

The Voter of ODC



Inside this issue:

Iron Jawed Angels	1
President's Message	2
Upcoming Meetings	3
Health Care Reform Caring for the Uninsured	4
Test based school accountability	5
Membership News Action Alert from LWVUS	6
Honorary Member Diane Brown	7
League Calendar	8

IRON JAWED ANGELS



Come celebrate Women's History Month by watching and discussing *Iron Jawed Angels*, the HBO film about two defiant women who struggled to secure the right to vote for all women. This HBO film stars Hilary Swank, Julia Ormand and Angelica Huston, and will be shown in both Durham and Chapel Hill.

Chapel Hill Screening

**Saturday, March 8
2:00 to 5:00 PM**

**Royall Room in the George Watts Hill Alumni Center, UNC
Stadium Drive**

(Parking at Rams Head Center on Ridge Road)

The screening is followed by a panel discussion with:

- Vicki Boyer, President, LWVODC
- Dawn Shamp, Author of *On Account of Conspicuous Women: A Novel*
- April Henry, UNC Doctoral Candidate

The event is co-sponsored by the UNC General Alumni Association.

Durham Screening

**Wednesday, March 12
7:00 PM to 10:00 PM**

**North Regional Library
221 Milton Road
Durham**

The screening is followed by a discussion led by Sylvia Kerckhoff, former Mayor of Durham.

The event is co-sponsored by the Durham County Library.

Upcoming Events

**March 26
10:00 AM**

March General Meeting

April 17

6:30 PM to 9:00 PM

**Popcorn and movie night
"Uncounted" The New
Math of American Elec-
tions**

May 15

**1:00 PM to 3:30PM
Annual Meeting**



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Vicki Boyer

As you know, February 14th was the 88th birthday of the League of Women Voters.

LWVUS has shared with me, via a listserv I am on, a selection of Birthday Greetings sent to the League. I want to share them with you, as they show just how much people value the work we do. These messages show that even though we sometimes feel our work is overwhelming and that we have little chance of achieving change, that there are those who sincerely appreciate our efforts and offer encouragement for tomorrow.

88 keys on a piano. 88 years of League. Let the music continue.

You are truly the League with a heart, a voice, and shared information which can create positive change.

Still the best organization in America! Taught me most everything I know about organizing. Love it with all my heart.

You are the most underappreciated national treasure.

You go, girls...doing a great job!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

When LWV speaks, civic leaders listen. Happy Birthday to a group that has earned respect because of all the hard work of its volunteers.

With respect, love and gratitude from my grandmothers, my parents, my children, grandchildren - and self.

From the bottom of my heart, body, mind and political soul - Women can and do change the world. Let's keep it up!

The League was responsible for two of the biggest things in my life: My business and my marriage. I'll always be grateful to this terrific group of women.

LWV is the standard by which I measure all other organizations.

Without you, we'd be nowhere. Thanks for changing the world.

League Members are wonders, Without them voters would wane, By not registering to vote, by not standing in the voting lane. So Happy Birthday LWV, Long may you continue to serve, So our voting process continually improves, And never your resolve shall swerve.

It is great to be associated with this wonderful organization which so many depend on for advice & information, especially in this election year!

We've come a long way baby!!!! The clothing changed, but not the sentiments!!!

AT 88 you still have the "it factor" and still rock.

Happy Birthday to a group that still believes in the "high road" and making things transparent, honest, and positive.

To the best darn organization that ever was created in these United States. Happy Birthday, women.

We are so proud to be a small part of this big, beautiful picture of democracy in action.

I came from Iraq and I was 38 year-old. I was never given the chance to vote. I am a proud member of this league and I am a proud citizen of this country where I was given the chance to vote.

