



The League of Women Voters of Washington County, AR

www.lwvarwc.org

JUNE-JULY, 2011 VOL. 58, ISSUE 4

JUNE 14 (Tuesday) – 6:00 PM at Fayetteville Town Center

PUBLIC INPUT MEETING for redrawing political boundaries of Arkansas' 100 House and 53 Senate districts hosted by the Arkansas Board of Reapportionment (<http://arkansasredistricting.org>). Contact Rep. Greg Leding to request additional information (Phone - (479)422-8099; Email - greg@gregleding.com; FACEBOOK – <http://facebook.com/gregleding>) or visit his website: <http://gregleding.com>

JUNE 14-15 (Tuesday-Wednesday) – 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM Washington County Courthouse

FEMA MOBILE DISASTER RECOVERY CENTER – Federal and State Disaster Relief Staff will be available to assist Arkansas residents wishing to apply for financial compensation for damages incurred as a result of April and May 2011 flood events. Registration with FEMA online (www.disasterassistance.gov) or by phone (1-800-621-3362) prior to visiting the recovery center is highly recommended and will help to expedite the application process.

JULY 25 (Monday) - 5:30-7:30 PM in the Fayetteville Public Library Walker Community Room

LWVWC SUMMER SOCIAL & FAYETTEVILLE COMMUNITY WILDLIFE HABITAT PROJECT SPEAKER SERIES* PROGRAM (6-7:30 PM)

“Creating Habitat for Butterflies”



PHOTOS – Terri Lane (<http://habitat.accessfayetteville.org>)

Cindi Cope is a Master Gardener, member of the City of Fayetteville Environmental Action Committee, and Fayetteville-In-Bloom Chair. She will discuss butterfly lifecycles and identification, and provide specific strategies for landscaping with native plants to support our native butterfly populations.

The Fayetteville Community Wildlife Habitat Project is an initiative of the Environmental Action Committee, in partnership with the National Wildlife Federation and the Fayetteville Natural Heritage Association (http://www.accessfayetteville.org/government/neighborhood_resources/Habitat/index.cfm). The project is designed to address species decline as a result of habitat loss by encouraging residents to create and certify wildlife-friendly landscapes on their properties. Together, we can create attractive, native landscapes that provide the basic elements all wildlife need: food, water, shelter, and nesting sites.

Help Fayetteville become the first recognized Community Wildlife Habitat in the state of Arkansas by certifying your yard at www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife. For information on the Fayetteville Community Wildlife Habitat™ Project contact **Terri Lane** at treehuggerlane@cox.net.

*See Page 6 for more on the Fayetteville Community Wildlife Habitat Project and Speaker Series.

FROM JOYCE'S DESK

I have just taken a look at the last three years of LWVWC to review the varied and challenging programs and activities we have addressed during this time. So as my final presidential task for these last three years, I want to remind you of the ground we have covered and thank those who have made our activities successful.

We have had panels on electricity use in Arkansas, foster care, the need for alternative transportation, national health care reform, Congressional redistricting, child poverty in NW Arkansas, public transit, and Fayetteville's streamside ordinance. There have been legislative luncheons and candidate forums along with a special LWVUS 90th anniversary celebration at the Chi Omega house. We have sponsored films: *Iron Jawed Angels*, *Gasland*, *A Sense of Wonder* (Rachel Carson), *Bag-It*, and *Carbon Nation*. We have invited speakers to discuss Eco-Logical Communities and the natural gas severance tax.

I am especially grateful to everyone who helped develop and promote the programs we have offered. Laura Kellams, Mary Alice Serafini, Marge Zinke, Karen Rollet-Crocker, and Carole Westby (LWV Benton Co.) have done the heavy lifting as program chairs. Our membership and community are better informed citizens for having this information, which was well publicized through the efforts of Molly Rawn. Sally Kelley's talent as webmaster has provided a vital anchor to our programming, community information, and archived materials.

Officers serving with me have fulfilled their responsibilities 100%! I am particularly grateful to Sara Caulk for arranging facilities for all events and seeing that details regarding signage and serving supplies were always in place. I have appreciated Susan Rausch's care and efficiency serving as treasurer and taking on added membership reporting duties. I am thankful that Libby Wheeler has stepped up several times to assume responsibility when leadership vacancies occurred and extra hands were needed at events. I have been able to rely on faithfully recorded minutes from Nancy McCartney.

