



The Voter

May 2012

League of Women Voters of Sumter County

The Legacy of Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune

The Sumter County League of Woman Voters held its regular monthly Membership Meeting on Monday, April 9, 2012 in the Health Sciences Building on South Main. Our speaker was Elizabeth B. Dixon, Founder and Executive Director, The Mary McLeod Bethune Museum Development Association. Mrs. Dixon was born in Lee County. Upon her return to South Carolina she was inspired by a vision to promote the legacy of Dr. Bethune in her hometown of Mayesville. Retired South Carolina Supreme Court Chief Justice Ernest A. Finney, Jr. has given her his full support in this endeavor.

Dr. Bethune was born on July 10, 1875 on Raccoon Road in Sumter County, but made her home in Mayesville. One of fifteen children, the first to be born 'free', she and her family lived in a three room house. At an early age she realized that she could not read, and determined that she would. She attended Mayesville Presbyterian Mission School with the intent of becoming a Missionary to Africa. She attended Scotia Seminary and the Moody bible Institute. After graduating, she learned that she could not attain her dream of being a Missionary in Africa.

She returned to Sumter and taught school on Harvin Street. After a time, she decided to go to Florida and establish her own school. She found a former trash dump and talked the owner to sell her the land for \$1.50 down and \$5.00 per month. She recycled items from the dump, sold pies, sang in local hotels, and took many other jobs to keep her school going. Eventually she was able to interest a white businessman to serve on her Board and then to arrange financial support for the school. From these humble beginnings, Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach, Florida emerged. She served as president of the college from 1923-1942 and from 1946-1947. Her college concentrated primarily in teaching 'vocational education' subjects to the black boys and girls that were her students.

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Annual Membership Meeting

League of Women Voters of Sumter County
7:00 PM, Monday, May 14, 2012

Topic: National Convention Issues

Speaker: Keller H. Barron
Sumter LWV Delegate
2012 National Convention

Location: The Shepherd's Center
24 Council Street
Sumter, SC 29150

Dues are due: \$50.00.

Money in Elections

We are all aware that the huge amount of special interest money, particularly in federal races, has been a problem for years. We also know that these problems have been magnified by the Supreme Court ruling in the *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* case which unleashed corporate spending for supposedly independent campaign expenditures and which has resulted in millions and millions of dollars in secret contributions. And we are also concerned that a great deal of this money is going into highly negative, and often misleading, election-related ads.

There is a lot of frustration within the League - and around the country generally - about what can be done to minimize the ramifications in the 2012 election year and beyond.

I'm writing today to tell you what LWVUS is doing in this area - and to identify some ways in which your League and members can get involved as well.

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Money

LWVUS Activities Underway

1. We are continuing the fight to pass *the DISCLOSE Act*. This essential legislation will require financial disclosure for all campaign advertising. No longer will trade associations, corporations and wealthy individuals be able to make secret contributions to run election ads.
2. With a *grant from the Unitarian Universalist Church of Shelter Rock, NY*, we will be joining with one or two state Leagues to purchase advertising to bring the reform message to the public.
3. As you know, the *Federal Elections Commission* is not enforcing current law on campaign finance, so we and our sister organizations have been pressing for big changes. As a start, we've called on the President to appoint five new commissioners to the agency. With the strong support of thousands of League members, our efforts on the petition to the President on the FEC reached its goal of 25,000 signers and we are anxiously awaiting his promised response to the petition and the continuing problems at the FEC.
4. A new *League Campaign Finance Task Force* is now up and running, which includes nine knowledgeable and committed League members from around the country. The Task Force will serve as a resource to the LWVUS Board and will provide information and input on campaign finance issues, including short- and long-term strategies for reform.
5. Senior staff is participating in an *Independent Sector working group*, whose focus is on developing a response for the non-profit community on the increasing use of existing and new 501c(4), social welfare organizations, to engage in electoral activities. The League is a member of Independent Sector, which is a national organization that speaks for the non-profit sector on a number of issues. One concern of the IS working group is that the valuable role played by social welfare organizations will be tainted by new groups that are being created under section 501c(4) of the tax code but whose purpose is primarily to funnel funds into electoral races.
6. The Board is *recommending to Convention a comprehensive program* to educate members and communities on the issue of campaign finance in order to inform our education and legislative efforts as needed.

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Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (2010) is a landmark decision by the United States Supreme Court which held that the **First Amendment** prohibited the government from restricting independent political expenditures by corporations and unions.