**League of Women Voters
Orange/Durham/Chatham
P.O. Box 3397
Chapel Hill, NC 27515-3397
919-419-1650
[Http://lwvodic.org](http://lwvodic.org)**

Officers 2007-2008

President
Vicki Boyer
612-7079
vivalwv@gmail.com

1st Vice President
Carol Sherrod
542-6650

2nd Vice President
Joyce Colaiace
colaiaj@aol.com

Secretary
Barbara Nettesheim
942-2763

Treasurer
Bessie Carrington
489-8668

Nominating Committee
Jan Richmond
408-0444

Directors 2006-2008
Evelin Brinich
967-5819
Membership@lwvodic.org

Carol Rist
490-5718

Cynthia Wertz
Cynthia_wertz@embarqmail.com

Directors 2007-2009
Barbara Hardison
304-0929

Brenda B. Schoonover
967-7898

Linda Stryker-Luftig
542-1176
lindastryker@gmail.com

**Government
in the Sunshine:
Focus of Sunshine
Week**

Wednesday, March 26
10:00 am until noon

Lisa Sorg
Editor of the *Independent Weekly*
"How *Indy* Reporters Obtain Public
Information for Their Articles"

Extraordinary Ventures Facility
200 South Elliott Street
Chapel Hill

April General Meeting

Thursday, April 17
6:30PM to 9:00 PM

Popcorn and Movie Night

Featuring the film
"Uncounted"
*The New Math of
American Elections*

Extraordinary Ventures Facility
200 South Elliott Road
Chapel Hill

ANNUAL MEETING

Thursday, May 15
1:00 PM to 3:30 PM
Extraordinary Ventures Facility
200 South Elliott Road
Chapel Hill

Beginning at 1:00 PM, LWVODC member Dawn Shamp will read to us from her new book, *On Account of Conspicuous Women: A Novel*.

On Account of Conspicuous Women opens in 1919 in Person County, North Carolina, and is the story of four young Southern women who unite in friendship during the women's suffrage movement. Copies of Dawn's interesting and timely novel of social change will be available for purchase.

Afternoon tea or cool beverages and light snacks will be served after Dawn's presentation, followed by the annual business meeting.

The Voter...ODC...The Voter...ODC...The Voter

Caring for the Uninsured - Reality from a Community Health Center

by Melissa Bishop, MD
Health Care Reform Advocacy Committee

I was out of Kleenex, but Helen accepted the paper towel gratefully.

“I just don’t think I can take any more,” she cried. She complains of pain and numbness in her hands and feet, the result of years of poorly controlled diabetes. Her legs have been swollen and sore since having a blood clot last year. Her sleep apnea is worsening; her husband says she chokes and stops breathing repeatedly in the night. She is drowsy during the day, falling asleep whenever she sits down for a rest. She is the only wage earner in the family, bringing home \$800.00 per month from her job as an aid in a nursing home. Her husband is disabled with back pain. She has two school-aged sons, one of whom has autism.

“I can’t feel my hands to pass out pills, and when I sit down to do my paperwork, I nod off. I don’t really feel safe to drive because I am so sleepy, but I have to work. I’m so sorry to cry like this. I don’t have anyone to talk to, and sometimes I just need someone to listen. I’m sorry today it had to be you.”

Helen has no health insurance. I have been her doctor for six years, and have watched her health, and her spirits decline. I work at a community health center. Our center provides primary health care to low-income patients. About 30% of our operating budget is through a federal grant to help provide care for people without health insurance. Patients are charged according to a sliding fee scale that is based on their income. Helen’s household income is just over the federal poverty limit, and she is charged 25% of the fees she incurs at our office. She can obtain many of her medications at our pharmacy, and pays about \$10 per prescription per month. Since Helen takes multiple medications for hypertension, diabetes and vascular disease, even this discounted fee is beyond her budget. She obtains some of her medication through a free volunteer-run clinic. This has been helpful economically, but dangerously complicates and fragments her care. She also obtains a newer, more expensive diabetes medication through the pharmaceutical company’s patient assistance program, which requires cumbersome paperwork and tracking.

Helen has been feeling so persistently sad and hopeless, that we decide to try an antidepressant medication. What Helen really needs is what she explicitly asked for: “someone to talk to.” Unfortunately, mental health services are virtually non-existent for the uninsured in many counties of North Carolina. Helen will go without professional help to manage her sadness, exhaustion and frustration; but with medication she may notice some improvement in her mood in a few weeks . . . along with some stomach upset, trouble sleeping and decreased libido.

Ironically, though Helen works in a health care setting, her job does not provide health insurance. Over the last 5 years, it seems that the poorest, most medically underserved, and often the least healthy of our patients are employed in the health care industry. This is emblematic of the degree to which our health care system has failed; as many more dollars are spent on health care, and many more Americans are employed in health related fields, America’s performance on a variety of health measures continues to decline when compared to other industrialized countries.

