

The Mississippi Voter

League of Women Voters of Mississippi

Mary Margaret Bollinger, President

August, 2007

Ellen Russak, Editor

<http://www.lwv-ms.org>



President's Corner

This is my first President's Message and I want you to know how honored I am to assume our State League's presidency. I fully appreciate all the work that Fran Leber has done to smooth the way for me and appreciate the fact that she will be remaining on the Board to act as mentor (as well as Lobby Corps Director) as I start this exciting new challenge!

In preparation for assuming my duties as president, I attended the National League's Council 2007 meeting in Washington D.C. and it was a truly exhilarating experience! One of the most exciting things was meeting League members from around the country. It made me proud to be a part of this gathering of women and men who are so devoted to the ideals of League.

Following are two meeting highlights that all of us can use in our own MS Leagues:

Membership Initiative - Five local leagues from around the country were part of a pilot program whose goal was to increase membership. Following the guidance of a top public relations company, these Leagues had impressive membership gains. While some of the tactics were fairly complicated, others were quite simple. For example, speakers at League meetings were presented with memberships for all or part of the year on the premise that the speakers were generally people who shared League principles and would choose to remain members. Emphasis was also placed on

just "asking." Members were encouraged to ask their friends and new acquaintances to join. Most of us wait for the other person to request to join our League, but members of these pilot Leagues did the asking and carried around membership forms to have handy for anyone who responded positively - no time was wasted in signing them up!!

Voter ID - Word came to me while I was at Council of the court decision which will require Mississippi residents to re-register by party and present official voter ID. Needless to say, Voter ID was the breakout session I attended! Several Leagues in states which have recently faced similar problems presented their strategies. Chief among these were efforts aimed at educating the public about the problems involved for many of the citizens who work at blue color jobs, do not have driver's licenses, and must take time off from work to obtain and pay for an official ID. One person, who wrote a letter to the editor, ended the letter with the phrase "*Welcome to the poll tax of 2006!*" Please join me in writing an op-ed piece for your local newspaper urging that our state officials appeal the decision.

LWVUS Council 2007 was one of the most exciting meetings I have ever attended. I urge each of you to begin planning to meet in Portland for the LWVUS Convention 2008. I'm looking forward to a challenging League year and, with elections right around the corner, we're already off and running!

Mary Margaret Bollinger

2007 LWV-MS Convention Awards



Besides the usual business meeting and elections at the LWV-MS Convention in May,

three awards were given to very deserving recipients.

The Thelma Workman Award was presented to husband and wife team, **Bill and Alma Lindsey**, who have shown their continued dedication of time, expertise and work to the survival of the LWV Gulf Coast League since Hurricane Katrina. Active members for over five years, they were determined that the League have an important roll in Gulf Coast rebuilding to benefit all its citizens for a better future.

Alma (formerly Jane), a past Membership VP, immediately put her spirited skills to work in order to bring members back together in the wake of Katrina. She started phoning and found that their League had lost a quarter of its membership as people dispersed or where overwhelmed and then the president resigned. For a number of months they had only 5 members but they have increased to 20 as of May 7th. Alma has now assumed the presidency of the Gulf Coast League.

Alma's husband, Bill, has been a long supporter of Alma and the League and has served as treasurer for the Gulf Coast League for the last several years. He and Alma are a partnership in all their League activities. Theirs has truly been an inspirational effort!

The Katharine Rea Membership Award was given to **President, Jackie Rollins**, whose Jackson Area League sustained a large membership increase this past year. Spurring this increase were their stimulating and timely programs and action activities (see Jackie's impressive

article on the Jackson Area League's year). This award comes with a \$50 check that will be used for a banner with the new National League logo colors. Congratulations on a well earned award!

The Fran Leber Award was presented to **Bill and Mildred Hawley**, another husband and wife team, for their long and dedicated service to the League of Women Voters of MS. Together they started the Pearl River Unit: Bill serving as President and Mildred as Treasurer. On the State Board, Bill has served as treasurer and also as director of the Chip and health program issues. Both Mildred and Bill have served as State Board membership vice presidents and treasurers and have chaired debates throughout the state. On a personal level, many of their vacation trips have been booked through the "*Travel with the League*" program. In spite of extreme damage to their property during Katrina, they have continued to serve on the State Board and have struggled to keep the Pearl River Unit afloat. We can't thank the two of you enough!

