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We've Come a Long Way
By Joan Lamson

The League of Women Voters (LWV) was established in 1920 in response to the concern that the new access for women to vote might lead to brand new voters with a lack of knowledge of the issues. Women had just won the right to vote for the first time and it was recognized that a lot of information needed to be imparted without a partisan view. The LWV was created to increase the education and knowledge of the mass of new voters about the issues without regard to the political parties involved.

The LWV grew out of the suffrage movement, out of the days and times when women were not considered to be

“competent” to vote for the leadership of the country or of their home towns, counties, and states. It was a very hard-fought battle evidenced by the fact that some states such as North Carolina, in fact, did not ratify the vote until May, 1971.

There were a few failed attempts to establish a LWV chapter here in Carteret County in the early 1980's due to the absence of nonpartisan support. In 1997, some local women got together to work toward a local chapter. In February 1998 the local chapter was finally established by Mary Lou Langdon and myself. This team was able to achieve the goal

because of their bi-partisan status. I was honored to be the first president, serving for nearly three years.

As the organization gained status in the community, they provided candidates' forums, educational sessions on civics, voter registration opportunities, programs of interest to bi-partisan audiences and the powerful presence of “council watchers.” These “council watchers” were league members who wore a large button proclaiming their affiliation with LWV and who watched without comment, county and city boards as they met. Their observations were reported back to the organization

and dialogue was encouraged.

Current activities of the LWV of Carteret County include the continuation of candidate forums prior to each election, as well as voter registration programs and special speakers at some meetings. The League of Women Voters in Carteret County has been a catalyst for change in the manner in which politics is done here. New members are needed to bolster the critical mass of members who believe politics here should be open and transparent and honest. Membership is open to men as well as women. Anyone interested is urged to contact Mabel Steepy at 728-4754.