Patients without good medical insurance operate on the fringes of the American medical system. The private for-profit US healthcare system has evolved to suit the needs of its stake-holders – hospitals, doctors, insurers and pharmaceutical companies. The concerns of uninsured patients have not been taken into account. One obvious example of this is secrecy regarding pricing. Patients are generally unaware of the cost of a medical service until the bill arrives. There are no price lists to be found in doctors’ offices or hospital waiting rooms. The medical bill that an insured patient receives lists two prices: the actual price and the discounted price charged to the health insurance company. Medicare and Medicaid also pay only a fraction of the actual charge. Counter-intuitively, the uninsured are charged the highest fees because they have no collective bargaining power.

The prices are rising and the bills are shocking. As a doctor caring for the uninsured, half of my time is spent providing well intentioned but ill-informed financial counseling. One of the reasons that doctors have trouble factoring cost into their decision-making is that medical pricing is just as obscure to us as it is to patients. I frequently find myself guessing at prices. Last fall I recommended that a middle-aged woman with chest pain and an abnormal EKG have a cardiac perfusion scan, a very commonly performed test. I warned her that the test could be expensive – maybe as much as a thousand dollars. She opted to have the test, and fortunately it was normal. This week she informed me that her total bill for that test was close to four thousand dollars. Her family’s yearly income is less than \$20,000.

(continued on p. 5)



Helen Ladd

Test Based School Accountability How Does it Work in North Carolina?

League members who attended the February General Meeting of LWVODC gained an excellent understanding of the impact that test-based accountability programs are having on our schools and our students.

Helen Ladd, Professor of Public Policy Studies and Economics at Duke University and a member of the North Carolina Blue Ribbon Commission on Testing and Accountability, praised the North Carolina ABC Accountability Program, which began in 1996, because it focuses on the achievement of students instead of schools. "You start the assessment at the child's learning level at the beginning of the school year and ask what educational value has been added at the end of the year," Ladd said.

In contrast, No Child Left Behind is a nationally implemented status approach, which looks at the overall average standardized test score of a school. "Programs like No Child Left Behind ignore the fact that kids are bringing very different experiences to the school," Ladd said. "If we really want to get rid of the disparities, we need to put more interest in the out-of-school programs offered, preschool education, student access to glasses and hearing aids where necessary and out of school enrichment."

As to the impact that test-based accountability programs are having on our schools and our students, Ladd said that all of the testing has had a small positive effect on education, and more on math than on reading. She indicated that testing has had an even smaller effect on the effort to decrease the achievement gap between black and white students.

Caring for the Uninsured (continued from p. 4)

More often, after hearing my guess at the price of a medical procedure, uninsured patients will choose to forgo further care. Much of the medical testing we do is to identify low likelihood but potentially catastrophic problems – the MRI to rule out brain tumor in a patient with headaches, or endoscopy to look for stomach cancer in a patient with belly pain. A patient with insurance would not question or hesitate to undergo these tests, if for no other reason than to relieve the anxiety of uncertainty. Uninsured patients learn to live with anxiety and play the odds. Unfortunately, they will also delay needed care when the odds are not in their favor. Last month I saw an uninsured patient who had avoided seeking care for a severe sore throat and fever. By the time he finally came in, he required an ambulance ride, 2 emergency room evaluations, 2 CAT scans and surgical drainage of a throat abscess.

Unfortunately, Helen's story is not unique. As of 2006, 47 million Americans are without health insurance. Of those, 58% work full or part-time. The plight of the uninsured has had great emotional impact but little political impact. Estimates are that it would cost \$100 billion to provide medical coverage to every American. That seems like a lot, until we remember that annual US healthcare spending exceeds 2 trillion dollars. Until now, there has been little political will to accomplish universal health insurance in the United States. Uninsured Americans constitute a marginalized group with little political clout.

For the majority of Americans who have good health insurance, or perhaps have not yet realized that they are not as well covered as they thought, it is difficult to imagine having to struggle to obtain medical care. But we are complacent at our peril. The health care crisis in the US extends beyond the problem of the uninsured. The uninsured feel the pain first and most acutely, but we are all sure to suffer. The uninsured are the first to notice the astronomical costs of health care, but as health care costs sky-rocket, our health, jobs and economy are all at risk. The astonishing rise in medical costs means most of us are just one serious illness away from bankruptcy.

