



LEAGUE OF WOMEN  
VOTERS OF TULSA

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# METRO TULSA VOTER

JUNE 2011

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## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Oklahoma Legislature ends session with many controversial bills passed and headed to the governor for likely signature.
- Oklahoma Supreme Court declines venue in Voter ID case. Tulsa League to start education campaign on need to bring identification to the polls.

## Ruth K. Nelson is 2011 Pathfinder Award Recipient

Mark Your Calendars For the Annual Award Dinner on September 27

We are thrilled to announce Ruth K. Nelson is the 2011 Pathfinder Award recipient.

Tulsa has been and continues to be fortunate in having so many women and men with courage and civic commitment who lend their skills and knowledge and blaze trails for the benefit of the wider community, the state, the nation. Their presence has enriched us all by opening doors for the disenfranchised and furthering the mission and work of the League of Women Voters of Metropolitan Tulsa by informing, empowering, and advocating a direction. They share common traits: civic pride, a giving spirit, the courage of their convictions, a sense of the future and the direction a path might take. They have been the pathfinders.

Ruth has shared her time and expertise with many organiza-

tions over the years, but she may be best known for her work with the Tulsa Housing Authority where she has been a commissioner since 1989 and chairperson since 1991. Her leadership ushered in dramatic, positive changes to Tulsa's public housing.

In addition to her service to the Housing Authority, Ruth serves on the advisory board at the Tulsa Center for the Physically Limited, where she also served as a long-time board member and as president. She is also past president of the board of Planned Parenthood of Arkansas and Eastern Oklahoma. Ruth is a



past board member of the Magic Empire Council of Girl Scouts and of the Tulsa Jewish Retirement and Health Center.

She is a board member of the Tulsa Library Trust and serves on the advisory boards of Family and Children's Services, Life Senior Services and the Parent Child Center. Ruth has also been a trustee of Bryn Mawr College, her alma mater, and is a vice chair of its executive committee.

She is also a businesswoman, an expert scuba diver, an avid tennis player, a dedicated reader and world traveller. She has four children and 10 grandchildren.

This year's Pathfinder Award Dinner is scheduled for Tues., Sept. 27 in the Vista Room at Gilcrease Museum. 

## What's Best for Tulsa: City Charter Change

League Set to Consider Position on November Ballot Initiatives

The Local Study Committee will meet early this month to begin evaluating input from the Units and formulating a set of consensus questions to present to the Board of Directors for review and approval.

The Board will decide whether to call a Consensus Meeting of the membership or to proceed

with educational efforts about the proposed changes in anticipation of the upcoming November election. If called, the Consensus Meeting would likely be held late in July and its purpose would be to determine if the League wants to formulate an official position on any of the proposed changes.

Beginning last December,

Units began discussing the proposed changes to Tulsa's form of government. The following topics were discussed at length, including the advantages, disadvantages and impacts of:

- Partisan versus non-partisan local elections;

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**CONVENTION ROUNDUP: LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF OKLAHOMA**

The Tulsa League was well represented at the State Convention last month in Norman. We had seven voting delegates in attendance, including co-presidents Kathy Hinkle and Jim Hill, President-Elect Heather Hope Hernandez, Treasurer Kathleen Kastelic, Director Ron Wilkinson, Programs Committee Chair Lora Marschall and new State Board Member Sharron Pettiford.

**Oklahoma Water Study**

The new statewide water study proposed by the Tulsa League was adopted. The two-year study is intended to update and expand the current State position to bring it more in line with the scope of the National position. The committee will study water use, protection, management, conservation, ownership and quality across Oklahoma.

**VOTE411.org**

VOTE411.org, created by National in 2006, is the League's one-stop-shop for election related information. With local Leagues contacting candidates and uploading candidate information, local ballot questions and updates as needed, VOTE411.org provides nonpartisan general and

state-specific candidate information to the public. Beginning in January, we must pay to post our election information on the site.

The Tulsa League proposed State pay the annual \$5,000 to allow complete statewide candidate information be posted. However, the State Board recommended to the convention that instead they pay \$2,000 which allows election information only from local Leagues, but also include statewide races such as governor and the U.S. Senate as well as any state questions or other matters on all ballots. The convention adopted an amended version of the Tulsa League's motion which allows the State League to pay up to \$5,000 for VOTE411.org. The language "up to" gives us the opportunity to find a donor to pay the remaining \$3,000 to allow complete statewide coverage of elections on VOTE411.org.

