

League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area

February 2011

www.lwvka.org

Vol. 56 No. 5

Co-Presidents: Connie Ferguson and Kay Perry

League Phone: 269-544-0303

Program Planning Meeting

By Kay Perry

It is that time of year again – time to conduct our annual program planning meeting. For those of you who have never attended one of these meetings, there is much to gain by joining us. First of all, you get to spend time with League members, which is always a pleasant experience. Second, you have a chance to learn more about the League’s positions which cover a wide range of subjects. You don’t have to be an expert on any of the topics. We just need you to be awake and thinking.

This year we will focus on the LWVMI and local positions. Michigan League positions include Election Laws; Intergovernmental Relations within Michigan; Taxation and Budgeting; Great Lakes Ecosystem; Land Use; Pesticides; Solid Waste Management; Children and Youth, Social Services; Prisons in Michigan; Death Penalty; Education Structure, Financing and Goals; Teacher Certification in Michigan; Public School Academies; Structure/Funding of Michigan’s Public Libraries; and Health Care. The content of each position is on the LWVMI website.

In addition, the LWVMI is asking us to consider supporting a new study on Redistricting in Michigan. The study, if approved, would take place over the next two years.

The local positions we will review include Providing Government Services in Kalamazoo County; Financing Local Government Services; Library Services and Governance; Local Government Election Process; Education; Housing; Land Use Planning; Parks and Recreation; Management of the Kalamazoo River; and Preservation of Natural Areas. Those positions are included in your LWVKA Handbook.

We hope you can join us on January 29 at 9 a.m. at the Disability Resource Center at 517 E. Crosstown Parkway to discuss these important issues.

Calendar

Jan. 25 Board Meeting

Tues. The Park Club
219 W. South St., Kalamazoo
5:30 pm Food available for purchase.
6:00 pm Meeting
Questions? Call 269-544-0303
or email president@lwvka.org

Jan. 29 Program Planning (State & Local)

Sat. Disability Network
9 am 517 E. Crosstown Pkwy
Kalamazoo

Note: Members are welcome to attend all Board Meetings.

New Members

Frances M. Eckenrode
2929 Bronson Blvd.
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
269-903-9372
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William Costello
4210 North 36th Street
Galesburg, MI 49053
269-665-7165
wmcostello@yahoo.com



LEAGUE OF
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The League and Nonpartisanship

This article appeared in the December 2010 LWVBCC newsletter and was very favorably received by the LWVMI and the LWVUS.

By Susan Gilbert

It is not uncommon for outsiders, and even some members, to question how the League can be nonpartisan yet advocate on positions that, in the slice of time that is now, appear to be partisan. In the highly partisan climate that has developed in recent years, the League is one of the very few political organizations that is not in either the liberal/Democratic camp or the conservative/Republican camp. And we have members of all political persuasions and encourage them to get involved in politics. So members may be partisan but the organization is not. All this is hard for many to wrap their minds around.

The League is nonpartisan in that we do not endorse or support any political party or candidate for office. We don't rate legislators, we don't track their votes and we don't threaten them if they don't vote our way. Voter service is one of our main missions and we publish nonpartisan voter guides and hold candidate forums to help voters educate themselves beyond TV ads. Education is an important League function, and we try in our meetings and in this newsletter to inform our attendees/readers and stimulate them to think about issues in our world.

However, the League is also an advocacy group, and we have positions on issues that have been developed over the years since our founding in 1920 and are the result of study and consensus of the local Leagues nation-

wide. These positions are updated from time to time, but are basically consistent. The positions and platforms of the political parties, on the other hand, do change and at times they resemble our League positions, or not. But the League doesn't change or drop its positions because they are currently those of one party or the other. And we do speak out!

An example is health care. The League has a position on comprehensive health care for all Americans. President Truman liked that idea too and President Eisenhower delivered a special message to Congress on January 31, 1955 recommending a comprehensive health program for Americans. Lyndon Johnson got Medicare passed and that took the pressure off for awhile. But President Nixon encouraged HMOs as a way to rein in costs and provide health care for more people. Then President Reagan came along and decided the free market was the best way to manage health care and the Republicans have basically supported this idea since. But clearly both parties have been on both sides of the issue.

The key is not to confuse politics with position advocacy.

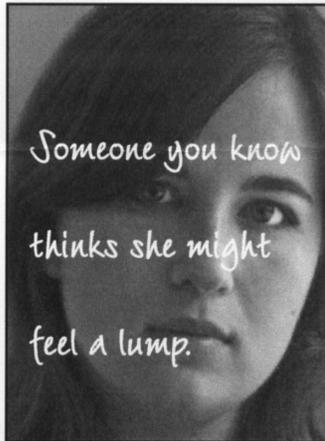
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News From National and State

LWVUS Education Study

Delegates at LWVUS Convention 2010 adopted a study of the role of the federal government in public education. The Education Study Committee has now been appointed. Its members are **Pat Aaron** (IL), **Gail Glick** (MA), **Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins** (CO), **Patricia Libutti** (NJ), **Jean Pierce** (IL) and **Janelle Rivers** (SC). **Peggy Hill** (LWVUS Board Member, TX) and **Joanne Leavitt** (CA) chair the Committee, which will work on producing background study materials to be posted on the LWVUS website and sent out to Leagues beginning in spring 2011.

LWVUS Privatization Study

In accordance with direction from Convention 2010, the LWVUS will undertake a study of "Privatization: the policy agenda to transfer government functions, services and assets to the private sector." This study will focus on the impact of privatizing government services on local communities. A committee is being appointed which will be responsible for developing study materials and consensus questions and reviewing/tabulating responses submitted by participating Leagues. Based on the submitted responses, the Committee will recommend position language to the Board.

Task Force to Study How Michigan Picks Appellate Court Judges

(from an article in *Crain's Detroit Business*, by Chad Halcom, Dec. 14, 2010)

A task force convened by a state and a federal judge, with input from business leaders and law firm partners, will explore the State's method of picking appellate court judges. The 24-member Judicial Selection Task Force, convened by Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice **Marilyn Kelly** and Sixth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals Senior Judge **James Ryan**, will begin meeting in January to examine Michigan's appointment model as well as the recent spike in campaign spending for Michigan Supreme Court races. After completing

its study, the task force will publish recommendations for improvement or reform by late 2011.

Patricia Donath, attorney and past president of the League of Women Voters of Michigan and board member of the League of Women Voters of the United States is part of the 24-member task force.

League to Incoming House Leadership: Retain and Strengthen the Office of Congressional Ethics

On December 2, the League, in coalition with nine other groups, held a press conference to urge the incoming House leadership of the 112th Congress to continue the Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE) and to oppose any efforts to weaken or undermine that Office. Earlier in the week, League President **Elisabeth MacNamara** sent a letter to Speaker-elect **John Boehner** arguing for the continuation of the OCE.

Comments Submitted to the Election Assistance Commission

In its comments to the Election Assistance Commission (EAC), the League strongly supported online voter registration, proposing that the EAC provide the registration application form in electronic format. The Election Assistance Commission (EAC) has proposed some minor changes to the mail-in voter registration application form. A number of state Leagues also submitted comments to the EAC.

League Supports the CEDAW Treaty

On November 19, the League of Women Voters joined with over 100 coalition partners in support of the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Treaty in a statement to the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law.



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
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Voter Registration Update

**League
volunteers
continue to
register
voters.**

By Karen Eddy

On November 17, 2010, at the Project Connect event held at the Expo Center, **Suzanne Cook, Carol Payne Smith, Jackie Wylie and Karen Eddy** signed up 13 voters.

On November 9, 2010, we began our weekly presence at the Department of Human Services (DHS) each Tuesday from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. In November and December, 36 people filled in applications. **Elaine Jayne, Louise Robeck, Lyda Stillwell, Yolanda Mitts, Kay Anderson,**

Karen Eddy and Diane Worden were the League members at DHS. Thank you to **Janet Scarrow** for responding to the request for volunteers to register voters at the DHS site.

In recent months LWVKA has participated in 19 voter registration events. Thirty-two League members received a total of 178 voter applications. Thanks to all who carry out this important League function. If this opportunity to serve interests you, please call Karen Eddy at 599-6399.

"The League of Women Voters is where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement.
Join us in making democracy work!"