The Voter...ODC...The Voter...ODC...The Voter

Membership News

By Evelin Brinich

Our annual Spring Newcomers' Mix and Mingle was a success with 16 people in attendance. Our group included a lively mix of working and retired women. New members present were Jean Atwater, Margot Barnhardt, Edith Haubrichs, Dawn Shamp, Ruth Shur, Carolyn Talbot, Joan Wrede, and Page Vernon. Prospective members present were Tana Hartman, Kathy Michinek, Kay White, and Helen Williams. Current LWVODC Board members Vicki Boyer, Joyce Colaiace, and Evelin Brinich told the group about the League's history and current activities. Attendees were invited to tell the group what issues they are interested in. Half of the members stated an interest in health care reform. Other topics of interest are immigration, education, privatization of water, women's reproductive rights, equal pay (Title 9). It was an eclectic group with many good ideas, and we look forward to their active participation in our League!

Welcome to our new local members!

Mimi Strand
4900 NC HWY 55 Ste. 160-189
Durham, NC 27713
423-6875
ncwatersprite@hotmail.com

Kay White
875 Millcroft
Pittsboro, NC 27312
542-1138
kaywhite@earthlink.net

Carl L. and Helen Williams
22 Speyside
Pittsboro, NC
542-5328
helencarlwms@msn.com

Welcome to our new national member:

Barbara Bergquist
2600 Croasdaile Farm Pkwy #A239
Durham, NC 27705-1336

ACTION ALERT FROM THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE U.S.

Stand Up Against Administration Fear Tactics

Your Representative in Congress needs to be encouraged to keep protecting America's basic civil liberties against the administration's fear tactics. The administration wants to continue warrantless wiretapping of American citizens and to let telecommunications companies off the hook for possible illegal eavesdropping.

The 110th Congress has already spent innumerable legislative hours discussing surveillance legislation. Earlier this month, the Senate passed S. 2248, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Amendments Act of 2007, which allows for limitless warrantless wiretapping by the executive branch and includes retroactive immunity for telecommunications companies. These companies have allowed the administration to use corporate resources to spy on innocent Americans.

The House of Representatives voted to adjourn for the President's Day recess without considering S. 2248, thereby resisting administration claims that this would leave America vulnerable to terrorism.

Take action today to encourage your Representative to keep protecting civil liberties by continuing to stand against the administration's fear tactics!

Tell your Member of Congress to limit the ability of government agencies to obtain information about American citizens without the appropriate judicial constraints. While the intelligence community needs the authority to track terrorists abroad, this should be done without threatening our civil liberties.

TAKE ACTION

1. Contact your Representative now, by phone or by email, and tell him or her to continue to stand up against S. 2248. Tell him or her that warrantless wiretapping of Americans is unacceptable in a democracy and remind your Representative that blanket retroactive immunity for telecommunications companies is wrong.

Sign up to receive Action Alerts directly by email. Don't miss an opportunity to take action! It's easy to sign up and the League will never share your email with others:
<http://takeaction.lwv.org/lwv/mlm/signup/>.

Recognizing Our Honorary Members

This month we complete the series of articles featuring our honorary members, written by Membership Chair Evelin Brinich. Honorary Members are those who have been League members for fifty years or more. As Evelin wrote in the August *VOTER*, "My hope is that these narratives will provide us with a framework for appreciating what it means to be a League member, where we have been, where we are going, and, most of all, some inspiration for good citizenship." Thanks Evelin. You succeeded. And congratulations to our nine inspiring honorary members.



Diane Brown

Despite being in the last stages of moving from a home of 30 years, Diane Brown agreed to an interview. Sitting in an almost bare house, Diane's lovely, lilting voice seemed to caress the memories seeping out of every crevice.

