



Keynotes Focus on Impartial Justice and Environmental Law

The League’s 2013 state Annual Meeting opened with a lively discussion about judicial independence and accountability led by UW-Milwaukee political science professor Sara Benesh and Wisconsin Appeals Court District 4 Judge JoAnne Kloppenburg.

Benesh provided historical perspective on judicial selection and recusal. Wisconsin is one of 22 states in which justices are elected. Twenty-four states have a merit selection process with retention elections, and four states have a purely appointive system. She discussed recent findings in social science research:

- Nonpartisan elections have lower turnout. Benesh said that party affiliation offers more information to voters about the candidate and makes it more likely they will vote.
- Research does not support the theory that merit selection results in more diversity on the bench.
- Elections in and of themselves do not hurt the perception of legitimacy of judges in public opinion. People are not offended by the fact that judicial candidates must run campaigns.
- It is the amount of money in judicial elections that lowers public confidence. Studies show there is a widely held

perception that campaign contributions influence a judge’s decisions.



Keynote speaker Kimberlee Wright at 2013 Annual Meeting.

Benesh acknowledged that the League’s effort to get the state Supreme Court to adopt recusal rules was unsuccessful but said “it was the right way to go” because the U.S. Supreme Court is making it difficult for states to limit money in elections.

Kloppenburg spoke from her experience as a 2011 candidate for Supreme Court, which led her to conclude that, following the Citizens United ruling, merit selection is the only effective way to reduce the influence of money in Supreme Court and Appeals Court elections. She said that while public financing made it possible for her to challenge an incumbent, the infusion of millions of dollars worth of attack ads late in the campaign “took the race away from the candidates and ultimately away from the people.”

“I am convinced the only way to remove the influence of outside interests is to remove money from elections, and the only way to do that is to select judges without elections,” she said.

Kimberlee Wright, executive director of Midwest Environmental Advocates, delivered the Saturday morning keynote. She discussed the erosion in environmental law enforcement over many years, beginning in the 1990s when Governor Thompson made the DNR Secretary an appointed position and abolished the Public Intervenor office. Although Governor Doyle campaigned on restoring the independent DNR Secretary, he vetoed a bill to accomplish that.

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President's Message



Melanie G. Ramey

Although it was disappointing last May when the Wisconsin Court of Appeals found Wisconsin's voter ID law to be constitutional, the League of Women Voters is not easily discouraged. After all, the League was founded by suffragists who fought for decades to win the right to vote for women. For 93 years the League has advocated for free, fair and accessible elections with high citizen participation.

The League challenged the voter ID law in October 2011, arguing that the legislature overreached in enacting a law that makes the display of one of a short list of government-issued photo IDs at the polls into an additional qualification for voting in our state. In March 2012, Dane County Circuit Court Judge Richard Niess blocked the law on the grounds that it violates the state constitution. The Appeals Court in May reversed Judge Niess's ruling.

On June 28 the League petitioned the state Supreme Court for a review of the Appeals Court ruling, which we believe is flawed. It did not acknowledge that under the law a qualified citizen who is registered to vote in Wisconsin could still be barred from actually casting a ballot. The law is anti-democratic and it makes no sense.

It takes an affirmative vote by three justices on the state Supreme Court to accept the case. In the meantime, the voter ID law continues to be blocked by an injunction in a separate lawsuit. We are pleased that no qualified voter was disenfranchised in the fall 2012 elections because of the ID law.

As the League continues to advocate for fair elections and clean government in Wisconsin, we are grateful for the generous and creative support of our members and friends. The two new named funds at the state League this year are shining examples. Bill Malkasian has created a fund for an annual Zabelle Malkasian Lecture in his mother's honor. As reported in the last issue of Forward, LWV La Crosse Area member Signe Schroeder is building a fund to honor her mother, former state President Carroll McCarty Gundersen. Like the state League's endowment, the earnings from that fund will be available for much-needed operating money for years to come.

With gifts like these and the support of all of our members to their ability, the League will become stronger and better able to provide the nonpartisan voter education for which we are known. The League also will be better prepared to step up when bold action is needed to protect our democratic principles. ❖

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The mining law that passed this year weakened environmental protections to allow construction of the largest open pit iron mine in the country in the headwaters of a pristine landscape. She noted that mining special interests donated \$15 million to state legislative campaigns prior to the vote. Wright mentioned that frac sand mining and Concentrated Animal Feed Operations (CAFOs) also threaten Wisconsin's natural resources.

