



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

THE DC VOTER

A Voice for Citizens - A Force for Change

Volume 87, Issue 01

January 2011

President's Message

By Billie Day

The past months have been busy as we celebrated, demonstrated, and participated in election-related activities. My thanks to all who give so actively of your time to lead and participate in LWVDC activities and to contribute to its success. Thank you especially at this time to recent donors in October and November; names are listed on page 7. December donors will appear in the next issue.

As we begin 2011, and, in a few months, the League's 91st year, we have much work ahead as changes come to the city and to the Congress. Please join in our activities. Plan to attend the program planning session on January 26, at which time local and regional priorities will be discussed. Come and bring your concerns. And, looking ahead, save the date of April 16 for the 2011 Annual Meeting.

Local Program Planning Meeting: January 26th

All Leaguers, please mark your calendar for **Wednesday, January 26** from 11am – 1pm when we will meet to discuss and select our next local topic to study.

Should we study HIV/AIDS in DC? The electrical grid? Urban policy? Civic engagement? Housing? Elections? School lunches? We need your ideas and

opinions. All League members encouraged to attend. The meeting will take place at the League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia, 11th Floor Conference Room, 1100 15th Street, NW.

Questions?

Please contact Kathryn Ray at kcrdlb@gmail.com or 202.244.0770

November Green Bag — A Stimulating Lunchtime Discussion

by Geraldine Whitley

The monthly, first Wednesday, environmental series continued November 3 with **Dr Paul F. Walker**, Director of the Security and Sustainability Program for Global Green USA, the US National affiliate of Green Cross International (GCI).

Dr Walker discussed at length the international efforts to facilitate and advocate for the safe and sound demilitarization and nonproliferation of nuclear, chemical, biological, and conventional weapons stockpiles. One tool to address nuclear weapons issues is the Nuclear Weapons Convention. First drafted in 1997, the convention is a proposed international treaty that would prohibit the development, testing, production, stockpiling, transfer, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons, as well as provide for the elimination of nuclear weapons. It would be similar in form to existing conventions outlawing other categories of weapons, such as biological weapons, chemical weapons and anti-personnel mines. Seven countries: Russia, USA, India, South Korea, Libya, Albania, and Iraq are currently working with the United Nations on their nuclear weapons issues.

Each year since 1996, the UN General Assembly has passed a resolution calling on all countries to immediately fulfill their disarmament obligation, as articulated in an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, “by commencing multilateral negotiations leading to an early conclusion of a nuclear weapons convention.” In 2007, 127 countries voted in favor of the resolution, including four coun-

tries with nuclear weapons: China, India, Pakistan, and North Korea.

The idea is for countries with nuclear weapons to destroy them in stages, including taking them off high alert status, removing them from deployment, removing the warheads from their delivery vehicles, and disabling the warheads by removing the explosive “pits.”

Another serious issue is the safe destruction of nuclear weapons found in warehouses, underground deposits, and nuclear weapons found in open fields with little or no security.

Dr. Walker stated that, “Green Cross has affiliates in 30+ countries focusing on security and sustainability of nuclear weapons.” He added that Green Cross is constantly reviewing the thousands of abandoned nuclear weapons sites throughout the United States that are under review for safe destruction. Not only are these weapons dangerous to our physical health, causing unexplained deformities in both humans and animals, they are detrimental to our mental health (possibly causing various cancers, various stages of mental illnesses, etc.).

The participants wholeheartedly engaged in the discussion. For more information on this topic please visit Global Green USA website at www.globalgreen.org

Don't be left uninformed about important environmental issues affecting us all. Bring your lunch and plan to participate in the next Green Bag discussion—details coming soon. Open to the public.

A Growing Health Concern

by Joan Wilson

LWVDC jointly with the United Nations Association of the National Capital Area (UNA-NCA) held a panel discussion October 26 on UN Millennium Development goal #6: Combating HIV/Global AIDS. It was held at Howard University Hospital and moderated by LWVDC Vice President **Goody Braun**, who also organized the event with help from **Billie Day**, who noted in her opening welcome the increasing rate at which this disease is spreading throughout the U.S., especially in rural areas and in the female population.

Two speakers focused on the worldwide epidemic and two concentrated on what's happening locally; all gave a shocking wake up call to Washington, DC: HIV/AIDS here is at the same epidemic levels as in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the numbers are rising faster than anywhere else in the world. All emphasized something can be done to reverse this crisis, notably by improving sex education of young women and men.

Pauline Muchina, Ph.D., Senior Partnership Advisor with UNAIDS, an agency of the United Nations, drew attention to the abuse of females, the widespread sharing of partners by men, and the resulting increase in HIV infection not only in Africa but also in Washington. **Carol Jenkins**, Vice President of International Development, World Learning Organization, reported on her experience in Ethiopia, where her organization has helped children orphaned by AIDS get a better education and, with that, a better life.

A very moving appeal was made by Howard

University Pediatrics Physician and Professor **Sohail Rana**, M.D., who treats newborns diagnosed with AIDS transmitted by their mothers. There is medication to prevent the transmission of the HIV virus from mother to fetus but DC expectant mothers need to be educated to seek out this treatment, he said.

Marilyn Johnson, MAS—Director, Provider Outreach with the Howard University Local Performance Site in DC of the Pennsylvania/Mid-Atlantic AIDS Education and Training Center—told of the particular cultural issues in the community which present barriers to understanding the dangers of AIDS and stigmatize individuals who seek testing or help with safe sex precautions. Religious restriction of open discussion of sex health also was signaled as a significant obstacle.

Walter Smith, Director, D.C. Appleseed, urged that testing for AIDS be made a legal requirement, emphasizing that were such testing a part of routine physical examinations for all patients, it would be “socially acceptable.” DC Appleseed has been rating schools on their AIDS education, and they have improved from an F in the first survey to a C+ in the last one, Smith reported.

During the Q&A session, audience members and speakers highlighted the role of churches in counteracting parental denial and objections to sex education in schools, which are deemed top priorities for AIDS reduction. It was a substantive and stimulating evening skillfully conducted by Moderator Braun.

LWVDC Hosts International Legislative Fellow

by Billie Day

From October 15–November 7, LWVDC hosted **Diana Consuela Perez**, a participant in LWVUS International Legislative Fellows Program of the US Department of State. Coordinator **Billie Day** designed a program to provide knowledge and experience related to issues of civic engagement, government, and transparency in keeping with interests expressed by Ms. Perez. She met with **Lloyd Leonard** and **Betsy Lawson** at LWVUS as well as other advocacy directors in the city and spent a day on Capitol Hill. Her internship opportunities were with the LWVDC, the DC Council, and the DC Board of Elections and Ethics. In addition to her intern activities, the experience with the League was designed to expose the Fellow to the diverse neighborhoods of Washington and to provide opportunities for her to engage with local community members. During her first week, she visited most of the LWVDC units; later she attended the monthly board meeting of LWVDC and spoke about her visit.



Pictured here, Diana Consuela Perez, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton and Billie Day.

Her week with the DC Council, she interned in the office of Councilmember **Mary Cheh**, under the supervision of **Jeremy Faust**, Director of Legislative Affairs, observing and participating in Council activities and committee activities. Councilmember Cheh has been chairperson of the Committee on Government Operations and the Environment, and initiated bills on transparency and openness as well as the Omnibus Election Reform Act of 2009.

Councilmember **Muriel Bowser**, also an active proponent of openness in government, had agreed to host a Fellow from Brazil, who was unable to come at the last minute because of elections there.

During her week with the DC Board of Elections and Ethics, Ms. Perez interned under the supervision of **Rokey W. Suleman, II**, Executive Director. On particular days, she was assigned to work with Chief Counsel **Kenneth McGhie** and with Public Affairs Director, **Alysoun McLaughlin**. She was able to engage in and observe a full range of election activities, beginning with the completion of Early Voting and preparation for Election Day. Her activities included observing procedures of voting and counting, witnessing problem solving and responses to Election Day problems, as well as traveling to five polling sites. She received briefings by various staff members and technical representatives of the electronic voting equip-

Continued on page 7

An Elections Thank You

In addition to the many members who served as Poll Workers, LWVDC members were active in observing polling stations at the General Election. This included observing activities of early voting, same day registration, and curbside voting. Special ballot requests were observed because of changes of name or address, lost registration cards, delayed receipt of absentee ballots. Two observers reported minor problems with touch screen voting, but in general observers saw few problems. Elec-

tion night counting at the Board of Elections and Ethics was also observed. Those who observed included: **Robert Brandstetter, Jean Hall, Lee Etta Powell, Constance Tate, Kathryn Ray, Geraldine Whitley, Joan Wilson, Alexandra Dickson, Melody Webb** and **Billie Day**.

