

THE VOTER

DEPUTY DIRECTOR & GENERAL COUNSEL



Energy Alabama is a nonprofit membership-based organization advancing Alabama's clean energy future through education and advocacy.



ALABAMA'S FIGHT FOR CLEAN ENERGY

On **Monday, November 17**, the next **LWVEA Civic Leader Meet and Greet Series** event will feature **Sheree Martin**, Deputy Director and General Counsel of **Energy Alabama**, who will discuss the state of energy in Alabama.

- **Why are electricity costs so high in Alabama?**
- **How do the profit margins of Alabama Power compare to those of other energy companies?**
- **What do Alabamians stand to gain from utility scale solar?**
- **What do residents need to know about the SSE4 pipeline project that will extend near Opelika?**

Join us Monday, Nov. 17 at 6 pm (doors open at 5:30)
Auburn First Baptist Church | 128 E Glenn Ave, Auburn AL

Hot Topics

Also this month: the LWVEA will hold our November Hot Topics meet-up at the new IHOP on South College in Auburn! Stay tuned for details.



October Recap

Standing Together Supporting Immigrant Families in Alabama

On October 20th, the LWVEA's monthly **Civic Leader Meet and Greet Series** featured Community Organizer **Veronica Ayala** of the **Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice (ACIJ)**. Ms. Ayala spoke with LWVEA attendees about the ACIJ's work, recent state laws that impact Alabama's immigrant community, and the scope of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity in the state.

New Laws

SB53, an updated "show me your papers" law, took effect October 1. The law criminalizes transporting an undocumented person into the state of Alabama, with some exceptions such as medical, religious, or charitable reasons. SB63, which took effect June 1, requires that fingerprints and DNA be collected from undocumented individuals upon detention.

ICE Activity in Alabama

"Statewide, we estimate that about 125–150 families are affected by ICE detentions every week," said Ms. Ayala. The ACIJ receives calls from the Birmingham area, Auburn, Opelika, and other areas of the state.

While ICE raids are not frequent in Alabama, the ACIJ has observed that agents more commonly knock on home doors and pressure residents to reveal their undocumented status. ICE has also detained restaurant workers as they enter or leave their places of employment.

Providing Critical Assistance

The ACIJ has traditionally helped migrants who have been released on parole by providing access to basic necessities, such as a shower, food, and a ride to the nearest bus station. The organization also helps individuals connect with their sponsoring families and make court dates or check-ins. Ms. Ayala noted, however, that the option of being released on parole is no longer as accessible to detainees as it was in the previous administration.



To assist households affected by ICE detentions, the ACIJ provides access to local pantries and clothing drives. The organization has additionally established a **Mutual Aid Fund** to provide financial assistance. So far, the ACIJ has assisted about 50 families with donations of \$500 per family to help with rent, legal fees, or other financial needs. Anyone interested in donating can do so at the [ACIJ website](#).

Migra Watch

Through its Migra Watch program, the ACIJ urges people to report ICE activity, record detentions (without posting videos publicly), and to remind those being detained: "*No digas nada. No firmes nada.*" ("Don't say anything. Don't sign anything.")

Should a citizen witness and record an ICE encounter with a community member, the ACIJ asks that citizens share the recording with the ACIJ. In the interest of the impacted individual's safety and privacy, do not post the video on social media.

Wednesday Action

The ACIJ tracks and identifies anti-immigration bills and engages state legislators through speeches and marches at the State Capitol. You can join the group every Wednesday during the legislative session.

Get Involved!

Visit the [ACIJ website](#) to become a member, keep up to date on activities, and donate.

*Submitted by
Rebekah Crawford
LWVEA Board Director*

The Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice is a group of individuals and organizations working for the rights and dignity of all people by promoting just policies, fostering grassroots movements, and amplifying the voices and contributions of immigrants in Alabama.

October Recap

Brush with Early Voting **LWVEA Participants Paint, Sip, and Meet with AL Rep. Jeremy Gray to Talk Voter Accessibility**

Did you know that Alabama is **1 of only 3 states** that does not offer no-excuse early voting options? If an Alabama voter is unable to vote on Election Day, they must have a verifiable [eligible excuse](#), such as being physically incapacitated or being absent from their county, and submit an approved absentee ballot.

On October 28th, LWVEA members and friends gathered at the Whistle Stop Bottle and Brew in Opelika to paint their dream “I voted” stickers and chat with **Alabama State Representative Jeremy Gray (D-83)** about what expanding access to early voting could do for voter turnout in Alabama and how to go about achieving it.

Voting During COVID: A Glimpse into What Could Be

“In 2020, over 300,000 people absentee voted in Alabama,” said Rep. Gray. When the Alabama Secretary of State allowed no-excuse absentee voting during the pandemic, voter turnout reached a [record](#) 62%. For Rep. Gray, this experience offers not only a glimpse into what voter turnout could look like with expanded absentee access, but a blueprint for where to start. “If we can get momentum around no excuse absentee voting, that’s a good start,” he said.



"We need to form a coalition for no-excuse absentee voting. After we get that, we can fight for early voting." — Rep. Jeremy Gray

Alabama Lags Behind

Rep. Gray lamented that, despite Alabama’s legacy as a hotbed for civil and voting rights activism led by activists such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and John Lewis, the state still lags far behind the rest of the U.S. with regard to voter accessibility. “What we are proclaiming, we are not living,” he said.

Looking Ahead

This upcoming legislative session, supporters of early voting expansion will want to pay close attention to the Constitution, Campaigns and Election committee, which is chaired by State Rep. Bob Fincher (D-37). Rep. Gray noted that key bills to expand early voting options across the state will likely be championed by State Reps. Thomas Jackson and Adline Clark. Rep. Gray also stressed that it is important to amplify a wide spectrum of voices across the state: from the single parent who works two jobs and can’t get time off on Election Day to the rural senior citizen who does not have reliable transportation to travel to her polling place. All of these stories of our neighbors need to be amplified. They also demonstrate that voter access is a nonpartisan issue that everyone has a stake in. “We need to form a coalition for no-excuse absentee voting. After we get that, we can fight for early voting,” Rep. Gray said.

*Submitted by
 Vanessa Benitez
 LWVEA Board Director*

October in Pictures

Brush with Early Voting



October Speaker Series Event with Veronica Ayala of the Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice



October Hot Topics Gathering



Tabling at Opelika's National Night Out