With the DNR weakened and special interests influencing the legislature, Wright asserted that citizen engagement is critical, and she welcomes the opportunity to work with League members to protect our clean and healthy environment.

"People standing together in common purpose are more powerful than any special interest," she said. ❖

League of Women Voters of WI Education Network/Advocacy Network 2013 Calendar

LWVWEN Board Meeting

October 4, Madison

Issues Briefing

October 5, Madison

Lake Michigan LWV Annual Meeting

October 17, Sheboygan

State Annual Meeting

May 30-31, 2014, Appleton

Celebrate your birthday *and* support your state and local Leagues with a gift to the Birthday Fund.
For more information,
lwvwi.org/Donate

Awards Luncheon Recognizes Leadership and Vision

The Beloit League and a number of League members were recognized for their leadership and vision at a Saturday Awards Luncheon at our recent Annual Meeting.



From left, Louise Petering, LWV Milwaukee County, Penney Van Vleet, LWVUS, and Peggy Cox LWV Winnebago County.

Membership and Leadership Development (MLD) state coordinator Louise Petering presented the first annual Membership and Leadership Development Award to LWV Beloit for achieving a 95% member participation rate for the 2011-2012 League year. The Beloit League used data gathered through conscientiously tracking attendance at meetings to gauge and build on member involvement, a key practice of the national League's MLD project. The award also recognized the Beloit board for building their League while also building democracy.

Melanie G. Ramey, LWV President, received the 7th annual Meg McLane Award for Advocacy. This award recognizes individuals working for positive policy changes in Wisconsin, while also honoring the dedicated work of Meg McLane, a longtime member of the Fond du Lac League and the state Legislative Committee, who now lives in Ohio.

In nominating Melanie, Vice President Debra Cronmiller, LWV Appleton, wrote, "Melanie is a visionary who sees the League's potential and relevance. With humor and grace, she nudges League leaders to be courageous." Her nomination specifically noted her efforts in spearheading the modernization of the state League to make it a financially self-sufficient organization. In 2009, Melanie inspired the League to launch a critically important statewide discussion about judicial recusal in an effort to restore public confidence in our state courts. Most recently, Melanie has led the League in challenging Wisconsin's voter ID law.

The Awards Luncheon included remarks by Penney Van Vleet, LWVUS National Nominating Committee member. She presented certificates of appreciation signed by LWVUS President Elisabeth MacNamara to:

Melanie Ramey, LWV Dane County, LWVWI President

Julie Arneth, LWV Greater Green Bay, state board member and LWVUS Ruth S. Shur Fellow

Louise Petering, LWV Milwaukee County, state board member and MLD state coordinator

Peggy Cox, LWV Winnebago County, MLD coach

Jennifer Balma, LWV Manitowoc County, MLD coach ❖



MLD Team from left, Jennifer Balma, LWV Manitowoc County, Louise Petering, LWV Milwaukee County, and Peggy Cox, LWV Winnebago County.

MLD Team Announces New Award

The state board's new Membership and Leadership Development (MLD) Award celebrates and recognizes one local League annually for its outstanding work with building organizational and social capacity. This year the award went to LWV Beloit. The first competitive award will be presented at the 2014 Annual Meeting.

The MLD Award grew out of the state League's participation in the LWVUS Membership and Leadership Development Program. The Wisconsin League signed on to the MLD Program in 2010 with three state coaches, who each worked with two Leagues to build membership and organizational capacity.

Member participation is key to deepened member involvement, increased overall membership and development of new leaders. Visibility garners interest in the League. Efforts to increase participation and heighten visibility require constant nurturing on the part of local Leagues. When done well, the payoff can be growth and success—valuable assets for the larger goal of making democracy work in Wisconsin.

The MLD Award will honor a local League that uses both time-honored League tools and strategies of the MLD program to support growth and leader development. All local Leagues are eligible to apply; they are not required to be MLD participants. Guidelines for applying and criteria used to select the recipient League can be found on the Members page of the state League website at lwvwi.org/Members.aspx. For more information, contact Louise Petering at l.petering14@att.net. ❖

Best Practices Featured at Annual Meeting Workshops

Local Leagues presented four workshops at the 2013 Annual Meeting that highlighted best practices in core programs, along with ways to promote membership and leadership development. Summaries of information presented at the workshops follow:

LWV Dane County:

Model Voter Guide

Speaker: Gail Bliss

The Dane County League's model voter guide, *Candidates' Answers*, has been published through a partnership with the weekly *Isthmus* since 1998.

- Candidate response rate of 92% in the Spring 2013 election; partisan elections often have a somewhat lower response rate.
- Posted on Dane County League's website before all elections. Print edition before bigger elections.
- Requires significant volunteer effort to produce and distribute thousands of copies of the popular document.
- Loyola University is currently studying whether voters who receive the guide are more likely to cast a ballot in the election.

LWV Appleton and LWV Whitewater Area:

Cultivating Visibility and Advancing Advocacy through Outreach

Speakers: Sara Companik, Shirley Strange, Irene Strohbeen and Ellen Penwell

LWV Appleton has enhanced its profile through new materials, programs and collaborations with other organizations.

The League has also built relationships with local media, resulting in interviews



Anne Creamer, LWV Milwaukee County, leads a local League workshop.

on such topics as how to hold an unbiased candidate forum and the role of election observers; they hosted a press conference in support of Election Day registration.

LWV Whitewater Area hosts a high profile, well-attended annual event at which they honor someone within the community with their Making Democracy Work Award. The League's "Ladies Liberty" are a popular—and award-winning—sight in the annual Fourth of July Parade.

LWV Milwaukee County:

Membership and Leadership Development

Speaker: Anne Creamer

Accepting a "Growing the League" challenge from LWVUS, LWV Milwaukee County gained 36 members—a 23% increase—in 2012 through:

- Outreach to prospective members and meticulous database upkeep.

- Improvement of administrative processes, tracking of participation in League activities and personal follow-up designed to attract and retain members while cultivating new leadership.
- Assignment of clear roles, process development and documentation, and improved communication.
- Hiring a part-time administrator and opening an office in a shared-space center.
- Working to be active and visible in the community, and showing personal appreciation for every voluntary contribution.

LWV Manitowoc County:

Mental Health Study

Speakers: Mary Wallace, Maureen Crowley, Cecilia Held, Nancy Slattery, Marilyn Sontag and Darlene Wellner

LWV Manitowoc County adopted a Mental Health Study in 2010 that focused on strengths and gaps in local services. The resulting 65-page report, which can be downloaded at lwvmanitowoc.org, includes:

- Historical perspectives
- Results from a survey of providers
- Summary of the scope of each agency's work
- Identification of gaps in mental health services
- Recommendations including: an easily accessed and maintained directory of local services; opportunities for providers to meet, network and coordinate; a peer counselors program; and establishment of a community clinic.

The PowerPoint presentations for all four workshops are available on the state League website at lwvwi.org. ❖



Bill Malkasian with LWVWI president Melanie Ramey and LWV Milwaukee County leaders Mary Kae Nelson and Joanne Barndt

Bill Malkasian and Mary Kae Nelson

Gift Honors a Mother's Passion for League

Bill Malkasian paid tribute to his mother, Zabelle Malkasian, a longtime Milwaukee League member who died this spring, by making a \$10,000 contribution to the state League at the Annual Meeting. In presenting the check, Malkasian said he chose to make the gift from her estate because "she talked about the League all the time." He added that he had learned about the importance of civic engagement from her League work.

The gift enables the League to establish the Zabelle Malkasian Lecture, which will take place at the state Annual Meeting beginning in 2014. Up to \$2,000 per year will be made available for speaker fees and expenses until the funds are depleted. Bill Malkasian will participate in initial planning discussions about the lecture, and we look forward to having him join us at the meeting each year.

The Malkasian fund will make it possible to annually offer a high-quality presentation and discussion on a key policy issue, with the potential for broader outreach when Leaguers share the insights gained within their communities.

The lecture will be available to League members and others who do not attend the meeting through a recording and/or transcript on the League's website.

The lecture fund carries Zabelle Malkasian's legacy and passion for the League's work forward. It's a wonderful gift by a son in honor of his mother, a woman who lived the League's mission of promoting active and informed participation in government. ❖



Zabelle Malkasian

Save the date for next year's Annual Meeting!

May 30-31, 2014

Appleton

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Melanie Ramey
President
LWV Dane County
2013-15

Debra Cronmiller
Vice President
LWV Appleton
2012-2014

Ethel Himmel
Treasurer
LWV Janesville
2012-2014

Elizabeth Wheeler
Secretary
LWV Dane County
2013-15

STAFF

Andrea Kaminski
Executive Director

Lindsay VanVonderen
Administrative/
Program Assistant

LOCAL LEAGUES

Appleton
Ashland/Bayfield Counties
Beloit
Dane County
Door County
Greater Green Bay
Janesville
La Crosse Area
Manitowoc County
Milwaukee County
Northwoods
Ozaukee County
Ripon Area
Stevens Point Area
Whitewater Area
Winnebago County
Wisconsin Rapids Area

DIRECTORS

Julie Arneth
LWV Greater Green Bay
2013-14

Laura Boettcher
LWV Janesville
2012-14

Patricia Finder-Stone
LWV Greater Green Bay
2013-15

Linda Jorgenson
LWV Ashland/Bayfield
2013-2014

Joyce McCollum
LWV Greater Green Bay
2013-2014

Louise Petering
LWV Milwaukee County
2012-14

Pamela Rewey
LWV Dane County
2013-15

Ellen Rosborough
LWV La Crosse Area
2013-15

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Marilyn Boeldt, Chair
LWV Milwaukee County

Nancy Hill
LWV La Crosse Area

Julie Arneth
LWV Greater Green Bay,
State Board



From left: Julie Arneth, Anita Loch, Peggy Cox and Louise Petering.

Leaguers Get Down to Business at Annual Meeting

The League's state Annual Meeting was held June 7-8 at the Hilton Milwaukee City Center. The 64 delegates in attendance represented 16 of 17 local Leagues plus the Lake Michigan LWV and the newly forming Northwoods League. President Melanie G. Ramey presided, with Carolyn Castore, LWV Milwaukee County, serving as Parliamentarian. Delegates accomplished the following:

- Revised bylaws to clarify election of directors and to accomplish all business in one plenary session at Annual Meeting
- Updated the state Apportionment/Redistricting position to provide more flexibility to respond to legislative proposals as they may arise
- Launched a statewide campaign for redistricting reform, coordinated by Carolyn Castore, to advance a process that utilizes an independent commission or agency for drawing electoral districts
- Voted to drop the League's position on judicial selection due to lack of consensus revealed by survey of Leagues earlier this year
- Updated the state Natural Resources position by replacing "global warming" with "climate change" to reflect current science
- Voted to review and update the state Water position for adoption at the 2014 Annual Meeting, with state board member Elizabeth Wheeler, LWV Dane County, coordinating the effort
- Adopted a budget for the 2013-14 League year
- Elected a new slate of directors, officers and nominating committee for 2013-14

Annual meeting minutes and the revised positions and bylaws can be found on the state League website at lwvwi.org. ❖

Executive Director's Message



Andrea Kaminski

The Awards Luncheon at our Annual Meeting in June gave much deserved recognition to a number of Leaguers whose tireless work helps advance the League's goal of making democracy work. Truth be told, there are countless members who are integral to the operations of our lean organization; here are kudos to just a few who made the League better this year by doing what they do.

Julie Arneth, LWV Greater Green Bay, is stepping down as state board secretary, although she will continue as director. Julie has served on both the LWV Greater Green Bay and LWV Wisconsin boards as director, secretary and president. Stepping up as secretary is the capable Elizabeth Wheeler, LWV Dane County. I am grateful to both for taking on this important job.

Board vice president Debra Cronmiller, LWV Appleton, represented LWVWI at a Midwest Democracy Network conference in Chicago on June 26. Debra then joined board member Ellen Rosborough, LWV La Crosse Area, in representing our state League at the

LWVUS Council in July. Thank you for giving us a presence at these important events.

League committee work was truly outstanding this year and included:

- Fund Development Committee: implemented the fund development plan, developed a planned giving brochure, stewarded two new named funds;
- Legislative Committee: responded to drastic, rapid-fire proposals from the Legislature;
- Membership and Leadership Development Team: provided resources and coached six local Leagues, established the new MLD Award (see story on page 3);
- Technology Improvement Team: developed the Members-Only website and trained local League administrators;
- Program Planning Team: with assistance from Legislative and Judicial Committee members reviewed and updated League positions;
- Election Observer Program: recruited, trained and placed hundreds of observers in multiple statewide elections, wrote final reports and recommendations;
- Nominating and Investments Committees: ensured continuing leadership and fiscal stewardship.