Diane became acquainted with the League through her political science professor at Lake Erie College. This professor was a League member and required that all her students participate in voter service as part of their course work. Diane married during her junior year in college and had two children within 19 months. She joined the League in 1956 in Painesville, Ohio. With a laugh she quickly added "I needed the League to keep my sanity." Once in the League Diane took on many responsibilities and became a board member. When the family considered a move to Chapel Hill in 1962, the presence of a League chapter was a decisive factor. By 1963 there were five children in the Brown household and Diane remained active in the League, working in almost every capacity. She was Chapel Hill president from 1969-1971. During her presidency the Chapel Hill League celebrated the LWVUS' Fiftieth Birthday at Morehead Planetarium. Tongue-in-cheek Newsletter want ads to enlist volunteers would read "Experienced Bulletin-folders needed. If you are the mother of a baby in diapers, you are experienced." In those days members of the LWV Board were addressed as Mrs. James C. Brown, Mrs. Roderick Ironside, etc. Diane served as State League president from 1981-1983. During these years Diane's interests became increasingly focused on voter service. On one day in 1970, the Chapel Hill League assisted the Orange County Board of Elections with the registration of 300 people.

In addition to her League activities, Diane volunteered for the Orange County Retired Senior Volunteer Program Advisory Council Board in 1978 and served as Chairwoman in 1987. She also served as a Special Voter Registration Commissioner (registered voters and set up special registration events) from 1972-1989, was appointed to the Orange County Board of Elections in 1989, became a board member and mediator for the Dispute Settlement Center in 1987, and later became a mediator in the District Criminal Court. In addition, Diane has served on numerous other boards including the NC Council of Women's Organizations and North Carolinians for Effective Citizenship. She also taught English as a volunteer for the group English Classes for Foreign Wives. In 1992 Diane received the Governor's Award for Outstanding Volunteer Services.

Looking back on all these activities, Diane considered "What I have learned in the League has affected my whole life." She then added "Women did it all." She is quick to add that her husband, Jim, became the first man to join the local League in 1975 when men first became eligible for voting membership.

A League memory Diane particularly cherishes is the League's involvement in putting a billboard in downtown Washington, DC in support of the Voting Rights Act. In a period of 6 weeks in 1982 Diane and the League worked together with a coalition of 26 organizations (AFL/CIO, NCAE, NAACP, Common Cause, and others) to put up a red, white, and blue billboard with "A message to Senators NOT from North Carolina" proclaiming that "Despite our Senators' opposition, hundreds of thousands of North Carolinians want a strong Voting Rights Act. Please pass Senate Bill 1992." With the financial support of the League, Diane was able to be in Washington on a cold, rainy February day for the unveiling of the billboard and a press conference. The event received wide press coverage and SB-1992 was passed.

Asked how we can improve what we do, Diane recalled that the League used to be very involved in the process of studying issues and may have engaged in "too much study and not enough action." However, she sees benefits in working in committees and doing careful research. Offering different meeting times and locations could make it easier for more members to be involved.

League of Women Voters of
 Orange, Durham and Chatham Counties
 P.O. Box 3397
 Chapel Hill NC 27515-3397
 Tel: 919-419-1650
<http://www.lwvdc.org>

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization for men and women that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences policy through education and advocacy. Any citizen over 18, male or female, may become a voting member of the League. With that membership comes the opportunity to work on local, state, regional, and national program issues.

The Voter is printed on recycled paper.

League Calendar

Mar. 6 9:30 AM	LWVODC Board Meeting	
Mar. 8 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM	<i>Iron Jawed Angels</i> Followed by panel discussion	George Watts Hill Alumni Center, UNC (parking at Rams Head Center on Ridge Road) Chapel Hill
Mar. 12 7:00 PM to 10:00 PM	<i>Iron Jawed Angels</i> Followed by discussion led by Silvia Kerckhoff	North Regional Library 221 Milton Road Durham
Mar. 26 10:00 AM to noon	Sunshine Week Lisa Sorg, Editor <i>The Independent</i>	Extraordinary Ventures Conference Center 200 South Elliott Street Chapel Hill
Apr. 17 6:30 PM to 9:00 PM	Popcorn and Movie Night <i>Uncounted: The New Math of American Elections</i>	Extraordinary Ventures Conference Center 200 South Elliott Street Chapel Hill
May 15 1:00 PM to 3:30 PM	Annual Meeting Dawn Shamp reading from her new novel, followed by annual business meeting	Extraordinary Ventures Conference Center 200 South Elliott Street Chapel Hill