



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF NEW ORLEANS LEAGUE ESSENTIALS

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CANDIDATES INFORMATION READY ONLINE

Citizens are encouraged to check the site www.lwvno.org/s2010-orleans.html to find current information on all of the candidates running for office in Orleans Parish for the February 6 primary election. The League posed questions to all of the candidates and has published their unedited responses along with pertinent biographical information. All candidates were contacted and 78% of them responded. The site also provides links to government offices such as the LA Secretary of State and the Legislature. Other links include polling locations, sample ballots and upcoming election dates. During the 2009 elections, the League site experienced 81,000 hits, making it the most visited site for voter information in the Parish. For those who don't have a computer, please talk to your friendly neighborhood librarian or ask a family member to take you to this informative site.

The Women's Breakfasts Have Now Resumed

Meals are sponsored by organizations and non-profits geared toward professional / working women in the GNO area. They are held the second Wednesday of every month, 7:30-9AM, at Zea's: 1525 Saint Charles Ave.

For reservations and further information: 504.528.1046,

julie@gnowomensbreakfast.com or visit www.gnowomensbreakfast.com

Women's Mentoring: Focus on Financing

There will be no mentoring session in February due to Mardi Gras. But starting in March, we will begin a series of talks (the second Saturday of each month) on what to do with our money during this time of economic instability. Don't miss 10AM on March 13th: Financial Empowerment and Socially Responsible Investing - a Woman's Perspective

- > Recover what you can
- > Protect what you have
- > Prepare for your future -- AND
- > Invest with your values

The speaker, Elyce Picciotti, is an investments broker for Wells Fargo, 111 Veterans Blvd., Suite 1800, Metairie, LA 70005

Letter from the President: 2010 - New Challenges!

Happy New Year, L WVNO members! 2009, with its worries and concerns about the economy and our area's on-going recovery and rebuilding, is past. We start 2010 with pre-election forums and debates. I have hopes for these new leaders, such as New Orleans' mayor, regional/parish leaders in the Greater New Orleans area, our next City Council, one assessor (elected, rather than appointed), one sheriff for both Civil and Criminal matters, a new state representative for one of our districts, and the election of judges and other local officials. There are also Mardi Gras, a possible trip to the Superbowl for our state's football team, the Saints, and on a sad note, the earthquake in Haiti. This tragedy affects our area's Haitian residents and their loved ones and reminds us of our own disaster not long ago. May we do what we can to help the relief effort in whatever way possible.

This is also a Census year, so there is a need for people to assist with the census. As federal appropriations and congressional reapportionment and redistricting decisions are made based on population figures, we must have as accurate a population count as possible.

This year we hope to have at least one or two general membership meetings. Please stay in touch, and let us know what you're interested in! We encourage all of our members to be active in voter education/registration, to attend the forums and debates, to get involved and to ask questions of the candidates for the various offices.

Wendy King
L WVNO President

Help us to make history come alive!

Contact Renee Smith at renee210@aol.com or 905-5208 to participate in the League's upcoming 90th Anniversary celebration.

Volunteer Opportunity

If you're in Orleans Parish Prison, even for a short time, you're likely to have trouble getting a job after you're released. If you're also without a high-school diploma, you're really going to have difficulties. Meantime, until you get out, you could study and take the GED exam. The prison has facilities, computers, learning software, and other tools to get you ready for the test. But, if you're not a teenager, there's no one at the prison who's available to help you use them. Holly Wilson is one of the four School Board teachers there. She is asking for volunteers to fill this huge need.

A volunteer commitment could be for two times each week at Tulane and Broad. Your weekly hours and schedule would be up to you. If you can help, please consider this opportunity. Interesting, flexible, and challenging, it has great possibilities. Call me or contact Holly at 733-3338 or hwilson@cox.net. If you only "might have time some day" please call anyway!

Marian Bourgeois
891-5430
mariancha@earthlink.net

MANY THANKS for the GENEROUS DONATION

Thank you to our dear friend and former LEAGUE president,
Betty Wisdom, who remembered us in her will
to carry on her lifetime mission of equity for all.

Betty Wisdom (1930-2007) was a civic activist, philanthropist and bibliophile who worked diligently toward the improvement of her beloved New Orleans. Of her numerous achievements, she considered her leadership as Chair of the Audubon Park Commission during the redevelopment of Audubon Zoo as her favorite. She helped turn it into its current nationally spotlighted standing and as a draw for families, the first real such venue New Orleans produced. As well as an animal lover, Betty was an ardent civil rights activist. In 1960, as a board member of Save Our Schools (essentially formed out of members of the LWVNO), she and 24 other women personally helped escort to and from school, the white children from the 12 families who were willing to keep their children in Franze School as little Ruby Bridges integrated it. As a result of this one successfully integrated public school, New Orleans was forced to integrate all of the schools. In 1994, Oprah Winfrey recognized the "S.O.S." for their work, along with the Little Rock 7 and Ruby Bridges. Betty was very honored to have been included with those whom she considered "the really brave".