I am especially proud of what a great job Bettie Lu Lancaster has done as Voter Services Chair in overseeing the many candidate forums and distribution of the *Guide to Elected Officials*. It has fulfilled our most important role in what the public expects of the League. I thank Dot Neely for applying her talents to the job of Voter Editor and Genie Donovan, Judy Cary, Bettie Solis, Patsy Ferritor and Jo Bennett for seeing to its distribution.

I will greatly miss working with Genie Donovan, Judy Carey, and Mary Bess Mulhollan as they leave the board after sharing years of experience and friendly support. Quite honestly, it is everyone's friendship that I value most highly about the League!

THE LWVWC'S PROGRAMS FOR THE YEAR AHEAD, 2011-2012

by Karen Rollet-Crocker and Libby Wheeler

National and local concerns will be the focus of next year's programs. This will broaden the League of Women Voters of Washington County's activities and link us to other organizations both at the national level and in our own community. Our goal is to work in partnership on important issues.

In May, at our annual business meeting, attendees were asked to rank listed topics of concern and to add other topics that we would potentially be interested in helping to implement. Results of the topic ranking and submission activity are summarized below:

- **DEVELOP A SERIES OF ACTION STEPS ADDRESSING THE REQUEST OF THE IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY TO BECOME INVOLVED IN THE LEAGUE'S MISSION** to encourage informed and active participation in government, increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influence public policy. **(Continued on Page 5)**

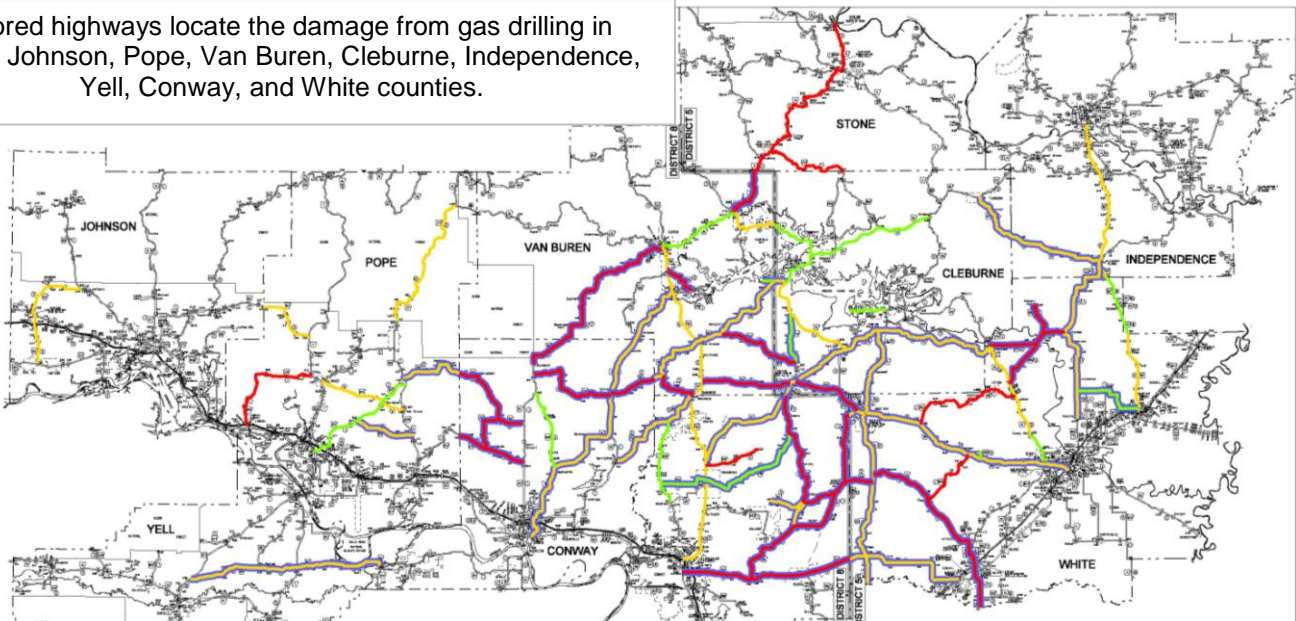
SHEFFIELD NELSON OUTLINES NEED FOR REVISING NATURAL GAS SEVERANCE TAX

by Joyce Hale

Failure of the 2011 Arkansas Legislature to increase Arkansas's natural gas severance tax has motivated Sheffield Nelson to revive his earlier efforts for an increase through a ballot initiative. Speaking to the LWVWC at the Annual Meeting, Nelson indicated that if a petition drive is successful in placing this on the ballot in 2012 and it is accepted by the voters, the rate would increase to 7%. This level would be comparable to what is taxed by Texas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma. The severance changes promoted by Governor Beebe and passed by the 2008 Legislature made significant improvements, but it has failed to produce expected revenues. Generous exemptions for new wells in the first three to four years assure 100% payback for well costs and operation before going to 5%. With the majority of the well's productive life in the first years of production, this was a major concession to the industry. In addition, wells of only marginal production pay only 1.25%. These exemptions drastically reduced the 5% rate most people thought would be collected to only about 1.5%.

The natural gas severance tax is dedicated for highway/road use and will continue to be used in this way if the act's 7% rate is approved. After the Arkansas Highway Department reported \$455 million in highway damage from gas drilling activity with only slightly more than \$50 million received from the severance tax, the urgency to raise highway funds has increased.

Colored highways locate the damage from gas drilling in Stone, Johnson, Pope, Van Buren, Cleburne, Independence, Yell, Conway, and White counties.



A vote to support a 7% natural gas severance tax was passed at the LWVAR State Convention in April. This was in keeping with our previous stand on severance taxes stating that it "should be equalized and increased". More information will develop in the coming months as the initiated act's petition drive is organized. View video clips of Sheffield Nelson's League presentation at: <http://www.youtube.com/user/SkylockProductions>.

More detail can be seen at <http://www.arktimes.com/ArkansasBlog/archives/2011/03/01/sheffield-nelsons-push-for-severance-tax>.

**COMMENTARY ON THE APRIL 20, 2011
PANEL ON ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION
by Karen Rollet-Crocker**

On Wednesday, April 20, 2011, the Washington County League of Women Voters sponsored a Panel on Alternative Transportation, with Grace Donoho, Vice Chair of Advocates for Public Transportation, Phil Pumphrey, Executive Director of Ozark Regional Transit, and Uvalde Lindsey, State Representative, District 88. Approximately 40 attendees listened to major concerns about our regional public transportation needs and the potential loss of our Ozark Regional Transit bus system due to a federal funding cut mandated by our growth in population. The group had a lively discussion afterwards, commenting on the issues and asking a number of questions, especially about ridership and funding. Most were concerned about losing the bus system, and they learned that help was needed in getting public support to pass the ¼ cent sales tax for the bus system.

The League's Alternative Transportation study group was headed by Karen Rollet-Crocker and included Marge Zinke and Sara Bartlett. They generated a list of major concerns: funding, population growth, environmental issues, and the need to attract more riders on public transit.

Grace Donoho began the discussion by describing community needs for those who cannot drive. She shared her own story about how her knee operation experience caused her to realize the value of having the ORT paratransit system come to her doorstep to take her to her doctor's office and physical therapy. Many people rely on the bus system as a life saver in the short term or long term. She pointed out that we are all heading toward a time when, as elderly individuals, we won't be able to drive.

Uvalde Lindsey was able to give the group information about successful tax proposals for transit across the country. According to the American Public Transportation Association, tax increases for transit pass 70% of the time. Last year was even better: 77% of the tax increases passed. At the same time, due to the current economy, 84% of transit systems raised fares or were forced to cut services. Despite this, transit services are gaining in communities nationwide.

There are three primary revenue sources used to fund public transit agency operations: 1) Local/Regional; 2) State/Federal; 3) Transit Fares. Federal funds have traditionally paid most of the costs. The timing for federal cuts in funding for ORT is unfortunate. Representative Lindsey mentioned some information sources, such as The Center for Transit-Oriented Development and a new Transportation Coordination newsletter from the National Conference of State Legislatures. He pointed out that transit providers such as ORT are part of a complicated picture of transit systems that need coordination to eliminate overlaps as well as adequate funding.