A special thank you also to **Robert Brandstetter**, who visited a polling site with a Japanese delegation, and to **Alex Dickson**, who visited another with two Russians.

Hand Gun Control Committee Update

by John Mathison

A long standing federal law prohibiting gun dealers from selling handguns to anyone under 21 years old is being challenged by the NRA, according to the November 26, 2010 lead editorial in *The New York Times*.

Young people in the age range 18-20 commit a disproportionate amount of gun violence with that age group accounting for about 5% of the population but nearly 20% of homicide

and manslaughter arrests. A bipartisan movement is underway to keeping our streets and our teenagers safe by working to extend the prohibition on gun sales to people 18 to 20 years old by licensed gun dealers. An early *Washington Post* editorial stated that the "loop hole" that allows unlicensed sellers to sell weapons at gun shows to buyers without requiring background checks should be closed.

Family Favorites: Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow

We still have copies of the cookbook celebrating LWVDC's 90th anniversary with healthy recipes from around the country.

Copies are \$15, including postage. Order forms may be downloaded from the website www.lwvdc.org Proceeds go to the LWVDC General Fund.

Only \$12 if purchased at LWVDC events!

Thanks for Your Generosity

Thank you to the following members who contributed to either the Educational or General Fund or both during the months of October and November.

Bashkin, June
 Bogorad, Hope
 Calbert, Madlyn and William
 Cuniberti, Julia
 Diggs, Reba
 Duke, June
 Fields, Adrienne
 Houghton, Lois
 Hunton, Norma
 Keenan, Joan
 Kirby, Mary Jane
 Legowski, Margaret
 Luchs, Barbara
 McCauley, Mary

McElroy, Elizabeth
 McMeans, Sarah
 Marsh, Anna
 Matthews, Christine
 Mathison, John
 Nesper, Ken
 Nyangoni, Dr. Betty
 Rubin, Lillian
 Rumsey, Leona
 Stout, Barbara
 Tate, Constance
 Wheeler, Patricia
 Yancey, Elizabeth
 Yeomans, Barbara

League Hosts Fellow, continued from page 5

ment companies.

The DC League of Women Voters enjoyed the company of Ms. Perez and hopes to have provided her with the experiences she was seeking and with opportunities to understand and appreciate the special status of the District of Columbia and its many communities. Many LWVDC members became actively involved in the Fellow's activities, hosting and/or suggesting contacts for her. It was

also an opportunity for many community leaders to interact with LWVDC. Likewise, all who were involved learned from Ms. Perez about her country, Colombia. Thank you to those who were actively involved: **Mary Bailey, Billie Day, Alexandra Dickson, Teresa Grana, Natalie Howard, John Mathison, Chris Matthews, Joan McKinley-Shelton, Vivianne Mozon, Abigail Nichols, Kathy Schmidt, Linda Softli, Jonathan Talbot, Emily Tamlyn, Melody Webb, and Joan Wilson.**

Plug in to the Electric Grid

The LWV–NCA Fact Sheet “The Adequacy and Reliability of Electricity in the National Capital Area” is now complete.

To view this extensive paper, please visit www.lwvnca.org

*Add the following LWV–NCA event to your calendar: **Saturday, February 12, 11am—Forum of Metro Governance, MLK Jr. Library***



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(fax) 202 783-0444 (email) lwvdc@aol.com

DATED MATERIAL

CALENDAR

Mark Your Calendars Now!

LWVDC Program Planning Meeting

Wednesday, January 26th

11am–1pm

LWVDC Conference Room, 11th Floor

1100 15th Street, NW

Please plan to attend this very important general meeting where we will discuss and select our next local topic for study.

Your input is essential!

For further information or questions, please contact Kathryn Ray at kcrdlb@gmail.com or 202.244.0770

READY FOR A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY? We are looking for 1-2 members interested in being part of a coaching team to be trained by LWVDC in outreach techniques, organizational planning, leadership development and mentoring. This is a great networking and personal development opportunity.

Contact dickson.alexandra@gmail.com or call the LWVDC office.