→ Our Newly Elected Officers ←

President: Mary Margaret Bollinger, Jackson

VP Membership: Bill Hawley, Picayune

VP Voter Service: Minta Uzodinma, Jackson

Treasurer: Natalie Maynor, Jackson

Secretary: Jane Lindsey, Biloxi

Appointed Directors

Editor, "Mississippi Voter:" Ellen Russak, Starkville

Webmaster & LWVMS Calendar: Stacy Callender, Jackson

Web Voters' Guide: Tom Head, Jackson

Lobby Corps: Fran Leber, Jackson

Immigration Study: Deloris Lee, Jackson

Communications: Jeanne Luckett, Jackson

Why I Joined the League --Ellen Russak, LWV-MS "Voter" Editor



My mother was a Leaguer in Kentucky so when I saw a notice in my Connecticut paper about a League study on "Quality Integrated Education," I knew it would be much more stimulating than the scarf tying lessons I was getting at my other organization. What I didn't realize was that participation in the study also entailed presenting our findings at the consensus meeting. Back then I would rather pick up a live snake than speak in public! That became the first of many times the League nudged me into an unintended "growth spurt."

Over time I became president of our regional League and one of the directives was to visit at least one state board meeting. The next thing I knew I was asked to join the state board as Treasurer. When I told the president I didn't feel qualified, she said I would "stretch and grow" into the position. Well, I've been stretching and growing for several decades now thanks to the League!

I am now on the board of the LWV of Mississippi and, thanks to League on-the-job training, I continue to do what I enjoy most which is trying to make a difference in our town, state, nation, and the world!

Ellen is originally from Oberlin, Ohio but grew up in the Buffalo area of NY, went to nursing school, was a Captain in the Air Force during the Vietnam War era, Married an Air Force Sergeant who went on to become a veterinarian and set up a hospital in CT. Four years ago he decided to become a teacher of veterinary

medicine so they relocated to Starkville, MS and he now teaches at MSU's College of Veterinary Medicine. They have two grown daughters and recently acquired their first grandchild – a very exciting event! League has played a major part in her life since her girls were elementary school age.

- ➡ **Note:** The National League is collecting member stories for their web site ("how the League has affected your life" type things). They limit the number of words so they are short and easy to write. Go to www.lwv.org and under "search" type in "**storybank.**" You will find a form to fill out. Send a copy to LWVMS too for our "Voter" (editor@lwv-ms.org). We want to highlight more members.



Bylaw Amendments Pass

Delegates at the May LWV-MS convention approved the proposed bylaw amendments en toto. They are summarized in the March "MS Voter." For a complete copy of the amended bylaws, contact Ellen Russak at editor@lwv-ms.org or call 662-324-1800.

LWV-MS Voter's Guide

A link to view our **Voter's Guide** will be on our web site (<http://www.lwv-ms.org>) and in "**The Clarion Ledger**" as election gets closer. Don't miss it!!!

CYBER NEWS

Follow the Money Trail Online



OpenSecrets.org exposes who's giving how much campaign money to whom. **Maplight.org** is a new Web site whose mission is to correlate lawmakers' voting records with the money they've accepted from special-interest groups. All of this is public information. Spend a few minutes poking around and follow the money trails.

VoterWatch: The Congressional Record doesn't necessarily reflect what's said on the floor. Our elected officials can edit and insert and **remove** entire speeches at will. Voterwatch is a nonpartisan, nonprofit web site that helps *you* watch what they say, when they say it. It allows you to search videos of Congress to follow issues that matter most to you and your community. VoterWatch is in beta right now so you can only sample the videos from the Congressional floor proceedings about Iraq, but it will be adding many more videos in the coming months. <http://www.voterwatch.org/index.php/voterwatch/>

League Voter Registration Site: The general election is just a few months away. Make sure you, and your friends and family are registered to vote. Register at www.lwv.org/registertovote



Jefferson Davis Home & Presidential Library

(22 Months after Hurricane Katrina)

The Beauvoir House and the Jefferson Davis Presidential Library, in Biloxi, suffered heavy damage from Hurricane Katrina. These two structures can and will be restored given time and funding. Artifact search and recovery has been completed. 3,814 artifacts have been photographed, inventoried, boxed and stored in environmental storage. Conservation of the artifacts and the house furniture have begun. Stabilization of the house and presidential library are ongoing and architectural plans and specifications for their restoration are complete.

Lathan and Company of Mobile, Alabama, was the lowest and best bid taken on January 9th, 2007 in the amount of \$ 4.1 million dollars for the repair and reconstruction of Beauvoir House...The contract is for twelve months construction time with a completion date of March 13, 2008. Currently, Lathan has poured the concrete footings for the brick piers and has begun restoration of the brick wall in front of Beauvoir. Federal dollars will only pay for 2.5 million of the 4.1 million dollars cost to repair Beauvoir House. Beauvoir must come up with over 1.6 million dollars from other sources.

