



League Believes in Balanced Approach for Budgeting and Deficit Reduction

Soon after the November elections were over, the 112th U.S. Congress had to deal with a crisis of its own making, the “fiscal cliff”—a combination of expiring tax cuts and across-the-board government spending cuts that were scheduled for December 31, 2012.

LWVUS
President
Elisabeth
MacNamara

weighed in on the matter in a letter she wrote to members of Congress, advising that while it was important to avoid the spending and tax changes, it was much more important to provide a long-term solution by substantially increasing revenue, protecting the social safety net, reducing defense spending and carefully managing the deficit.

As we in Wisconsin consider the state budget for the coming biennium, we can find good advice in the principles outlined in MacNamara’s letter. The balanced approach she proposed recognizes what any business owner or

household budget manager knows: there are two factors in a balanced budget—revenue and spending. The trick is to find a balance point that stewards tax dollars

wisely and protects vulnerable citizens. The League of Women Voters believes that a progressive income tax system is the fairest way to generate government

revenue and ensure social equity.

MacNamara told Congress the League also supports an effective estate tax, ending special treatment of capital gains and dividends and increasing the maximum for Social Security tax withholding. “Securing substantial new revenue from those with the greatest ability to contribute will allow our nation to meet reasonable deficit reduction goals, invest in education and infrastructure and protect the programs that meet basic human needs,” she wrote.

Cont. on p. 2



The LWVWI Position on Government Financing

Support of financing of essential state government services by a well-administered tax system through:

1. Strengthening the income tax based on ability to pay
2. Use of a general sales tax with exemptions to make it less regressive.

Support of the state’s role in financing and organizing effective local government through equitable distribution of state monies including:

1. Equitable sharing of tax proceeds by state and local units through improvements in distribution of taxes raised by the state
2. A property tax relief formula that would tend to reduce local property taxes where they are above the state average
3. Use of the property tax as part of the revenue mix, but decrease the percentage of reliance as part of that mix
4. A highway aids formula that reflects cost, such as vehicle mileage or use
5. Use of increased users’ fees at both state and local levels.

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President's Message



Melanie G. Ramey

The new legislative session promises to be as challenging as the last one. Our staff and committees are already busy following and responding to one of the first bills dropped in the hopper—a mining bill.

On January 23 the League sent a memo to the Senate and Assembly mining committees to voice our opposition to AB 1/SB 1. This bill, which would shorten timelines and procedures for obtaining approvals for ferrous metallic mining operations from the Department of Natural Resources, would also relax environmental protections and reduce opportunities for citizen input and legal redress.

The legislature held only one hearing—in Madison—on AB 1/SB 1. Not holding a hearing in the area of the state most affected by the legislation is a breach of public process. Serious questions arose about how the hearing was conducted and its abrupt conclusion that denied many speakers the chance to be heard. This utter disrespect for public input is reflected in the legislation itself.

Current mining law recognizes that mining inevitably leads to pollution and destruction of natural areas, yet offers reasonable environmental protection if the Department of Natural Resources has the time, resources and information needed to make a vigilant assessment. Ashland-Bayfield LWV president Dorothy Lagerroos told legislators last year that it is bad government to tie the hands of the experts at the DNR, who use reason and science to balance the public interest in a safe and healthy environment with the public interest in developing resources.

AB 1/SB 1 takes away the DNR's ability to obtain needed information and explicitly states that whatever information the mining company provides in its application is *de facto* sufficient. Then it requires the agency to allow destruction of wetlands, groundwater and surface water for the iron mining industry.

Sponsors of this legislation would have been well advised to involve other affected groups in drafting the bill. Because they didn't, its implementation could be doomed even if it passes the legislature. In particular, the lack of involvement of the tribes, especially the Bad River Chippewa, which is a sovereign nation, could tie it up in the courts for years.

The mining bill guts sound government, which is based on checks, balances, facts and reason. It constitutes a give-away of our natural heritage and our civic legacy. We did not support this approach to a mining bill last year and we still do not support such an approach.

The League opposes AB 1/SB 1. I urge you to let your representatives know that you do too. ❖

Cont. from p. 1

MacNamara asserted that while long-term deficit reduction is an important goal, it is also vital to recognize that deficit spending is appropriate and effective for stimulating the economy during recession, meeting social needs in times of high unemployment and providing for defense needs in response to national security crises. "Early deficit reduction must not overtake the need for establishing economic growth and meeting vital needs. The Bowles-Simpson proposal, for example, cuts the deficit well beyond what is needed to stabilize the deficit over the long term," she noted.

The League believes any budget must protect basic social spending, including health care and other essential services for low-income people. With the current state of the economy, we need a truly balanced approach to spending and taxes.

