

The Voter of ODC



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JANUARY GENERAL MEETING

Farmworkers in North Carolina

Tuesday, January 15, 2008

1:00 PM

Hargraves Center
215 North Roberson Street
Chapel Hill

Speaker: Melinda Wiggins
Executive Director, Student Action with Farmworkers
(SAF)

SAF is a nonprofit organization engaging students in the movement to improve the lives of immigrants and farmworkers. This North Carolina grassroots effort brings students and farmworkers together to share their culture, to educate, to provide skills and resources and to promote change in the living and working conditions of a farmworkers life.

Melinda Wiggins will give us an overview of the work of this organization and inform us of recent NC legislation that will provide the NC farmworker with a better, safer and healthier future.

League members and others: Don't miss this opportunity to become better informed about this immigration issue that we are linked to by being consumers of the products of the North Carolina agriculture industry.

**IMMIGRATION
CONSENSUS DISCUSSION**

Saturday, January 26, 2008

9:30 AM to 11:30 AM

Chapel Hill Library

100 Library Road (off Estes Drive)

This will be our final discussion on the LWVUS Immigration Study. Discussion at this meeting will form the basis for our consensus on immigration, which must be sent to the LWVUS by the end of January.

Coffee and iced tea will be available. If you desire other drinks or snacks, please bring them with you

Upcoming Events

**January 15
January General Meeting**

**January 17
Immigration Presentation**

**January 26, 2008
Consensus Meeting
Immigration Study**

**February 14
February General Meeting**



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Vicki Boyer

Meetings. Meetings. Meetings!

Why attend meetings? In the workplace it seems that the higher up the corporate ladder the more meetings one attends. Many feel these meetings become a big waste of time. But not for us. Not for the League of Women Voters! Our meetings have concrete outcomes. They give us the ammunition we need to advocate and serve. They give us opportunities to work with others. Opportunities that really matter.

The meetings we plan share information with our members. Information that gives us the means to take action, if we so desire. We attend meetings to see our friends and to broaden our acquaintance in the community. We attend meetings to learn. (And we do like to learn!) We know we can take what we learn and put it to action, and work for change in government and public policy. When we are able to affect change, we create a legacy for those who follow us. To affect this change, we work with others. Our meetings are a place where we can bring our friends and family, and even work together with them on a project.

Unlike many business meetings, our meetings have clear goals. The outcome is always a better understanding of the issue at hand, as well as broadened comprehension of our world and how it works.

Our meetings are where we create an institutional history for the League of Women Voters and where our League culture perpetuates itself. These shared experiences build relationships between members, allowing us to discover common interests and make new friends. Common interests can lead to working with a group of like-minded individuals to affect change in government at all levels.

We still want to change the world. But it is hard to change the world alone. Come to our meetings. Get to know more of the people who share your concerns. At the very least you will learn something new. But it could lead to more...it could change the world.

I can't wait to see YOU at the next meeting!

Vicki

The Economic Impact of the Hispanic Population on the State of North Carolina

If you have not yet read the study by James Johnson, Jr. and his colleagues at the Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise titled, *The Economic Impact of the Hispanic Population on the State of North Carolina*, you still have time to read it before the immigration consensus.

The full report may be downloaded on line at: www.kenaninstitute.unc.edu.

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**February
General Meeting**

**February 14
10:00 AM**

**Conference Facilities of
Extraordinary Ventures, Inc.
200 South Elliott Road
Chapel Hill**

Speaker: Helen F. Ladd, Edgar
Thompson Distinguished Professor of
Public Policy Studies and Professor
of Economics
Duke University

Topic: The Results of the School
Testing
Policies in North Carolina

Professor Ladd's research has a concentration on Education Policy and State & Local Public Finance. She has authored numerous publications on education policy and finance, and currently serves on the North Carolina Blue Ribbon Commission to research school testing policies and student achievement.

Please note the new location for the February meeting. The conference facility at 200 South Elliott Road is managed by Extraordinary Ventures, Inc. It is located diagonally across from Whole Foods and next door to the State Employees Credit Union. Ample parking is available behind the facility.



**Orange County
Education Advisory Committee
on Local Revenue Options**

By Barbara Hardison

One day last fall, I saw in the paper that the Orange County Commissioners were looking for citizen volunteers for the Education Advisory Committee on Local Revenue Options. Since this issue will appear on the ballot in the primary in May in Orange County, I decided to apply. As it turns out, they had a slot for a volunteer from the League of Women Voters, and I was accepted for that slot. The first meeting was held in December, which was mainly a meet-and-greet and the give out information and a projected time line of events. As it turns out, this committee will not study the issues and give the Commissioners recommendations, which is the usual practice. We will have another meeting in mid-January to hear from the "experts" as to the options for revenue raising – either a .25% raise in the sales tax or a .4% land transfer tax. In mid-February it is expected the County Commissioners will make the decision of what option or options will appear on the ballot in May. After that, it will be the committee's responsibility to formulate plans/actions to educate the voting public. These plans/actions will be neutral in tone and will give the relative pros and cons for whatever option(s) is/are selected. After each meeting I will report back to the LWVODC members on the status.

The County was initially looking for 20 citizens to be members of this committee. As of December, only 11 people had volunteered. If any League member is interested in joining the committee, there are at-large vacancies. Contact Rod Vissor, 245-2300.

Sustainable Living

At our annual holiday dinner, Carrboro Alderman Dan Coleman encouraged each of us to make choices in our personal lives which will result in improved health for ourselves, our economy and our planet. Alderman Coleman recommended three books to guide us on the road to sustainable living:

The Small-Mart Revolution, How Local Businesses Are Beating the Global Competition

by Michael Shuman

- Shows exactly why locally owned businesses are far more beneficial to their communities than massive chains like Wal-Mart
- Outlines specific strategies small and home-based businesses are using to successfully outcompete the world's largest companies
- Advises consumers, investors, policymakers, and organizers on how they can support the the local entrepreneurs who contribute to their communities

The Omnivore's Dilemma

by Michael Pollan

In this groundbreaking book, Michael Pollan turns his own omnivorous mind to the seemingly straightforward question of what we should have for dinner. To find out, Pollan follows each of the food chains that sustain us—industrial food, organic or alternative food, and food we forage ourselves—from the source to a final meal, and in the process develops a definitive account of the American way of eating. He takes us from Iowa cornfields to food-science laboratories, from feedlots and fast-food restaurants to organic farms and hunting grounds, always emphasizing our dynamic coevolutionary relationship with the handful of plant and animal species we depend on. For anyone who reads *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, dinner will never again look, or taste, quite the same.

Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life

by Barbara Kingsolver

Barbara Kingsolver and her family sweep readers along on their journey away from the industrial-food pipeline to a rural life in which they vow to buy only food raised in their own neighborhood, grow it themselves, or learn to live without it. Their good-humored search yields surprising discoveries about turkey sex life and overly zealous zucchini plants, en route to a food culture that's better for the neighborhood and also better on the table. Part memoir, part journalistic investigation, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* makes a passionate case for putting the kitchen back at the center of family life and diversified farms at the center of the American diet.

Presentation of Interest to Members of LWVODC on the Current Situation Facing Undocumented Immigrants

On January 17, at 7:00 PM, in the Chapel Hill Public Library Conference Room, the Orange County Bill of Rights Defense Committee will screen a 54 minute DVD of a presentation given recently by Marisol Jimenez-McGee, Advocacy Director of El Pueblo. Ms. Jimenez-McGee explains clearly the economic and social difficulties of undocumented immigrants in the US with a focus on North Carolina, telling of the influence of the US quota system and path to citizenship and the role NAFTA has played in displacement of workers in North Carolina and Latin America. She addresses structural adjustments required by trade treaties, changing skills needed by workers in North Carolina, and the anti-immigration sentiment in our state. League members are welcome to attend this meeting. The presentation will offer additional information for League members in preparation for our consensus on immigration.

Submitted by Peggy Misch

More Immigration Resources on the Web

The Pew Hispanic Center (<http://pewhispanic.org>) is a Washington, DC based "fact tank" and has over 75 reports and fact sheets on a wide range of topics. Scholarly and nonpartisan, they avoid taking positions on the issues.

The American Immigration Law Foundation (<http://www.aifl.org>), another Washington, DC based nonprofit, is dedicated to increasing public understanding of immigration law and policy and the value of immigration to American society and to advancing fundamental fairness and due process under law.

The Heritage Foundation (<http://www.heritage.org>) is a Washington, D.C. based conservative "think tank." Excerpts from their article, *The Fiscal Cost of Low-Skill Immigrants to the U.S. Taxpayer*, by Robert E. Rector and Christine Kim are widely quoted as gospel by illegal immigration opponents.

The Southern Poverty Law Center (<http://www.splcenter.org>) of Montgomery, Alabama, is a nonprofit that advocates for justice and equality and opposes hate groups. Their article, *Getting Immigration Facts Straight*, goes a long way toward doing just that.

Thanks to the Henderson County Voter for this information.



Recognizing our Honorary Members

by Evelin Brinich

Our honorary member this month is **Elizabeth Wade Grant**, who has been a member of the League since 1952.