Your representatives at convention believe having an online voter guide available to the public for all major elections across this state is the best way for the League of Women Voters to carry out its mission of contributing to an informed electorate. We also believe a robust VOTE411.org can be used as a recruitment tool to open local Leagues in other parts of the state.

**Oklahoma League Awards**

The Tulsa League won both the Action Award and the Voter Services Award granted by the State League for our activities regarding Community Conversations on Project Schoolhouse and voter services, respectively.

**National Council, June 2011**

The State Board voted to pay a substantial portion of the registration fee for National Council for both President-Elect Heather Hope Hernandez and Treasurer Kathleen Kastelic to attend (\$500 of the \$695 per person).

**Tulsa League Members on State Board**

The Tulsa League is lucky to have so many dedicated members to volunteer their time for the Oklahoma League. Past Tulsa President Mary Jo Neal was elected incoming State co-president to serve with Stillwater Leaguer Karen Melcher. Another past Tulsa President Polly Bowen is the incoming First Vice President. Past Tulsa President Marjorie Swofford is serving another two-year term, and current Tulsa Board Member Sharron Pettiford was elected to serve on the Oklahoma Board for two years. Sharron has agreed to be special ambassador from the Tulsa League board to the state board to ensure our respective boards are in close contact. 

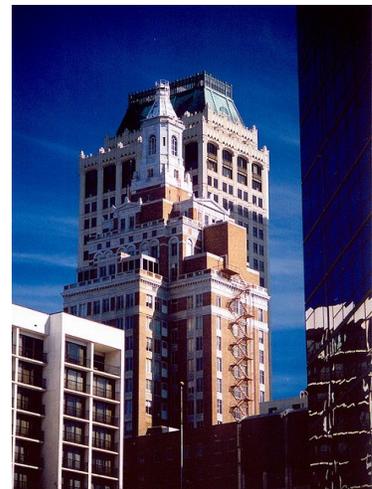
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**CITY CHARTER CHANGE:  
LEAGUE SET TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Adding three at-large councilors to the city council;
- Changing to a Council/City Manager form of government; and
- Changing councilor terms of office back to two-year terms.

During the coming weeks Tulsa City Councilors will hold public meetings in their districts to get input from constituents about their specific proposed changes. League members are en-

couraged to attend. To find out when a meeting is scheduled in your district, call or e-mail the League office. The Local Study Committee has developed a list of questions to ask at these public meetings. Contact Mary Jane Lindaman at [miltulsa@cox.net](mailto:miltulsa@cox.net) for a copy. 



## OKLAHOMA SUPREME COURT DECLINES JURISDICTION IN VOTER ID CASE TULSA LEAGUE TO BEGIN EDUCATION CAMPAIGN ALERTING VOTERS TO BRING ID TO THE POLLS

The Oklahoma Supreme Court declined to take jurisdiction of the Voter ID lawsuit, meaning the earlier ruling by District Judge Tom Thornbrugh requiring the case be heard in Oklahoma County still stands. In declining to assume jurisdiction, the Supreme Court made no finding on the merits of the constitutional challenge to the state question.

No matter the outcome of the Voter ID lawsuit, the Tulsa League will continue to fight any attempts to disenfranchise voters. We remain committed to ensuring all qualified Oklahomans have unfettered access to the polls.

The new Voter ID law takes effect July 1, which means voters in the September primaries

and the November general elections will face new challenges when they go to their polling places.

Once the rules are finalized, the Tulsa League will begin a comprehensive education campaign to alert voters that to cast their votes, they must bring proper identification to the polls.



We are committed to ensuring no one is intimidated or deterred by this new law.



## OKLAHOMA LEGISLATIVE WRAP UP FOR 2011 SESSION

FROM REPRESENTATIVE JEANNIE MCDANIEL

Below is a summary of some of the controversial legislation passed this session. For a complete list of bills passed, see the [overview](#) compiled by the House of Representatives staff.

### Pension Changes

HB 1648 - Prohibits the officers of local, state and national education associations appointed after Jan. 1 from participating in the state's public pension system for teachers. It affects only seven of the estimated 90,000 teacher's retirement system members.

SB 377 - Raises the retirement age for new teachers from 62 to 65 and establishes a minimum age of 60 for full retirement benefits for teachers who meet the rule of 90.

