

National Convention Report 2010

Judy Thomas, LWVCCA president

Atlanta, Georgia: June 11 – June 15

What an amazing way to spend five days in HOT Atlanta. I've returned from the stimulation of 14-15 hour days filled with the insights and information of more than 600 voting delegates from 45 states (including Alaska!) plus national and state board members and staff. I attended two caucuses, five workshops, two briefings for first-timers, five plenary sessions and one small group meeting on civility. While it is still fresh in my mind I wanted to share with you some of the highlights and significant information.

Two New Study Program Items Adopted

The Federal Role in Public Education study recommended by 71 Leagues was approved. The two year study will focus on the role of the federal government in education policymaking, with possible consideration of funding, common standards and/or governance relationships among all levels of government. The scope will be dependent on available resources, including committee and LWVUS staff time. The adopted budget includes \$10,000 for the study. (voice vote)

Also approved was a non-board recommended study of Privatization: the policy agenda to transfer government functions, services and assets to the private sector. (card vote: 308-274) A tote bag was passed to help fund the study; it raised \$3,500. See also the note below under per member payment.

Concurrences Approved

Based on concurrence with the LWV of Maryland and LWV of Maine, Marriage Equality will be added to the Equality of Opportunity position. Based on concurrence with the LWV Arizona, the LWVUS will support "the use of the National Popular Vote Compact as one acceptable way to achieve the goal of the direct popular vote for election of the president

until the abolition of the Electoral College is accomplished.”

Resolutions

Six resolutions were also approved. 1) the lifting of the travel restrictions of Americans going to Cuba; 2) re safe drilling and mining for energy resources; 3) limitation of the use of the Senate filibuster; 4) adding the principle of Transparency to the SARA resolution (Security, Accuracy, Recountability; Accessibility) dealing with voting; 5) strong LWVUS Board support of improved Medicare for all; 6) resolution re the Gulf Oil well gusher.

Speakers

John Lewis, representing the 5th Congressional District of Georgia was inspiring: “I don’t know what our country would be like without the LWV . . . You’ve been getting in the way. Continue to get in the way. Continue to get in to trouble. . . . We’ve got a ways to go to create a ‘more perfect union.’”

Walter Shur, whose very significant contribution in memory of his LWV member wife has led to the creation of Shur Fellows, a membership recruitment and leadership development program. (Our new state president Marcia Hirschberg is one of these specially trained fellows. “If democracy has a heart, then that heart is the ballot. No organization has done more to keep the heart beating than the LWV.”

Leslie Sanchez, author of *You’ve Come a Long Way Maybe*. “In 2010 many women will be running for office; women will be running against women. We will need ground rules for how women will deal with each other in politics.” The current political scene “feels like Katrina in slow motion.”

Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of Health and Human Resources. [There is much to do] “as we work toward a more perfect union.” “The Affordable Care Plan is a work in progress.”

From the civility group discussion: “Democracy is about getting your say, not your way.”

Elizabeth Shur, newly elected LWVUS president from Georgia, a trial attorney. “We must get in the way, everywhere, every way we can.”

Re National LWV

- 27% of the national budget resources come from the per member payment; the rest comes from contributions and grants. There are 300 major and planned giving donors.
- LWV staff includes 30 persons (28 full time, 2 part time), 23 funded from the budget, 7 fully funded by grants.
- There are 830 state and local Leagues.
- The next LWVUS board will be looking at possible models that will help locals keep more of their dues. See also below.
- **Per member payment:** because the delegates approved a second study, the delegates amended the proposed PMP increase for FY 2010-2011 from thirty cents to forty cents for a total of \$29.70. The argument ran we will not participate in unfunded mandates. An additional increase from the proposed increase for FY 2011-2012 was defeated leaving PMP at the recommended \$30.

Ideas abound, Concerns are very similar.

I had numerous opportunities to talk with members of Leagues from around the country. It seemed like everywhere Leagues are dealing with an aging membership and shortage of younger members. At the same time, many Leagues are engaging in very meaningful work and gaining visibility. I'll be sharing many ideas with the board and our membership over the coming year.

Thank you for making it possible for me to attend the convention. I felt it was time and money well spent. To find out even more about the Convention go to www.lwv.org.