– from www.beauvoir.org



< Before



After >

Jackson League's Annual Report

Jacqueline Rollins, President



Our Fall Membership meeting included a video of **"Jackson's Urban Forest – Conserving an Important Asset."** It also continued our focus on the LeFleurs Lake/Two Lake development project planned for the Pearl River in Jackson. Discussion was led by Dr. Tom Pullen, retired Corps of Engineers biologist and active member of the Pearl River Basin Coalition. The Jackson League is also an active member of that coalition. The Pearl River development plan does not take negative watershed issues into consideration, a fact that could have serious detrimental effects on northern and coastal Mississippi.

January's membership program included a discussion on **"Ethics in MS Politics,"** led by Judge Mary Libby Payne, Mississippi Court of Appeals, Retired and founding Dean and Law Professor of MS College School of Law.

At our Annual Meeting in April, we amended our bylaws to conform with the National and State LWV changes. Our program continued the discussion of the LeFleurs Lake project with a presentation by Dr. Cathy Shropshire who gave an update on the charette (a creative process akin to visual brainstorming that is used by design professionals to develop solutions to a design problem within a limited timeframe) that was held in Jackson in March. The Hinds/Rankin Levee Board has received the report from the CEO but it has not been released to the public. The Levee Board stated that they do not plan to include the public in any further discussion or decisions regarding plans for the project. The Jackson League plans to write a letter to the editor and call for open meetings and public input with published announcements for public hearings before a final plan is accepted. Letters will also be sent to the Levee Board and several political leaders involved in the decision process.

Addendum: the Pearl River Basin Coalition sent two registered letters to the Rankin/Hinds Levee Board requesting to review the report from

the Corps of Engineers regarding the project. We have had no response. We also were told that we would be advised of the results of the charette and, to date, we have received no information.

Voter Service: We continue to encourage members to assist with registration of voters. Plans are to set up tables at coming events and at some colleges. Election Day telephone coverage was in place at election time and will continue. We have been assisting the State League with the Voter's Guide. We surveyed members for questions for Candidate Guides for the primaries and will continue that for the fall elections. We met with "The Clarion Ledger" editorial board to discuss layout and details of the voters' guide.



Gulf Coast League's Annual Report

The Gulf Coast League was badly affected by Hurricane Katrina. Homes were damaged and some members have dispersed but those that remained managed to continue to do voter service projects and this year put on a forum highlighting available community services including affordable housing. In September they held an excellent forum on the new electronic voting machines that sparked their college students' interest.

Former president, Gloria Manning, resigned and Glen Sanberg stepped into the breach to become president pro tem. An annual meeting was held and after elections, **Alma Lindsey** (formerly Jane Lindsey) became the new president. On April 25th, they held a very successful voter registration effort at Jefferson Davis Community College.

A Personal Message: *The League on the coast would like to thank everyone who thought of us when Katrina struck. We want to especially thank Past President Fran Leber; she called with encouragement and has helped us in every way she could ~ "So thanks, Fran!"*



LWVMS LEGISLATIVE REPORT **(2006-2007)**

Fran Leber, Lobby Corps



EDUCATION

HB 238 – Mississippi Adequate Education Program – Secures every child a quality education; enhancement for at-risk students; and a new “redesign” program in high growth districts. Cost will be \$125 million for 2008 and about \$30 million each year in following years. LWVMS supported this bill. *Passed.*

HB 1058 – To initiate the screening of children in grades 1-3 for dyslexia and to monitor them. Supported. *Passed.*

HB 554 – Charter Schools: The law which established a procedure for local public schools to apply for and be granted charter school status had a sunset provision. This bill extended the date the law would sunset to 2009. Supported. *Passed.*

SB 2627 – Early childhood care and education grant program. Supported. *Passed.*

SB 2323 – Teacher Salary Increase for K-12. LWVMS supported. *Passed.*

HB 247 - Tobacco Tax Increase/Reduce Food Tax.