Betty had researched her LWV files prior to our meeting. She was kind enough to provide me with copies of State League Voters published during her term as president from 1983-1985. Her quarterly presidential addresses gave me a feeling for the time, for the League's activities, and an appreciation for her excellent writings.

Betty graduated in 1947 from Mt. Holyoke College in South Hadley, MA and received her MA from Radcliffe/Harvard in 1951. She married Richard (Dick) Grant in 1952 and they moved to Durham, NC that summer. She joined the Durham LWV in the fall of 1952. A family member had told Betty that wherever she lived she should look into the League because it was the best way to meet people who shared common interests in the democratic process on all three levels – local, state, and national. Betty and Dick's two children were born in 1953 and 1956 – true North Carolinians. Betty recalled that in those days, many women connected to the academic world stayed at home or worked part-time while their children were little and the League offered them the opportunity to attend evening meetings when their husbands could baby-sit. Betty taught a section or two of French at Duke University. After she was divorced in 1972, Betty worked five years at Duke Medical Center and gradually became more and more involved with the League. Much later, in 1989, she was ordained deacon in the Episcopal Church and served as part-time chaplain at the Duke Medical Center for nearly 15 years until she retired in 2003.

Betty's most important League activities included being president of the state League from 1983-1985. During her term, the League was actively protecting its policy of non-partisan presentation of facts for political action. Fifty thousand free Voter Guides for the primary and general elections were distributed and well received by all North Carolinians. During her term North Carolina was also chosen to be one of five states for the Women's Vote Project, a national effort to register women and get them out to vote. The League also became known for its fact sheets on bills introduced into the General Assembly on which the League's had a position. Despite the State League's tremendous efforts, Betty's term also saw the reversal by the Federal Communications Commission of its previous ruling on political debates, resulting in debates sponsored by the broadcasters and the increased possibility of special interest funding. This development affected the League's ability to obtain sponsorship for any of the senatorial debates.

Since her retirement Betty continues working with Orange County Habitat for Humanity, the Chapel Hill Homeless Shelter, and on a Noise Abatement Committee (regarding the noise of I-40 that borders Carol Woods on the north side). Betty takes Tai-Chi and walks early each morning. Since 2003 Betty's health has had set-backs from which she has made remarkable progress, and she feels blessed to still be able to live independently (at Carol Woods). However, she misses the energy she had when she was in her 50's. While she does not attend evening meetings due to end-of-day fatigue, she reads all LWV newsletters carefully and tries to attend morning or lunch meetings when they are offered. Asked what recommendations she might have on how we could improve our services, Betty suggested having meetings at different times of the day in different locations might be helpful.

For Information and Background Papers on Immigration Study

Go to www.lwvdc.org

Click on "What's New" and under "Immigration" you will find links to the LWV-US study. Available at the LWVUS website are: resource information on immigration, including *Immigration 101: the Basics*, background papers, the scope of the LWVUS study, the consensus questions to be discussed at our small group meetings, background papers on immigration policy and more.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF 2008 PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES' HEALTH CARE REFORM PROPOSALS

By Evelin B. Brinich
Chair, Health Care Reform Advocacy Committee

Health care reform is on everyone's mind. It is an issue which has become increasingly difficult to ignore as we keep paying more for less health care and worrying about how we can afford it in the future. A poll in October 2007 found health care at the top of the list of issues people in North Carolina want their government to address. Not a single day passes without "news" of another state, organization, or political candidate proposing a new way to fix the problem. One can only hope that this abundance of reform ideas leads to real change instead of the usual burn-out and boredom often following hot news items.

Although still early in the game, presidential candidates all offer ways to fix the problem. Many plans are still sketchy – and the devil is in the details – but we may wish to consider the candidates' views on how to fix health care as we begin to think about our voting decisions. Below is a brief summary of their current views with the candidates listed in alphabetical order. More information is available on their respective websites.

Hillary Clinton is proposing an American Health Choices Plan that covers all Americans and improves health care by lowering costs and improving quality. A refundable tax credit will prevent premiums from exceeding a percentage of family income.

John Edwards' health care reform platform includes a universal health care plan which would require by law that every American has comprehensive health (including mental health) coverage. Health Care Markets would give individuals and employees choices, including a publicly financed, single payer plan.

Rudy Giuliani hopes to decrease health care costs by increasing competition and expand choices through tax code reform (not tax hikes) and keep government bureaucracy out of health care.

Mike Gravel proposes a universal health care voucher program in the form of governmentally issued annual health care vouchers based on their projected needs.

Mike Huckabee feels America does not have a health care crisis but a health crisis. He would like to decrease health care spending by improving preventative care, electronic record keeping, portability, and by reforming medical liability laws.

Duncan Hunter emphasizes the differences in health care costs across America and suggests individuals should be able to purchase insurance plans across state lines.

Dennis Kucinich and others introduced HR676 in January 2007, the "United States National Health Insurance Act (or the Expanded and Improved Medicare for All Act)," which would cover all Americans through a publicly financed, privately delivered universal, single payer, not-for-profit health care system which would also encourage prevention and maintain quality.

John McCain would harness competition by promoting insurance policy purchases across state lines, purchasing cheaper policies between jobs and more expensive policies while employed, and with the use of tax-exempt health savings accounts to pay for health care expenses.

Barack Obama would make available a new national health plan that would give individuals and small businesses the choice of buying affordable, portable health care coverage similar to that available to federal employees. Subsidies would make insurance affordable for those who cannot pay for it. Greater availability of generic drugs would further help decrease health care costs.

Ron Paul is for medical savings accounts, freedom of choice, tax credits – all to provide an incentive for people to spend less.

Bill Richardson would give all Americans a choice to keep their current coverage but would offer other choices including the same plan available to members of Congress, Medicare beginning at 55, Medicaid and SCHIP for lower income families, and sliding scale tax credits for those who need it.

2008 Presidential Candidates' Health Care Reform Proposals

(continued from p. 6)

Mitt Romney would establish federal incentives to deregulate and reform state health insurance markets so market forces can work, help low-income uninsured individuals purchase private insurance, establish health savings accounts, work to reform medical liability, and “bring market dynamics and modern technology to health care.”

Fred Thompson thinks it is best if individuals decide what is best for them with insurance that is not dependent on employment and insurance that can be purchased from anywhere in the nation.

In summary, all candidates agree that health care costs need to be addressed. Most Democrats prefer some type of universal health care solution that involves individuals and employees sharing the costs and working with the insurance and pharmaceutical industries to contain costs of premiums. Dennis Kucinich is the only candidate who backs a single payer universal health care plan without the insurance industry as middle man. Most Republicans are for market-based solutions such as increasing competition among insurers, tax subsidies, and the availability of health savings accounts.

Leaguers may also wish to review the LWVUS position on health care reform available at: www.lwv.org (Search: health care).

HEALTH CARE TERMINOLOGY

by Anna McCullough, Health Care Reform Committee

Understanding the technical terms candidates use as they discuss health care reform proposals is critical to making informed decisions as we vote at both the state and national levels. A better understanding of what candidates really mean when they use these terms can also help us understand how their proposals fit with the League's position on health care. A brief list of some of the more frequently used terms follows. The information included here was drawn from the following websites, all of which are excellent resources for more in-depth reading and exploration of the many issues surrounding health care reform:

- Physicians for a National Health Program: www.pnhp.org
- The Kaiser Family Foundation: www.kff.org
- The National Conference of State Legislatures: www.ncsl.org
- Understanding Health Policy, 4th Ed. By Thomas Bodenheimer and Kevin Grumbach. McGraw Hill, 2005.

- **Universal Health Coverage:** Includes all members of a geographic or political entity, regardless of an individual's health status, and provides everyone access to a basic level of health care services.
- **National Health Insurance:** This term is sometimes used interchangeably with universal coverage. A National Health Insurance program implies governmental guarantee that everyone has insurance for basic health care.
- **Single Payer:** Health care is paid for out of a single publicly administered trust fund (as opposed to our current multi-payer system in which costs are covered by a number of different entities). A single payer system addresses how health care is financed – individual proposals may differ in how health care is delivered (i.e. how patients choose providers, etc).
- **Individual Mandate:** Requires all adults who do not have employer sponsored insurance to purchase health insurance coverage or pay a penalty.
- **Employer Mandate:** Requires all employers of a certain size to provide health insurance for employees or pay a penalty.
- **“Pay or Play” approach:** this is a term used to describe states using their tax authority to require that employers of a certain size “play” by spending a certain amount of their payroll on health coverage for employees or “pay” a fee in the form of a tax (which might be used for state sponsored health programs).

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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

Tuesday, January 15
1:00 PM

General Meeting
Speaker: Melinda Wiggins
Executive Director,
Student Action With Farmworkers

Hargraves Center
215 N. Roberson St.
Chapel Hill

January 17
7:00 PM

Orange County Bill of Rights Defense Committee
54-minute DVD of Presentation by Marisol Jimenez-
McGee on Current Situation
Facing Undocumented Immigrants

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February 14
10:00 AM

General Meeting
Speaker: Helen F. Ladd
Professor of Public Policy Studies &
Professor of Economics
Duke University

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Conference Facilities
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