



Charlottesville Area
League of Women Voters
 Newsletter
 May 2013

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lww.avenue.org

2013 LWV CVA May Annual Meeting

**Wednesday Luncheon,
 May 15, Noon**

Member/Guest Social at 11:30 am

The Greencroft Club, Charlottesville

Guest Speaker: Brian Wheeler,

Executive Director, *Charlottesville Tomorrow*

"Hyperlocal Journalism: What is it?"



The 2013 Annual Meeting of the League of Women Voters of the Charlottesville Area will take place on Wednesday, May 15, at the Greencroft Club. **(See the next pages of this newsletter for program and luncheon reservations.)** Our guest speaker, **Brian Wheeler**, was hired as *Charlottesville Tomorrow's* first Executive Director in July 2005. Mr. Wheeler has lived in the Charlottesville-Albemarle region since 1984.

Mr. Wheeler helped launch a unique partnership with *The Daily Progress*, the first of its kind in the nation, which placed Charlottesville Tomorrow's reporting in the pages of the local newspaper of record. Since 2009 over 775 news stories have been published in the newspaper and today Charlottesville Tomorrow produces almost 50 percent of the newspaper's content related to growth, development, and local politics.

In the hyperlocal community news sector, Mr. Wheeler has been a participant in the annual Block by Block conference, a Knight Community Information Challenge boot camp, and the 2012 Community Journalism Executive Training program.

Mr. Wheeler represented the community as an elected member of the Albemarle County School Board from 2004-2010. From 1998-2005, Mr. Wheeler served as Chief Information Officer at SNL Financial, a leading provider of data to Wall Street. Prior to that, Mr. Wheeler was employed at the W. Alton Jones Foundation, a private family foundation that focused on grantmaking supporting environmental and international security projects. Mr. Wheeler received a B.A. in Foreign Affairs from the University of Virginia in May 1990. Mr. Wheeler and his wife Jean have two children and currently live in Ivy, Virginia.

This page is sponsored by Joan Jay of Loring Woodriff Real Estate Associates



LWV of the Charlottesville Area
Annual Meeting
Wednesday, May 15, 2013
 Member/Guest Social: 11:30 am to Noon
 Luncheon at Noon
The Greencroft Club
575 Rodes Rd., Charlottesville

Please join us for Annual Meeting of the LWV of the Charlottesville area. Following our luncheon and the presentation of our guest speaker, Brian Wheeler of *Charlottesville Tomorrow*, we will hold our Annual Business Meeting to conduct member business for the coming fiscal year which begins July 1, 2013 (see next page of this newsletter for "Program.") The venue for this occasion is The Greencroft Club, just off of Route 250. From town, follow Route 250 west (Ivy Road), for approximately 5 miles, and turn left onto Rodes Road. **Social begins at 11:30 with cash bar, followed by luncheon at 12 noon promptly.**

Menu is:

Greencroft Chicken sautéed with asparagus tips and cherry tomatoes in a chardonnay basil butter sauce served with chive smashed Yukon gold and seasonal vegetables.
 Served with house salad, rolls, iced tea or coffee, and dessert.

OR

Vegetarian option: Greencroft Farm Salad fresh local greens, Caromont Farm cream chevre, Spring Gate Farms poached egg, golden beets, garden tomato and pickled red onion served with Mayer lemon vinaigrette.
 Served with rolls, iced tea or coffee, and dessert.

Cost: \$30 per person. To place a reservation, call (970-1707) or email the League office, lww@lww.avenue.org. Indicate your meal choice, and mail your check using the form below. Reservation deadline is: Thursday, May 9, 2013.

.....*Cut Here and Return with check*.....

Checks should be made out to The League of Women Voters and sent to:

**League of Women Voters
 1932 Arlington Blvd., Room 111
 Charlottesville, VA 22903-1559**

Name(s)and meal choice(s) - Greencroft Chicken or Vegetarian Option

Amount enclosed: _____

Annual Meeting Announcement
of the League of Women Voters of the Charlottesville Area
Wednesday, May 15, 2013, at The Greencroft Club, Charlottesville

PROGRAM

Member/Guest Social 11:30 am to 12 noon (Cash Bar)
Luncheon and Presentation by Guest Speaker
Annual Business Meeting of Members (following speaker's
presentation):

The Annual Meeting of our League is the time when members vote on the business of the League for the coming fiscal year, 2013-14. We urge members to attend and

- Adopt **Local Program for 2013-14** with new Local Position on **Health Education**; and changes to Local Position on **Eduction**;
- Elect directors and officers for 2013-14;
- Adopt the Operating Fund Budget for 2013-14, and
- Adopt LWV CVA By-Laws amendment on member dues.