Supported. – Died in Senate



ELECTION LAWS

HB 997 – Increase the number of weeks allowed for a runoff for special elections from two weeks to three weeks after the initial balloting. Supported. *Failed.*

SB 2823 – Voter Registration – Delay the date municipalities have to comply with the requirements of the State-Wide Election management system. Opposed. *Failed.*

SB 2233 –Increase the number of days before the election that a person has to qualify in order to run to fill a legislative vacancy. Supported. *Passed.*

SB 2831 – Revise the dates for run-off elections for certain offices and to increase the compensation paid to managers and clerks of the election. Supported. *Passed.*

SB 549 – Create a Merit System for selecting Applet Court Judges. Supported. *Died in committee.*



SB 2964 – Judges: creates a nominating committee for vacancies. Supported. *Died in committee*

ETHICS

SB 2319 – Requires executives of county commissions to fill out statements of economic interest. Supported. *Failed.*

HEALTH ISSUES

SB 2764 – State Board of Health: to keep the department and reconstitute the membership of the board. League supported reconstruction of board. *Passed.*

SB 2391 – Clarifies the judicial waiver needed to waive parental consent normally needed by minors to obtain abortions and, if Roe V. Wade is overruled, prohibit all abortions with limited exceptions. Opposed. *Passed.*

You can view the votes on the above issues at <http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/2007> Click Select a Measure; put in bill number; click VOTE in blue.

43.6 Million Uninsured in U.S.



Washington, June 25, 2007 (Reuters) – About 43.6 million people in the United States, or 14.8% of the population, had no health insurance in 2006, according to a survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention... The estimate is based on those who did not have insurance at the time of the interview. About 54.5 million people in the country, or 18.6% of the population, had no insurance for at least part of 2006... Texas had the largest percentage of people without health insurance, with 23.8% of the population not covered, the report said. Michigan had the lowest, at 7.7%.



Mississippi's Health Report Card

Excerpts from Mississippi Health Advocacy Programs (MHAP) article

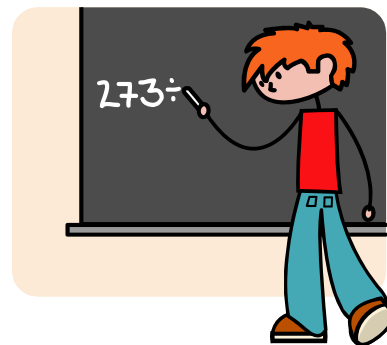
On April 22nd, a “*New York Times*” article profiled Mississippi’s staggering increase in infant mortality. Following this disheartening reality, there was April’s “*Public Citizen*” report ranking the country’s Medicaid programs based on eligibility, scope of services, quality of services, and reimbursement. Mississippi’s Medicaid program was listed as the worst in the country based on those criteria. Finally, June’s report by the “*Commonwealth Fund*” ranked Mississippi 49 out of 50 in comprehensive health system’s performance. **At the present time, there are 537,000 uninsured in Mississippi out of a total population of 2,910,540 (18.5%).**

At-Risk Hearing

-- from Rep. John Mayo’s mass e-mail 7-7-07 (he sends almost daily e-mail reports during the legislative session: imayo@mail.lbo.state.ms.us/

House Education Committee Chairman Cecil Brown was selected chair of a senate/House committee to look into school funding for at-risk children. There was quite a bit of discussion this past session on increasing funding for districts with at-risk students enrolled; that is students whose family income falls below the poverty level as determined by the federal government's definition for eligibility for free lunches in schools.

The meeting was largely a presentation by the MS Department of Education and covered not only the poverty defined at-risk child and numbers, but also possible "at-risk" indicators as determined by drop-out criteria and other physical or mental impairments to learning. The meeting lasted about an hour. Besides legislators, there was a standing room crowd of parents, stakeholders, counselors and the like present. Several more meetings will follow before the Legislative Budget Committee begins meeting in September. Currently, at-risk students receive 5% additional funding above the per student appropriation determined by MAEP.



MS's Highway 61: an Icon of the Delta

The Mississippi Delta has been a huge influencer of American culture and Highway 61 is the thread that runs through it. Called The Blues Highway, because it carried so many bluesmen from the Delta, and Freedom Road because it led out of the Jim Crow South, Highway 61 carried tens of thousands of Delta citizens north during the Great Migration. In the process, it transformed America. "Much of what is profoundly American – what people love about America – has come from the Delta, which is often called 'the cradle of American culture.'" (Stories of the Delta, The National Park Service, Lower MS Delta Symposium, 1996).



In Memoriam

**Claudia Taylor (Lady Bird)
Johnson
1912-2007**

Christened Claudia Alta Taylor when she was born in a country mansion near Karnack, Texas, she received her nickname "Lady Bird" as a small child. She married Lyndon Johnson after a very short courtship and then moved to the White House after Kennedy's assassination where she did her best to ease a painful transition. She soon set her own stamp of Texas hospitality on social events, but these were not her chief concerns. She created a First Lady's Committee for a More Beautiful Capital; then expanded her program to include the entire nation. She took a highly active part in her husband's war-on-poverty program, especially the Head Start project for preschool children.