Phil Pumphrey showed the group how successful Ozark Regional Transit growth has been in the past nine years. He pointed out that federal funds we have primarily been relying on are not supposed to fund a community's entire system, but are 'seed' money for the future. Because the NW Arkansas urban population has now exceeded 200,000, federal operational funding (\$750,000) will be lost. The result will be the elimination of all fixed bus routes. Mr. Pumphrey added that the cities and counties cannot make up this loss in revenue. In addition, local surveys show that three-out-of-four people think the current bus system is 'poor to below average'. Three-out-of-four people also think it is 'important to very important' to expand the bus system.

A new Transit Development Plan has mapped routes that can encourage 68% of our population to take a bus to work, since there will be close access to a bus route. If the transit tax passes, the system will get an additional \$13 million per year for a greatly expanded bus system.

The League Board has voted to support the tax effort, and a committee will continue to work on the issue as part of its mission to encourage informed and active participation in government, increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influence public policy.

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THE LWVWC'S PROGRAMS FOR THE YEAR AHEAD, 2011-2012

by Karen Rollet-Crocker and Libby Wheeler

- **PROVIDE PROGRAMS ON 3 MAJOR TOPICS:**

- 1) **NATIONAL LWVUS STUDY OF THE FEDERAL ROLE IN PUBLIC EDUCATION (K-12)**

Control of K-12 public education is shifting from primarily local control to state and national regulation. The US Congress is currently embroiled in a debate and stalemate over the reauthorization of ESEA, the 2001 NCLB. Major study issues include the purpose, role, and extent the federal government should play in public education. Areas for national debate involve school choice, accountability, teacher quality, goals, standards and above all, funding. Federal funding currently averages about 10 percent of local school budgets. The LWVUS will provide study materials, and local and state Leagues will discuss the role of the federal government in public education with the goal of coming to consensus on a number of questions.

- 2) **A LOCAL PROGRAM ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

Given the disasters our area and nearby communities have suffered, the League will review public preparedness and policies for such hazards as floods, ice storms and snowstorms, extreme heat and extreme cold, earthquakes, landslides, fires, wildfires, hazardous materials and terrorist attacks. Possible topics include: what local emergency plans exist, identifying hazards that affect our local area, how emergency communication plans are developed and maintained, and what disaster supplies are needed. Other topics covered can include evacuation, emergency public shelters, animals in disaster, and information specific to people with disabilities.

- 3) **THE NATIONAL LWVUS STUDY ON GOVERNMENT PRIVATIZATION**

"Privatization: the policy agenda to transfer government functions, services and assets to the private sector". The study will focus on the impact of privatizing government services on local communities. A National League Committee will develop study materials and consensus questions. Consensus responses submitted from our local League, along with response submissions from other state and local Leagues across the country, will be used to formulate the LWVUS' stand on privatization.

- **HOST A LEGISLATIVE LUNCHEON**

- **PRODUCE COMMITTEE REPORTS UPDATING STATE AND LOCAL POSITIONS REGARDING:**

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1) Fayetteville Sign Ordinance | 3) Severance Tax – Natural Gas |
| 2) Washington County Jail - Women's Incarceration Related to Educational Levels | 4) Public Transportation - Ozark Transit ¼ cent Sales Tax Vote |

NOTE: Karen Rollet-Crocker will be organizing the various committees to plan the programs and studies. Please call her at 442-9360 if you are interested in helping.

2011-2012 CALENDAR

JULY: LWVWC Summer Social

SEPTEMBER: Membership Meeting

OCTOBER: The National LWVUS Study of the Federal Role in Public Education

NOVEMBER: Consensus vote on Federal Role in Public Education Study and Legislative Luncheon

DECEMBER: Multicultural Holiday Celebration

JANUARY: Local Program on Emergency Preparedness

FEBRUARY: The National LWVUS Study on Government Privatization

MARCH: Program Selection for 2012-2013

APRIL: Consensus vote on Study on Government Privatization

MAY: Annual Meeting with Guest Speaker

FAYETTEVILLE COMMUNITY WILDLIFE HABITAT PROJECT SPEAKER SERIES**FREE OF CHARGE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

The City of Fayetteville Environmental Action Committee and the FNHA present the **Fayetteville Community Wildlife Habitat Project Summer Speaker Series** in the Fayetteville Public Library Walker Community Room..