To facilitate your preparation to vote on these items, you will receive in the mail the **Annual Meeting Packet** the first week of May. It will contain information vital to the business meeting. ***Please remember to bring this packet with you to the meeting!***

President's Message:

Dear LWV CVA Members and Friends of the League,

In the fall while discussing how best to reach out to a larger community, your Board decided to look into advertising League events in *Charlottesville Tomorrow* since their mission closely paralleled our own. They are non-partisan and like us have earned respect from the public for that stance. They seek as we do to inform and engage the public with in-depth research and information. Currently, *Charlottesville Tomorrow* covers land use, transportation and development issues that comes before the local government in the city and in the county.

We also looked at *Charlottesville Tomorrow* because it is electronic media informing and engaging through the internet. As much as many of us wanted to ignore what was happening with the way people were receiving information, we decided the League could not. The *Charlottesville Tomorrow* e-mail mailing list contains over 3000 names, the League has 140. Visitors to their web site number over 10,000 per month. Our site averages about 200. In addition, they have direct access to publishing articles in *The Daily Progress*, a process that has become very difficult for the League. We decided to give advertising on the *Charlottesville Tomorrow website* a try. We have had two ads per month running since September. From our attendance sheets at Community Dialogues, I feel that we have reached some individuals that we might not have through other means, and at least the name of the League is "out there."

BUT - that is only part of my story for this newsletter. In the course of meeting the staff and learning more about *Charlottesville Tomorrow's* organization, we learned that in addition to the areas of land use, transportation, community design issues and local election coverage, they were very interested in adding a position that would be dedicated to covering "Education." What was holding them back from creating this position was proof of community interest in this area. Lightning struck! Their Education Project seemed to be a perfect way TO ACT on our local education position. We certainly had the interest as evidenced by the fact that it was a major topic at our December planning meeting. Though our Education Position states "continued monitoring of local school systems, expenditures, funding sources, programs, salaries, etc.," we were not doing that. For many years, our LWV CVA Observer Corps used to manage to do this, but in recent years, this important League activity has become extinct.

Our Board asked how we could encourage *Charlottesville Tomorrow's* Board to commit to creating a position dedicated to education and learned that interest had to be found and demonstrated. "Demonstrated" meant someone providing a substantial amount of "seed money," at least in the five figure range.

Your Board considered this. We asked many questions of *Charlottesville Tomorrow* and of ourselves. We had the funds. Was this a worthwhile, League appropriate project? We decided it was. On January 28, 2013, the LWV CVA Board voted unanimously to provide \$12,000 seed money to *Charlottesville Tomorrow* to create a staff position dedicated to covering Education with the understanding that the League's name be prominently displayed with that position. By doing so, the LWV CVA will help enable a major spotlight to be shown on educational issues and provide needed increased visibility for the League.

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President's Message: Continued from previous page

About \$50,000 total is needed for *Charlottesville Tomorrow's* Board to proceed. To date our "seed money" has generated \$22,000 in other donations, however, if the project for any reason does not move forward, our funds of course will remain where they are now, in our Education account.

I hope you will see, as your Board does, that this is a very exciting step forward for the League. Brian Wheeler, Executive Director of *Charlottesville Tomorrow*, will be our speaker at our annual meeting. His topic? Communications in this technological world and how *Charlottesville Tomorrow* seeks to ensure that the public receives accurate, non-partisan information so that the public can get involved. Does that goal sound familiar?

Sincerely,

Kerin Yates

President, LWV CVA

**The League at
"Fridays After Five"**

Our League will again participate in Charlottesville's "Fridays After Five" at the Pavilion on the Downtown Mall. What participation means is volunteering as a group to man an assigned concession. For this we earn funds for the League. Last year our efforts brought in \$318. In addition to raising funds, volunteering to work one of the concessions is a fun social event and a venue for interacting with League members in a different setting.

WE NEED FOUR VOLUNTEERS for: May 17 - to serve sodas; and EIGHT VOLUNTEERS for: August 2 to man the beer/wine tent. Contact the League office, 970-1707, or email: lww@lww.avenue.org if you are able to volunteer for either (or both) of these dates.