The League of Women Voters urges lawmakers to support a new direction for federal and state fiscal policy, one that recognizes the importance of a fair tax system, one that provides for social needs and one that will carefully manage the deficit and the economy. ❖

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 lwwwisconsin@lwwwi.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*

Around The State

1 Appleton: Chapter leaders gave two pre-election interviews with local media in which they explained factors involved with sponsoring an unbiased candidate forum and the role of citizen observers in an election. In January they co-sponsored a well-covered media event in support of Election Day Registration.

2 Ashland-Bayfield Counties: As part of its study of “the new local economy,” hosted a discussion of Bayfield County’s energy-saving and -producing initiatives that included comments from Washburn’s new mayor. The session also included input from members who visited southwest Wisconsin to learn about the vibrant economy being built around local agriculture and investment in the Viroqua area.

3 Dane County: Sent a statement in support of environmental expenditures in the proposed Dane County budget to improve the health of the Yahara chain of lakes.

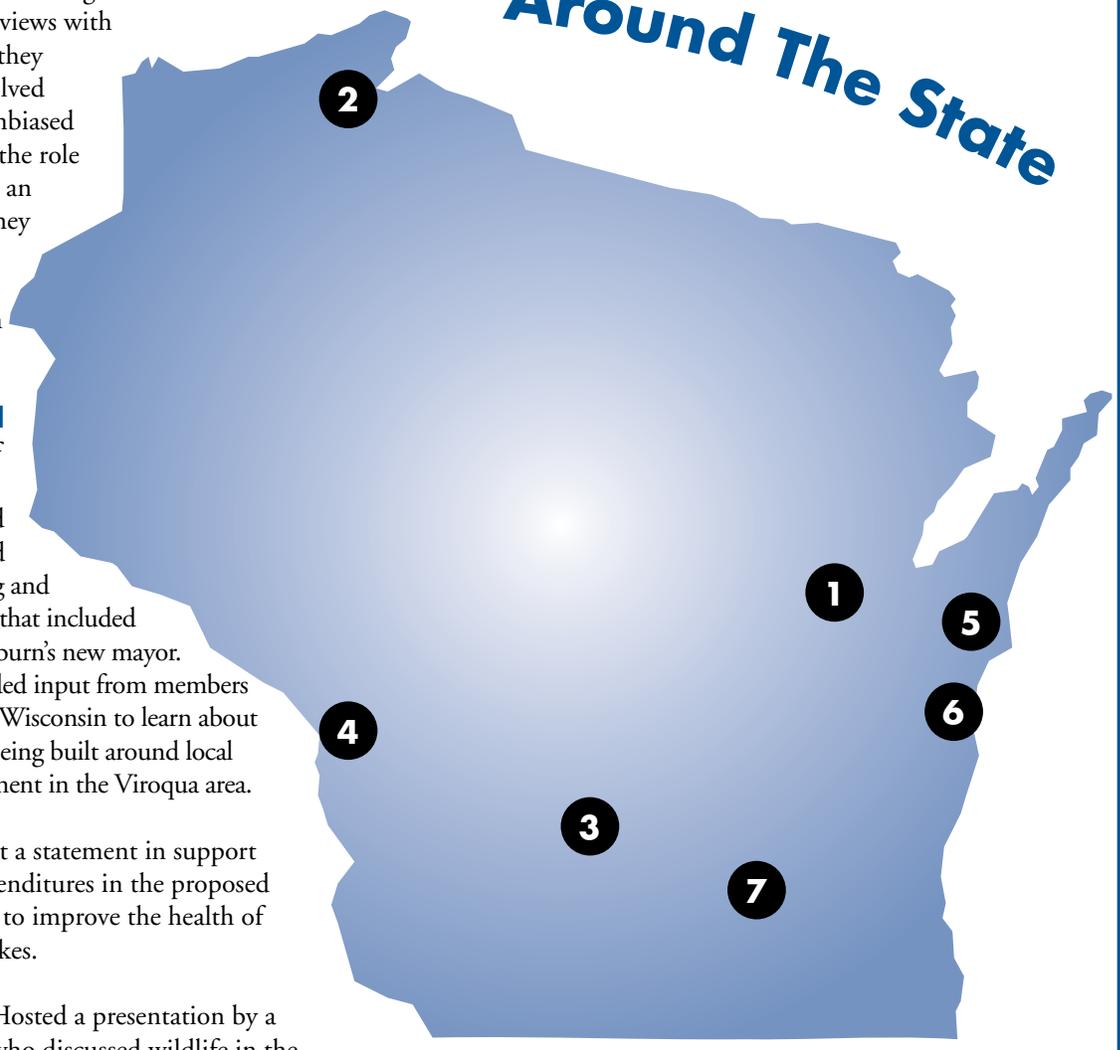
4 La Crosse Area: Hosted a presentation by a DNR representative who discussed wildlife in the La Crosse Marsh and efforts to insure the wetland’s long-term protection and management.

5 Manitowoc County: Announced topics for the Manitowoc Great Decisions group’s 2013 series, which include: Future of the Euro; Egypt; NATO; