

The Voter

League of Women Voters of the
Lower Cape Fear

9/1/2016

Letter from the President

Not in Kansas Anymore...

Late summer greetings from the mountains of Colorado where John and I are camping for a few weeks. It's a long way from coastal North Carolina – plenty of time to appreciate anew the sheer size of our country as well as the richness of its diversity.

Okay, Kansas *was* a bit long – 424 miles east to west on I70. But as Dorothy said, we're not in Kansas anymore. That well-known line from *The Wizard of Oz* has stayed with me, a talisman of sorts for thinking about the country in this over-heated political season. To the extent that Kansas represents the familiar, the comfortable, the expected and accepted ways of doing things, we have certainly moved someplace else.

This has led me to think about the nature and importance of compromise – a practice we seem largely to have abandoned. Compromise allows us to move forward in a productive way rather than remaining stuck in hardened positions. One need

not surrender core principles but there is generally something each side can give in an effort to get to “yes”. No better current example comes to mind than the actions of our three county boards of elections over early voting plans; two were able to compromise and one was not. Which county's voters were better served?

We're now plunging headlong into a busy fall election season; the trusted nonpartisan work of the League of Women Voters is needed more than ever. Read through this newsletter, check out our website calendar, and plan to help with our voter registration events, candidate forums or another activity. And a very warm welcome to our newest members – we're glad you've joined us and we look forward to seeing you at a League event soon.

Sheila Fellerath, President

LWV Lower Cape Fear



Full house Brunswick County membership meeting in Leland in August.

Presenting information and answering questions on the \$152 Million School Bond Referendum were Jessica Swencki, Executive Director of Community Engagement, Olaf “Bud” Thorsen, Chairman of the Brunswick County Board of Education, and Leslie Tubbs, Superintendent of Brunswick County Schools.



Welcoming new members:

Carolyn Pryor, Loraine Buker, Ann Parvin and Linda Kurta welcomed Sarah Stanhope, Pat Lowery, Cathy Campau and Margaret Ebeltoff on Sept. 15th

Recent New Members

Roselyn Upchurch is a NC native, living in Wilmington for 29 years, working mostly in the education and banking fields. She was Past President of The Pilot Club of Wilmington, an International civic/service organization whose focus is helping persons with brain-related disorders. Also volunteers on a regular basis at the NHC Arboretum and Cameron Art Museum. A history major and a political "junkie".

Kathleen Berkeley recently retired from UNC Wilmington after a career of 34 years as a professor of History and for the last 15 years as an administrator. Her research and teaching areas included gender and sexuality. She is the author of two books and numerous scholarly articles. A 2015 recipient of the YWCA's Women of Achievement Award in Education, Kathleen looks forward to continuing her community service. She is a member of the WHQR Board of Directors, a member of the local chapter of AAUW and volunteers at Mother Hubbard's Cupboard and the Little Red Wagon Program at Forest Hills Elementary School.

Suzanne Kaminski spent the majority of her professional career in NYC in the Insurance industry, and served as a Board Member of the Association of Professional Insurance Women (APIW) and volunteered at the Wall Street Rising/Municipal Art Society, New York Junior League and was a Board Member of the Fight For Sight Organization.

Since retiring to Brunswick Forest last year, she participated in the ASLP (Adult Scholars Leadership Program). As a new member of the League of Women Voters, she serves on the Membership and Voter Services committees.

Kathryn Hedgepeth retired from a career with the Alzheimer's Association in 2011, and moved to Wilmington from Western Massachusetts. "As the daughter of a newspaper publisher, I have a lifelong interest in trying to understand the complexities of this wonderful but often exasperating country in which we live. The League's careful and unbiased examination of issues helps me do that. Additionally, I strongly support the League's commitment to getting more people involved in the political process and look forward to helping with voter registration drives and candidate forums."

Beth Hansen moved to Wilmington 10 years ago with "My two passions are the environment and disability advocacy. I volunteered as an environmental educator. My disability advocacy began 25 years ago when my daughter was born with profound intellectual and physical disabilities." She is concerned about many social issues, and respects the League's approach to taking positions on issues and educating voters.

Andrea Carson is most interested in Social Justice, Education and the Environment, she was drawn to the League at our recent Hot Topic on Storm water Runoff. She moved to Wilmington 22 years ago from NJ. Her background is in program development in the health field and retired from New Hanover County Health Dept. Previous to that she ran outreach programs at the hospital.