Is Voter ID Implementation Possible In South Carolina?

COLUMBIA, S.C. -- A federal court has given the state of South Carolina until Monday to clarify whether it would be feasible to implement a statewide voter identification requirement in time for this year's general elections.

State elections officials have said that, in order to take appropriate steps to use the law for the Nov. 6 general election, the requirement that voters present government-issued photo identification at the polls must go into effect no later than Aug. 1 of this year.

Now, it will be up to state Attorney General Alan Wilson to outline what steps the state would need to take to create photo voter ID cards and make sure voters know the rules in enough time for the general election. The deadlines for the state would be tight. But one of the three judges hearing the case said the speedy schedule is necessary if state officials want to be able to use the law - if approved - this year.

A panel of three federal judges in Washington, D.C., is considering the lawsuit filed by Wilson, who earlier this year sued U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder over the U.S. Department of Justice's rejection of the law.

The federal government blocked South Carolina's photo ID requirement in December, saying it could keep tens of thousands of the state's minorities from casting ballots. Justice officials also said the law failed to meet requirements of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which requires the Justice Department to approve changes to South Carolina's election laws because of the state's past failure to protect blacks' voting rights. **(continued on Page 3-Voter ID)**

Voter ID

It was the first such law to be refused by the federal agency in nearly 20 years.

The law also requires the state to determine how many voters lack state-issued IDs so that the State Election Commission can inform them of the new law. The Department of Motor Vehicles will issue free state photo identification cards to those voters.

In a sworn statement submitted earlier this year, State Election Commission executive director Marci Andino said her agency was ready and willing to do what the law required to get both elections personnel and voters up to speed on the requirements but never followed through on those actions after the law was rejected. Those steps would have included:

- holding a series of seminars to educate voters about the new requirement;
- advertising the new policies in publications throughout the state;
- and notifying all registered South Carolina voters who didn't have driver's licenses and giving them information about how to get free ID cards that would comply with the law.

The commission would need at least four to six weeks to create a system to issue those ID cards, according to Andino. In addition to the machinations of putting such a law into place, several groups that have intervened in the case on the side of the federal government say there is simply not enough time left to both educate voters about the law and give them a chance to get the required identification before the November elections.

The League of Women Voters has argued that the law would hinder its Election Day duties of helping with a voter protection hotline and mean the league spends fewer resources on voter registration. Attorneys for the NAACP, which represents five black Benedict College students who wouldn't be able to use their school-issued ID cards at the polls, said the law would keep black voters from being able to cast ballots.

The American Civil Liberties Union represents three voters who say they have been unable to get the photo identification required by the law in order to vote.

The three-judge panel considering the case has set a schedule that, one of them wrote in court papers filed last week (April 26) "seeks to minimize the harms to the litigation process, on the one hand, and affected South Carolina voters, on the other."

In that same filing, U.S. District Judge John Bates wrote that the courthouse rush could have been avoided altogether if South Carolina had not only been more complete in its paperwork seeking initial approval from the Justice Department but also been swifter in challenging the rejection in court.

"A state's need to preclear an election law in time for a presidential election is, without question, quite compelling," Bates wrote. "But extraordinarily expedited litigation of preclearance cases can have negative consequences."

By MEG KINNARD - Associated Press
Myrtle Beach Online from The Sun News
Sunday, April 29, 2012

<http://www.myrtlebeachonline.com/2012/04/29/2800322/sc-to-say-if-voter-id-implementation.html>



Board of Directors Report

The Board of Directors met on April 19, 2012 for our regular Board meeting. Some actions taken at that meeting are:

- We continue to follow-up with the School Board concerning the adoption of the “iCivics” program at the middle school level.
- City Council still has not submitted its plan for re-drawing district lines for City Council. Since Council Members are elected ‘non-partisan’ the lines do not have to be approved until later this summer.
- Jeanette Roveri is working to organize Voter Registration drives at local high schools. If interested in helping with this effort, call her at 840-3770.
- Dr. Jacob Butler has agreed to attend our Annual Meeting on May 14 and continue the discussion he began in February about the First Amendment.
- The Board selected Keller Barron to represent the Sumter LWV at the LWVUS National Convention in June. Keller represented our League at the 2010 National Convention. We plan to have her attend a meeting this fall to share her assessment of the actions taken at that convention.
- President Gibbs attended the LWVSC Council Meeting on April 14, 2012. There were interesting presentations made concerning Human Trafficking in South Carolina (farm workers and hospitality industry), and a new research facility to be built in Charleston to test paddles and drive trains for very large wind turbine generators. State dues were not increased.