2013 Finance Drive Update

Operating and Education Fund Donations have amounted to \$6125 to date. ***Thank you to all who have contributed.*** Our total for last year was \$7300. Should you need information regarding donating or forms/envelopes, please contact the League at 434 970 1707 or by e-mail, lww@lww.avenue.org.

**League of Women Voters of Virginia
Convention 2013**

When: June 1-June 2, 2013

Hosted by the LWV of Williamsburg in Williamsburg, VA.

Attendees will vote on future program studies (for 2013-2015 biennium) and the LWV-VA budget, and elect a new president and LWV-VA board members.

***The Virginia Voter* and LWV VA website will soon contain more information, including registration forms. (Our special webpage for Convention 2013 can be found at: <http://lww-va.org/Convention2013.html>)**

International Relations /Federal Government Committee News

The International Relations/Federal Government Committee met on March 13 at the home of Dena Imlay to hear three reports.

Rosalie Simari reported on Fareed Zakaria's article in the November 26, 2012, issue of *Time* in which he states that the next big policy crisis for the Obama administration could be in Asian waters over five islets and three barren rocks – all uninhabited. Both China and Japan claim ownership and the dispute involves the huge natural gas reserves below the seafloor. The U.S. is involved because it is bound by treaty to assist Japan should Japan be attacked militarily.

Natalie Testa spoke on the life of Aung San Suu Kyi, a Burmese opposition politician and a consummate activist. Despite being under house arrest for almost 15 of the past 24 years, she was in April of 2012 elected to the lower house of the Burmese Parliament where her party, The National League for Democracy (she is chair), won 43 of the 45 vacant seats. She has received many prestigious awards, among them the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of thought in 1990, the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991, the Nehru Award for International Understanding in 1992, honorary citizenship in Canada (only four persons have received this honor), the Bolivar Prize in 2007 from Venezuela, and in October of 2012 our Congressional Medal of Honor, the United States' highest civilian honor. The current government of Burma (Miramar) was also discussed. [Information was gleaned from: The New York Times, The New Yorker, Time Magazine, and The Washington Post. All were written between April and November of 2012.]

Deborah Brooks presented the article "Silent Filibuster: It's Worse Than You Think," subtitled, "How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism" written by Thomas Mann of the Brookings Institute and Norman Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute – two political scientists with two different perspectives. The article focused on the procedural technique known as the silent filibuster whereby individual senators can hold their government hostage to their personal views by blocking bills and nominations. Critical to progress in the Senate is the fact that 60 votes are needed for closure. From 1917 to 2008, this type of closure was invoked only 53 times. In Obama's first term it was invoked 250 times. The term "silent" is derived from the fact that the senator only had to threaten a filibuster. He/she did not even have to be there and actively present one. On January 24th of 2013, changes to the filibuster rules were made and one must be physically present now to file a filibuster. However the new changes do not really zero in on the basic problem, the requirement of a supermajority to then pass the bill.

At our March 27th meeting at the home of Carol Jackson, **Becky Thomas** spoke about "loopholes," a term much used, misused, and abused in the last election by Republicans and in the current budget debate by both parties (v. "The Real Spending Problem," NYT, March 16, 2013). It's important to judge each "loophole" proposal on its merit; to that end, properly defining the word and its related terms is critical.

You've seen pictures of castles with narrow slits toward the top to shoot arrows through without becoming a target oneself. These are the original loopholes; the word dates from 1591, and seventy years later it was being used to designate "an ambiguity or omission in a statute, etc., which affords opportunity for evading its intentions" (OED). In this day and age, tax loopholes also result from specific enabling legislation. The word normally has a pejorative cast to it.

So what does a Senator mean when she says, "We spend in tax loopholes annually \$1.1 trillion. That's more than we spend on our defense budget (\$700B), on Medicare (\$528 B) or Medicaid (\$283B)?" She's

Continued on next page

not really talking about loopholes; she's talking about **tax expenditures** or **tax preference items**: tax breaks built into the tax code. At a trillion dollars (update: \$1.3 trillion in 2012), tax expenditures are almost equal to what the federal government receives in personal and corporate taxes and almost as much as it spends on discretionary programs, through the appropriations process.