– www.firstladies.org *Lady Bird Johnson has left a legacy we enjoy every day each time we drive down a highway and see flowers and trees instead of billboards and weeds. Editor*

Saving Energy!!

→ The Vatican embraces solar power! Thanks to Pope Benedict XVI's enthusiasm for green friendly technology, many buildings within Vatican City will be employing solar power over the next few years. The cement roof of the Paul VI auditorium will be replaced with photovoltaic cells to convert sunlight into electricity for use throughout Vatican City. – Associated Press, 6-7-07, *Sierra Club*, "Ray of Hope"

→ Under Mayor Bertrand Delanoë, Paris has added 125 miles of bike paths and launched the Vélib program, which provides thousands of inexpensive bike rentals, dispersed at docking stations around the city. -- *Compass*, July 16, 2007, *Sierra Club*, "Ray of Hope"



→ European lightbulb makers announced that they want to phase out the standard lightbulb within eight years and replace it with more eco-friendly bulbs. This would lead to a 60 percent reduction of CO2 emissions annually. – *Associated Press*, 6/5/07

→Australia, a nation of 20 million people, became the first nation to ban traditional light bulbs, requiring that consumers and businesses install high efficiency lighting to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Incandescent light bulbs will be phased out by 2010, eliminating an estimated 4 million metric tons of greenhouse gasses annually by 2015, according to the government... In the US, Wal-Mart has pledged to sell 100 million compact fluorescent light bulbs.

--Todd Woody, "Green Wombat, Environment + Technology," 2-20-07

The Women's Right Movement
Celebrates 159 Years



<< ***Elizabeth Cady Stanton & Susan B. Anthony***

Advertised in the July 14, 1848 Seneca County Courier as "a convention to discuss the social, civil and religious condition

and rights of woman," the gathering at Seneca Falls was the nation's first women's rights convention and the beginning of the woman suffrage movement. Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Martha Wright (Mott's sister) and Mary Ann McClintock organized the event in a matter of days after an impromptu discussion over tea about women's rights, or lack thereof.

Approximately 300 women and men attended the convention in Seneca Falls, NY, where Elizabeth Cady Stanton

introduced a Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions. Modeled after the Declaration of Independence, the document listed eighteen resolutions regarding women's rights. All resolutions were read and voted on. Only one resolution, calling for woman's enfranchisement, did not pass, as many, including Lucretia Mott, still considered a woman's right to vote inconceivable.

With the help of Frederick Douglass, a minimum majority was persuaded to pass the resolution. The convention and the adoption of the Declaration of Sentiments sparked the woman suffrage movement - kicking off a women's right-to-vote campaign that would take 72 years to win with the passing of the 19th Amendment in 1920.

- *National Women's History Project*

It's time to join or renew your dues!!!

LWVMS MAL (Member at Large) Membership Coupon

This coupon is for those wishing to join the State League because they are not near a local League or those MALs who wish to renew their membership for the July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008 FY; **this includes MAL Unit members.**

NAME: _____ **Phone:** _____ **E-mail:** _____

ADDRESS: _____

Make your check out to: **LWVMS, for \$35 and return Natalie Maynor, Treasurer, 3715 Greenwich St., Jackson, MS 39216.** If more than one person at the same address wishes to join, the dues drop to half price for them (\$52.50 for two at the same address).



LWVMS 2007 Calendar

Aug. 18 (Sat.) – LWV-MS Board Meeting, 10 a.m.-12 noon. All members are encouraged to attend. Board meetings will be held at the home of Mary Margaret Bollinger, 435 Naples Rd. Jackson, 39206.

Aug. 28 (Tues.) – Primary Election Runoffs. Be sure and vote!!

Nov. 6 (Tues.) – General Elections. Be sure and vote!!

Nov. 17 (Sat.) - LWV-MS Board Meeting, 10 a.m.-12 noon. All members are encouraged to attend.

Dec. 15 (Sat.) – Bill of Rights Day. Celebrate your rights as a U.S. citizen today.

MS Voter Article Deadlines: Send articles to editor@lww-ms.org or Ellen Russak, 205 King Richard Rd., Starkville, MS 39759.

Dec. 10, 2007 for January *“The MS Voter.”*

March 10, 2008 for April *“The MS Voter.”*

July 10, 2008 for August *“The MS Voter.”*



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MISSISSIPPI

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Mission:

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan, political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.