In the League office, Lindsay VanVonderen has provided invaluable assistance to local Leagues with financial reporting and 501(c)(3) compliance. With diligence and teamwork among national, state and local leaders—volunteers and staff—this three-level grassroots organization works—and works well! ❖

State Board Update

On July 27 the League's state board affirmed its strategic goals and planned for the 2013-14 League year. Here are some things to watch for:

- More resources for local Leagues through the Membership & Leadership Development program;
- Campaign for Redistricting Reform;
- Update of the League's state position on Water Quality;
- Pass-through grants from Joyce Foundation for local initiatives;
- Clarification of the state program planning process for local Leagues;
- Purchase and support of the Vote411.org voter guide in 2014;
- News from LWVUS in every issue of Forward beginning this fall;
- Integration of fund raising goals with strategic planning and budget. ❖

Save Trees and the League Money!

Money doesn't grow on trees, but we can save both by using email for League communications! Send an email to lwwisconsin@lwwi.org to sign up for any of the following (be sure to tell us which items you wish to receive by email):

- *Forward Newsletter*
- *League Updates and Action Alerts*

Find the League on Facebook!

facebook.com/pages/League-of-Women-Voters-of-Wisconsin

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Appleton: Organized a press conference to advocate against eliminating Election Day registration and reducing in-person early voting; four candidate forums, three voter guides and three “Lunch and Learn” events; began plans for hosting the 2014 state Annual Meeting.

Beloit: Led a series of “porch discussions” on environmental concerns; co-hosted with Beloit NAACP a “How to Watch a Presidential Debate” event.

Dane County: Registered more than 1,000 voters; presented seven well attended public forums at which half the audience were not League members—some subsequently joined.

Door County: Initiated and advanced the Door County Civility Project, which strives to foster and incorporate the principles of civility into everyday life; increased membership and number of active members.

Greater Green Bay: Offered a program about school vouchers that featured Assistant State Superintendent of Public Instruction Brian Pahnke; hosted an educational program on environmental health.

Janesville: Reviewed and revised fair housing policy; hosted a well-attended Affordable Care Act forum; continued to work on sustainability.

La Crosse Area: Participated vigorously in voter registration activities; partnered with other groups to register voters.

Lake Michigan: Held a fundraiser in Chicago to bring attention to the problem of invasive and sustainable fish species; sent a delegate to Great Lakes Lobby Days in Washington, DC; co-hosted an educational program about storm water management; prepared for Annual Meeting on October 17 in Sheboygan.

Manitowoc County: Completed a comprehensive study on Mental Health Services; marked seventh year for hosting the Great Decisions program; co-hosting the LMLWV Annual Meeting in Sheboygan.

Northwoods: Sponsored candidate forums for the primary in the 12th Senate and 34th Assembly district elections; sought and received recognition from the state and national LWV boards.

Ozaukee County: Offered presentations on the judiciary; read and discussed *The Nine: Inside the Secret World of the Supreme Court*, by Jeffrey Toobin; presented a “Naming and Framing” workshop about the importance of civil discourse; hosted a Women’s History Luncheon with 83 attendees.

Ripon Area: Initiated a series of water-related programs through the Ground and Surface Water Action Committee; hosted Senator Luther Olsen, who gave a rousing presentation on the drawbacks of expanding school vouchers.

Stevens Point Area: Co-presented with LWV Wisconsin Rapids Area a program on judicial Independence featuring UW-Milwaukee professor Sarah Benesh; co-sponsored a program on the school voucher proposals.

Whitewater Area: Hosted a candidate forum for the 2012 State Assembly District 43 race; doubled attendance at annual Make Democracy Work award dinner; began plans for LWV Whitewater Area’s 50th anniversary in 2014.

Winnebago County: Joined the Oshkosh city manager on a bus tour of city projects; arranged a public meeting to oppose lighted fenced ball diamonds in a local park; researching the scope of local poverty; monitoring development of a strategic plan for Oshkosh Schools. ❖

Make the League Part of Your Legacy

Many of our donors use their wills or living trusts to make their most generous gifts. Please remember the LWVW Education Network when you create yours.

*For more information, contact Andrea Kaminski,
(608) 256-0827.*



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