### Public Education

HB 1456 - Creates an A-F grading system for public schools. Under this law, an elementary school can devote an entire year to a curriculum devoid of any science, social studies, health, arts or even citizenship experiences and still receive the highest mark of A. Conversely, a school could have an enriched curriculum, be serving all types of learners and be producing students who actively volunteer and work cooperatively with oth-

ers and be given a low letter grade. The "grade" issued to each school is determined mainly by student test scores in mathematics and reading, without any regard to scores in science, social studies or other subjects.

SB 969 - Proponents asserted that this bill will create educational opportunities for "needy" children, in fact it will award scholarships to private schools to a family of four that has annual income as high as \$122,000. The bill also allows private school scholarships to families with children eligible to attend a public school in their area which has been identified for school improvement whether or not the child actually attends that school.

HB 2139 - Grants the elected Superintendent of Public Instruction control over the State Board of Education, whose role is now advisory.

SB 435 - Reconstitutes the State Board of Education, with its members to be appointed by and to serve at the pleasure of the governor. Under the law, a new governor would be able to appoint an entirely new board after taking office.

### Judicial Changes

HB2128 - Places a \$350,000 cap on non-economic damages that can be awarded in lawsuits while it also eliminates the right of a judge or jury to remove this

cap in cases where the victim suffered *permanent and substantial* physical ab-

normalities or disfigurement. The only circumstances in which a judge or jury may award a greater amount is under the following circumstances: reckless disregard for the rights of others, gross negligence, fraud or malice. The catch is that most insurance compa-

nies specifically exclude coverage when those four conditions are met, so even if a plaintiff met this incredibly high standard, the defendant would likely not be covered by his or her insurance policy leaving the plaintiff to try to collect damages directly from the individual.

SB 862 - Eliminates joint and several liability, where each defendant in a tort lawsuit is liable for the entire amount of a plaintiff's damage regardless of their degree of fault.

SB 878 - Overhaul of the Workers' Compensation system, which favors doctors, lawyers and insurance companies over injured workers. It shortens the time period that workers can file a claim, encourages workers to settle their claims without involving attorneys (everyone would have lawyers except the injured workers), and will eliminate death benefits for spouses of workers killed on the job if the spouses remarry.

### Diversity

Governor Fallin disbanded three ethnic advisory councils:



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## Oklahoma Legislature 2011 Session Wrap-Up

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Ethnic-American council, Hispanic council and the Asian-American council.

HB 2172 - Disbanded the Oklahoma Indian Affairs Commission. The duties of the commission will be handled by a liaison to be appointed by the governor.

SB 763 - Consolidates the Human Rights Commission and places it under the Attorney General's office.

SJR 15 - Placed on November ballot: a Republican-backed plan to wipe out all affirmative action programs. If passed, no preferences will be given to minorities or women in state contracts or for admission to state colleges or universities. It would also abolish a handful of state scholarships that target minority students.

### Municipal Collective Bargaining Rights

HB 1593 - Repeals the Oklahoma Municipal Employee Collective Bargaining

Act, a law requiring collective bargaining for non-uniformed employees in cities with at least 35,000 residents. Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Norman and Muskogee, all of which had collective bargaining agreements prior to the 2004 passage of the Oklahoma Municipal Employee Collective Bargaining Act, will not be affected by the new law.

### Guns

HB 1652 - Will allow Oklahomans licensed to carry concealed weapons to keep firearms in their vehicles at state career and technology centers. This bill was strongly opposed by CareerTech administrators, as they stated it would be unsafe given the makeup of their campuses are primarily high school students.

HB 1511 - Designates June 28 of each year as "Second Amendment Day." 

## JUNE 2011 CALENDAR

**Sat., June 4, 3–3:30 p.m.**

State Convention Debriefing -  
League Office

**3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.**

Executive Committee meeting -  
League Office

**Wed., June 8, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.**

Voter Registration at  
Naturalization Ceremony -  
Federal Courthouse, 333 W. 4th St.

**Mon., June 13, 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.**

Tulsa League Board Meeting -  
Location TBA

**Wed., June 15, 10:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.**

Oklahoma League Co-Presidents  
Meeting -  
League Office Conference Room

**Fri., June 20, All day.**

**DEADLINE** *Tulsa Metro Voter*

Send to [newsletter@lwvtulsa.org](mailto:newsletter@lwvtulsa.org) 