Betty was President of the League twice and showed her love of the League by serving as chair of every committee the LWV offered and many of the study committees that resulted in our local 'program'. She was a founder of the Alliance for Affordable Energy in 1985 as it fought for fair and affordable energy policy for the city, serving on their Board for 22 years. Betty also served on the Board of ACLU, Agenda for Children, and other civic-minded organizations. However, building dollhouses that she donated for auctioning and donating children's books to local public schools were her two most joyful experiences. Of course, she also supported numerous cultural organizations, even sponsoring the training of several opera singers! In 1994, Betty received the Times Picayune Loving Cup for her lifetime of unpretentious volunteer work on behalf of her fellow New Orleanians. Betty was and always will be an inspiration.

Anne Redelfs
Karen Wimpelberg

Welcome New Member Rachel Norman!

Reach her at norman@leh.org

Congratulations to Francine Giugno, our Second Vice President, who was recently selected to receive *City Business'* Leadership in Law award at a March 16, 2010 ceremony. Francine has been named as one of the top 50 attorneys in the metro area based upon her significant professional and civic accomplishments. Francine also spearheaded the recent four mayoral forums with Lela Neff.

WELL DONE, FRANCINE!!!!

The Healthcare Committee Invites You

to the showing of Sicko, by Michael Moore,
February 23rd at 6:30PM

Flora Blackstock's home: 3213 Grand Route St. John

Please join us for popcorn
and a lively discussion afterwards.

**Do You Have Views on Local Education?
Here's Your Chance to Make Your Views Known.**

Orleans Parish Education Network (O.P.E.N.) is a consortium of civic groups such as the Urban League of Greater New Orleans, the Greater New Orleans Education Foundation, CBNO/MAC, Children's Defense Fund, the Louisiana Justice Institute, the Silverback Society, and Bright Moments. O.P.E.N. is committed to ensuring civic engagement in shaping the future of public education in New Orleans. Members are asking for input from all interested parties on their perceptions toward the local public school systems. Please take a moment to fill in a quick but thorough survey to assess attitudes toward local education delivery.

For those with computer access, please go to:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NFH9BYL>.

For those who would like a hard copy of the survey,
please call Linda Santi at 504.382.0704.

Louisiana and New Orleans Join the Race to the Top

By Ann Meese, PhD

The Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) voted on Tuesday, January 13, 2010, to approve Louisiana's application for \$300 million. The vote was the final approval step necessary to officially apply for the funds, which are targeted for struggling schools. The New Orleans Public Schools were one of only 28 districts to apply out of Louisiana's 70 districts - winners will be announced in April. Participating districts have agreed to a number of reforms designed to increase academic performance:

- To develop a "value added" measurement in which teachers, principals and other school leaders are evaluated. Student performances on standardized tests, attendance and drop out rates are three of the components of this measurement.
- This "value added measurement" will determine pay based on how well their students improve academically over the course of the school year.

Louisiana Governor, Bobby Jindal, has announced that he would pursue legislation to include value added student performance measurements in teacher evaluations. He proposes to enact this system even if Louisiana is not selected for the Race to the Top program. Declining state revenue is forcing statewide cuts in education and health services. This, of course, concerns classroom teachers who are facing larger class sizes, which often cause a decrease in academic performance for students needing more one on one instruction. The value added student performance measurements would thus be affected. These declines appear to also inhibit state and even national funding for facility repair and construction.

The concern locally about the status of public education in New Orleans focuses currently on the academic rating on the state LEAP test and the state graduation examination. An ever-growing number of charter schools are showing marked academic progress. The concern centers on those schools, which are still performing poorly. This issue has become entwined with the governance system of the three existing school governing bodies – the 33 Recovery School District (RSD) schools under Superintendent Paul Vallas and the 37 charter schools under the RSD umbrella; the 4 Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB) schools under Superintendent Darryl Kilbert and the 12 charters under the OPSB umbrella; and 2 charter schools under the direct partnership with BESE.

What is the next step in governance for the public school systems of New Orleans? In the current mayoral race, the candidates voice support of the movement to meet standards, prevent dropouts and increase principal and teacher performance. Dr. Andre Perry, CEO of the University of New Orleans charter-school network, recently stated, "In New Orleans schools, we now have multiple superintendents; we have multiple decision makers; we have a highly decentralized landscape. Who is going to be the arbitrator? Who is going to be the convener? The mayor is a proxy for who the people trust. And in education we need a person we trust to make hard decisions right now." The Cowen Institute of Tulane University recently listed three things the Mayor of New Orleans can do:

- Coordinate the New Orleans Master Plan with the School Facilities Master Plan
- Enforce truancy laws to get school-aged children off the streets and back in schools
- Support the recommendation made by the After-school Partnership to support youth.

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LWVNO BOARD 2009-10

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!!!

Fun and easy FUNDRAISER for LWVNO!: February 6, 2010, 8 pm, at designated voter-polling places. Pick up the vote count and call in the numbers to FOX 8 TV. If you can help, please call or e-mail Jane Jurik, 394-7062, jjurik@bellsouth.net.

FOX 8 TV pays the League \$50 for each designated polling place we cover for them. In past years, this has proven to be an excellent fundraiser for the LWVNO. It takes an hour or less and you can get back home to watch the election returns!

Food For Thought:

“I have no home but me.”

Anne Truitt (1921-2004) – American Minimalist Sculptor