the four state races, but was unsure of who he was “supposed” to vote for in the fourth. We were, therefore, compelled to ask, “what do you mean by *supposed to*?” He replied that he had “learned” from us who to vote for---or at least, we were much more effective at this sort of indoctrination with three out of the four candidates running for state office at the time. This led to a very much needed and ongoing dialogue as to what it means to be informed, highlighting the reality that while the act of voting itself is tremendously important, to be an informed voter is an essential responsibility as part of a participatory democracy.

Fast forward several years, and we (as a society) find ourselves embroiled in a climate of ideologic manipulation, sound byte campaigning, and campaign finance practices which make it very hard to identify any sense of a common good. In response to this dilemma, the LWV US has been working hard on the DISCLOSE Act, which is counter legislation to the Supreme Court’s *Citizens United* decision---a decision which prompted LWV then-President Marie Wilson to testify that, “Voters deserve to know who is paying for election advertising. Secret money...has no place in America’s democracy.” Here is a link to the amicus brief which the LWV US filed in response to *Citizens United*:

http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Campaign_Finance_Reform&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=14014

It is important for us to support this effort for transparency in campaign finance, no matter who or what it is that we are supporting as voters. Being an informed voter takes a lot of courage and a bit more time, while it runs the risk of us questioning the ideas, policies, and people who tend to reflect our own frames of reference. It means that I, personally, encourage my children to seek out evidence that may lead them to conclusions that are different from my own. For all of us, it should mean investigating the small print and the footnotes, and insisting on paper trails for every candidate, not just those we may be less likely to support.

Now that voter registration has come to an end and this election cycle is coming to a close, it is a good time for us to affirm our commitment to an active and informed citizenry, by both modeling responsible civic habits and by actively working for policies and legislation that support transparent and truly democratic campaigns and elections.

Respectfully,

Loren Intolubbe-Chmil, President, LWV C/A

In Memoriam

Sadly, Sally Ann Kauzlarich passed away on October 3, 2010. Sally was a long-time active member of the League of Women Voters of Charlottesville/Albemarle.

International Relations Committee News

by Gerry Kruger

Thanks to our fearless leader, Flora Patterson, the members of the IR Committee each have copies of the U. S. Constitution. We even have homework and quizzes! Besides bolstering our knowledge of this document, we have continued to study the positions of our League. Natalie Testa explained the changes that were approved in our arms control position at the national convention last summer. A committee studied our position for two years, and many items were reworded for the first time since the 1950's. Basically the League encourages reduction in the number of weapons, first use, and the tensions between countries that would cause their use.

Natalie also gave an update on France's economic problems. Riots in the streets have taken place since some austere measures affected the numerous state workers in France. The large number of services they offer account for their voluminous state work force.

Gerry's report, "The Politically Incorrect Guide to Ending Poverty," described measures suggested by renowned economist Paul Romer. In 2008 he launched the idea of having rich countries such as Canada govern "charter cities" in poor third-world countries. The well-to-do countries would create jobs for the natives of poverty-stricken nations rather than have them leave their homes and families to find jobs in foreign lands.

Lois Sandy explained the steady increase of the U.S. trade deficit since 2006 as China's surplus has grown. She also discussed the influence of China's devalued currency on our trade deficit. However, the financial problems of some European countries such as Greece actually increased the yuan's value.

As the United States struggles with economic issues, thanks to our committee members, we are informed of the most recent developments. See the calendar on the back page of this newsletter for November meeting dates, and join us as we delve into them. (Never fear-- Flora's quizzes are "open-book.")

November Community Dialogue Announcement continued from Page One....

Kelly Carmichael is the Education Outreach Manager and We the People State Coordinator at the Center for the Constitution at James Madison's Montpelier. In this role, Kelly works directly with teachers and social studies specialists across Virginia conducting professional development using the "We the People" material and providing classroom textbook sets to civics and government teachers. In addition, Kelly directs the Virginia We the People State Finals, which occurs in Richmond, Virginia, each year. In addition to her work with the We the People program, Kelly works directly with the Governor's Commission on Civic Education, the Campaign to Promote Civic Education at the Center for Civic Education, and the Virginia Consortium of Social Studies Specialists and College Educators to influence and recommend sound civic education policy. Kelly has also served on the YMCA DC Youth and Government Board of Advisors since 2007 and was awarded the Service to Program in November of 2007 for her work overhauling the lesson plans and curriculum provided to the student advisors. Kelly received her M.Ed. in Social Foundations of Education at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Virginia, and her B.A. in Psychology and a minor in Women's Studies at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota.

Join us for this most engaging and educational event at Noon on Tuesday, November 16, at Monticello High School. Bring your own lunch, or order Bag Lunch (\$8), and arrive at 11:30. To order Lunch, contact the League office by November 15. Phone: 970-1707 Fax 970-1708 Email: lww@avenue.org



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Newsletter Editor
Michele Kellermann

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

Date/Time	Event	Place	Contact
Tuesday, November 2	Election Day: LWV C/A Voter's Guide is on our website: http://avenue.org/lwv	To check your voting precinct, go to www.sbe.virginia.gov	For voter and election information, go to our website: http://avenue.org/lwv
Thursday, Nov. 11, 4:30 pm	Natural Resources Committee Meeting	Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, 145 Ednam Dr., (Boar's Head Inn complex)	For more information, contact Linda Goodling, 296-9865
Monday, Nov. 15, 4-6 pm	LWV C/A Board Meeting	Jordan Bldg., Pepsi Place (behind the Senior Center)	For more information, contact Loren Intolubbe-Chmil, at lgic@embarqmail.com
Tuesday, Nov. 16, Noon	LWV C/A Community Dialogue: The State of the Constitution	Monticello High School - The Forum	For more information, contact the office, 970-1707
Thursday, Nov. 18, 6 pm	International Relations Committee Potluck Dinner/Meeting: "Law of the Sea"	Home of Flora Patterson, 685 Flordon Dr., 295-5532	For more information, contact Flora Patterson, 295-5532