Are they all bad? Far from it. Some of them are quite familiar. In 2011, there were 170 different tax preference items in the individual and corporate taxes, in five categories, among them *credits* like the earned income credit (\$60B); *deductions* like mortgage interest (\$79B) and charitable giving (\$42B); *deferrals* like 401k's (\$52B); *exclusions and exemptions* like employer-provided health insurance (\$260B, the largest overall); and *preferential rates* like those for capital gains (\$36B). Tax expenditures often promote behaviors considered desirable.

About two-thirds of them are spending in disguise, according to Donald Marron, of the Urban Institute-Brookings Institute Tax Policy Center (v. "Spending in Disguise," *National Affairs*, summer 2011, available on the Internet), so thorny questions arise (v. "Tax Credits or Spending? Labels, but in Congress, Fighting Words" (NYT 3/17/13)).

We also looked at tax loopholes in the everyday sense: "a narrow tax break that gives a special—and, in many cases, unfair—advantage to a specific constituency" (Politifact). Have a look online at Citizens for Tax Justice's "ten most insane." And let's not forget offshore tax havens, which cost the federal government an estimated \$100B a year (some 83% of the top 100 publicly traded companies had tax-haven units in 2009, according to the GAO). Then there are the major loopholes exploited by hedge fund partners, big oil...but these will be for another day.

Jean Minehart reported on a Newsweek article describing the life of a college-educated, middle class Saudi Arabian woman who is a member of the conservative Wahabi sect of Sunni Muslims. She is the second wife of a professor of Hadith (a collection of stories about the words and deeds of the Prophet) and the mother of seven children. Her husband spends every other day with her, alternating days with his first wife who lives with her eight children in a different house. Lulu (short for Loulwa) is very content with her life and rarely leaves home. (When she does go out, she is always fully covered.) She runs her home strictly according to Wahabi principles. There are no photos on the wall, one TV that is set to show only a religious channel (with no women on screen), no music with pronounced rhythm or women's voices, and a one strictly monitored computer. She feels it is proper that men make the family decisions and she worries that increasing openness in Saudi Arabian life will destroy proper family and religious values.

For future meetings of the International Relations/Federal Government Committee, see the calendar on the back page of this newsletter.

Book Events Discuss Alternatives to Incarceration

Those League members and friends interested in the new LWV US position which opposes minimum mandatory sentencing for minor drug offences and promotes alternatives to incarceration might be interested in the following **book discussions being held at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Unitarian Church**. Meetings are in the Church Parlor. The public is welcome. Edith Good, a League member, brought these upcoming discussions to our attention.

April 22, 2013 7 – 9 pm *Who's Afraid of Post-blackness* by Toure and Michael Eric Dyson

May 5, 2013 1pm *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander and Cornell West



League of Women Voters
 1932 Arlington Blvd. #111
 Charlottesville, VA 22903-1560

LWV CVA
President
 Kerin Yates

Newsletter Editor
 Michele Kellermann

Meetings and Events for May/June 2013: *Mark Your Calendars Now!*

Date/Time	Event	Place	Contact
Wed., April 24, 9:30 am	International Relations/Federal Gov't. Committee Meeting	Home of Natalie Testa, 70 Palmyra Dr., Lake Monticello, 589-4067	For further information, contact Marge Cox, 245-5528
Wed., May 8, 9:30 am	International Relations/Federal Gov't. Committee Meeting	Home of Flora Patterson, 685 Flordon Dr., 295-5532	For further information, contact Marge Cox, 245-5528
Wed., May 15, Noon	LWV CVA Annual Meeting/Luncheon Guest Speaker: Brian Wheeler, Charlottesville Tomorrow	The Greencroft Club, 575 Rodes Rd., Charlottesville	Complete program and registration/reservations in this newsletter, or contact Kerin Yates, 964-1840
Fri., May 17	"Fridays After Five" volunteers	Charlottesville Downtown Mall	For further information, contact Kerin Yates, 964-1840
Wed., May 22, 9:30 am	International Relations/Federal Gov't. Committee Meeting	Home of Deborah Brooks, 3080 Branham Pl., 295-7696	For further information, contact Marge Cox, 245-5528
Sat., June 1 and Sun., June 2	LWV VA Convention 2013	Williamsburg, Virginia	For further information, go to http://lwv-va.org/Convention2013.html
Tues., June 11, 4 pm	LWV CVA Board Meeting	Virginia National Bank Bldg., Arlington Blvd.	For further information, contact Kerin Yates, 964-1840