Monday, June 27, 6-7:30pm – “Native Bees of Arkansas”

Amber Tripodi is a University of Arkansas PhD student specializing in the conservation of bumble and carpenter bees (<http://entomology.uark.edu/5148.htm>). She will discuss the sharp decline in native bee populations, the import role of native plants, and how to identify these beneficial pollinators in your own backyard.

Monday, July 18, 6-7:30pm – “Backyard Wildlife Management 101”

Bruce Shackelford, President of Environmental Consulting Operations, Inc. (<http://www.ecoarkansas.com>) will discuss wildlife habitat enhancement strategies for large and small properties to provide the four basic elements that all wildlife need: food, water, cover, and places to rear their young. He will provide a broad-spectrum discussion from food plots, to feeders, to native plantings.

Mr. Shackelford has guided the Fayetteville West Side Wastewater Treatment Plant Woolsey Wet Prairie habitat restoration efforts (<http://www.ecoarkansas.com/WoolseyArticles.html>).

Excerpt from Environmental Consulting Operations Webpage (<http://www.ecoarkansas.com/WoolseyMain.html>) –

“The Woolsey Wet Prairie Sanctuary was established by the City of Fayetteville as a part of wetland compensatory mitigation requirements. The 46-acre mitigation site was constructed to offset the permanent alteration of 9.88 acres of wetlands from construction of the City’s Wastewater Systems Improvement Project.

OMI, the company contracted by the City of Fayetteville to operate wastewater facilities, applied to the National Wildlife Federation to get special recognition for Woolsey Wet Prairie. on March 9, 2011, the [National Wildlife Federation certified](#) the Woolsey Wet Prairie as a National Wildlife Habitat.”.

Read recently published article, “Woolsey Wet Prairie: A Piece of Living History in Fayetteville” by Bruce Shackelford, in the June 2011 Fayetteville Forward Newsletter Vol. 6./No. 2

(http://www.accessfayetteville.org/government/neighborhood_resources/documents/city_newsletter/V6_N2_June_2011_Newsletter.pdf)

Monday, July 25, 6-7:30pm - “Creating Habitat for Butterflies”

Cindi Cope is a Master Gardener, member of the City of Fayetteville Environmental Action Committee, and Fayetteville-In-Bloom Chair. She will discuss butterfly lifecycles and identification, and provide specific strategies for landscaping with native plants to support our native butterfly populations.

See the YOUTUBE video clip of presentation on “Biodiversity” by Cindi Cope at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIYPv01bwA0>

Monday, August 15, 6-7:30pm –“Critical Links; Wildlife Corridor Strategies for Northwest Arkansas”

Representatives of the Fayetteville Community Wildlife Habitat™ Project partnership, including the Environmental Action Committee and the Fayetteville Natural Heritage Association, will discuss the regional green infrastructure map and the importance of individual properties in wildlife corridor preservation (<http://www.fayettevillenatural.org/whats-happening.php>).

VOTER—FINANCE DRIVE REPORT**By Genie Donovan**

The Washington County League, members and supporters, should congratulate itself for a successful 2010-2011 finance drive. Members contributed \$1,755 and public support gave \$1,043 for a total of \$2,798.

Thanks to the following members who have contributed this year:

Fran Alexander	Karen Rollet-Crocker	Mary Bess Mulhollan
Lois Alward	Genie Donovan	Dot Neely
Leslie Belden	Joyce Hale	Jeanine Neuse
Wanda Belzung	Sally Kelley	Jane Scroggs
Jo Bennett	John King	Mary Alice Serafini
Anita Bukey	Nance McCartney	Wanda Stephens
Judy Carey	Izola Morgan	Libby Wheeler

Be sure to say thank you to the following public supporters:

Jana Britton	Emily Hart	Susan Schroeder
Lynn Carver	Ann and Morriss Henry	Frank and Sara Sharp
Collier Drugstores	Hugh and Brenda Kincaid	Jane and Philip Trapp
Don DeWeese	Shelby Rogers	Lynn Wade
Judge Marilyn Edwards		

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OF WASHINGTON COUNTY
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