Simone Dewey joined the League of Women Voters to learn and better understand the inner workings of our political system in an open and unbiased environment. She enjoyed a professional career selling international voice & data telecommunications networks. She also pursued an interest in interior decorating and owned an art gallery for emerging artists from 1999-2005. She is a native New Yorker who retired to Leland, NC from Chappaqua, NY in November-2014.

Cathy Campau moved to Wilmington 7 years ago and volunteers in various organizations in town. She worked for the Board of Elections in Charlotte as a poll worker and was aware of the LWV work with voter registration. A past member, she decided to rejoin and learn more about current issues.

New Gun Violence Prevention Roundtable - A Personal Story By Bonnie Bechard

On a cold January day in 1995, as I ate lunch at my desk in my UNC-Chapel Hill office overlooking McCorkle Square, I heard a burst of gunshots. Ironically, I was listening to a gun rights advocate on NPR extolling the 2nd amendment and how the government had no right to “take away our guns.”

As the gunshots came closer, students were dropping down behind the stone walls and hiding behind trees. A bullet ricocheted off the stonework at the edge of my window. As I was shepherding students into the safety of the building, we heard a barrage of gunfire as the police engaged the shooter, and then overpowered him.

A young father and a UNC student were killed that day, and two others wounded. The shooter, Wendell Williamson, was a UNC law student, with serious mental health issues.

There are so many ways to have prevented this tragedy. I had given this student his financial aid check just a few days before and, at the time, I was wondering what was wrong with him. I could see his skin was clammy and, in my ignorance, I thought he had a hangover. He used that money to purchase semi-automatic weapons.

This was a tragedy on so many levels. There are the two who

lost their lives. Then there are the 11-year old who lost his father, a wife who lost her husband, and the proud parents who lost their only son.

Wendell was a tragic figure, too, suffering from paranoid-schizophrenia. The Daily Tar Heel published one of his undergraduate essays on the World War I poets, that was brilliant, beautiful and compassionate. Wendell later wrote a book about the nightmare of being a paranoid-schizophrenic. His medical care dropped through the cracks when his psychiatrist moved away and his prescriptions lapsed. He is still locked away for his crimes.

The gun violence prevention interest group hopes to look at all the ways we could work toward avoiding such tragedies from happening again.

Bonnie Bechard

[How to be involved?](#)

Our mission is to protect our children and our communities by reducing gun violence. This year we are researching the issue, gathering the data, and will then set legislative goals.

This new Roundtable will meet following the Hot Topic Luncheon on Monday, September 26, at McAlister's Deli.

Join OBSERVER CORPS

Be a part of our league's Observer Corp and help stay informed about the actions and plans of our local government. Being an observer and keeping our league up to date helps promote open, transparent and accountable government.

How to become involved:

Decide on a local government board/elected body/committee to monitor that is of interest to you and/or your round table. Contact the Observer Corp coordinator (Carol Roberts) of your interest. If you will be a new observer, she will pair you with another member with experience in observing. An introductory letter will be sent to any new group being observed explaining the purpose of the observer and of the League.

Responsibilities of an

observer: Attend the meeting, take notes and then write a summary that will be sent out to our membership. Observers do not comment during these meetings but are there to represent the League by being a presence and noting what is happening.

The Observer Corps is an important part of our League program. Consider becoming involved.

September Hot Topic:

What an excellent opportunity to learn about the League of Women Voters of the Lower Cape Fear and our many advocacy efforts. This month's Hot Topic Luncheon will be a general meeting open to members, guests and visitors.

Attend to learn about Candidate Forum plans and other Voter Services activities as well as hear about our Observer Corps. There will be brief presentations from

Roundtable Chairs for Education, Environment, Gun Violence Protection, Immigration, and Women's Rights.

Please join us on Monday, September 26th at Mc Allister's Deli at 740 S. College Road, Wilmington, NC 28403. Lunch at 11:30; the program is from noon to 1:00 pm.

*League of Women Voters of the Lower Cape Fear
SERVING BRUNSWICK, NEW HANOVER, PENDER AND ONSLOW
COUNTIES*

League of Women Voters of the Lower Cape Fear

P.O. Box 4503 Wilmington, NC 28406

For a calendar of monthly activities, including public Hot Topic luncheons, Round Table meetings, open Board meeting, go to our website at www.lcflwv.org

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