If you have not yet made your reservations for the Annual Meeting on May 14, please do so.

Chuck Gibbs, President

First Amendment: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Nominating Committee Report

The Nominating Committee (Barbara Brown, Chair, Marie Hill, and Lorraine Dennis) submits the following recommendations for Board Officers to the LWV of Sumter County membership.

Nominee recommendations for 2012-2013 are:

- President: Jeanette Roveri;
- Vice President: Barbara Brown;
- Director: Open;
- Secretary: Ethel Wells;
- Treasurer: Barbara Wiley



Annual Membership Meeting

The Annual Membership Meeting of the Sumter County League of Women Voters will be held at 7:00 pm on Monday, May 14, 2012 at the Shepherds Center on Council Street. The meeting will commence with a brief social time with dinner to be served at 7:30 pm. The menu will consist of Roast Beef, Potato Casserole, Green Beans, Rolls, Dessert, Tea, Lemonade and Coffee. The cost will be \$10.00 per person. “New Beginnings” will cater the meal. The main item of business will be the election of officers for 2012-2013.

Keller H. Barron is a Past President of South Carolina LWV. She will again represent the Sumter League at the LWV National Convention to be held in Washington, DC, June 8-12, 2012. She will briefly discuss significant issues to be addressed at the convention. Ms. Barron will be seeking informal feedback concerning these issues.

To make reservations for the Annual Membership Meeting, please call Jeanette at 773-1944 (W) or 840-3770 (C), or email her at jeanetteroveri@hotmail.com. Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

We look forward to seeing all of you on May 14.

Chuck Gibbs, President

Money

Bethune

What Leagues Can Do

1. *Engage in the League's Money in Elections reform campaign.* Call on your Senators and Representative to support the DISCLOSE Act. Respond to LWVUS action alerts, reach out to your members to engage them in this topic, especially to meet with your federal representatives or their staff in the state or district. Write a letter-to-the-editor of your local papers and call attention to the problems of secret money in campaigns. Voters deserve to know where the money is coming from.
2. *Participate in the "Stations: Stand by Your Ad" campaign* to identify ways TV and radio stations can reduce the number of erroneous campaign ads run by third party organizations. For a description of the campaign and how Leagues and others can get involved, go to <http://www.lwv.org/files/StationsStandbyYourAdFactSheet.pdf>.
3. *Engage in public education about how to watch TV campaign ads* – particularly those sponsored by third party (and supposedly independent) organizations – with a critical eye.

Big money in elections – and the related avalanche of questionable and negative campaign ads – will be an inescapable reality in election year 2012. But the League is not sitting back quietly while that happens! There is much to be done, and I encourage everyone to make “money in elections” an important part of our *Power the Vote* efforts this year. Thanks for all you do!

Elisabeth MacNamara
 President, LWVUS



Starting in 1928 when she attended a Child Welfare Conference at the invitation of President Coolidge, Dr. Bethune served four Presidents, Coolidge, Hoover, Roosevelt, and Truman, in a variety of capacities, such as: 1930, White House Conference on Child Health; 1934-1935, Special Advisor for Minority Affairs; 1938, Director of National Youth Administration, Division of Negro Affairs; 1942 Special Assistant to the Secretary of War for Officer Training School (WAACS); 1945, U. S. Delegation on UN Charter; 1951, Committee of 12 for National Defense. In all these capacities, Dr. Bethune distinguished herself and demonstrated her love and concern for the youth of America. Dr. Bethune died in Daytona Beach on May 18, 1955.

The goals of the Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Museum Development Association are to: Establish and operate a small museum; Build a bed and breakfast, conference/retreat center; and Establish a training center for the rural youth of Lee, Sumter and Clarendon counties. Some of the trades to be taught are: upholstery, drapery-making, catering, and photography. The ultimate goal is to honor the beliefs and life ambitions of Dr. McLeod Bethune. Memberships are solicited. The address of the Association is: 1940 Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune Road, P.O. Box 374, Mayesville, SC 29104.

Chuck Gibbs, President

Sumter County LWV Local Officers		
President	Charles Gibbs cgibbs@sc.rr.com	775-0487
Past President	Lorraine Dennis	905-4350
First Vice President	Barbara Brown	469-3165
Treasurer	Barbara Wiley	469-8419
Secretary	Ethel Wells	481-2342
Director	Jeanette Roveri	840-3770
Director	Evelyn Bradford	499-5961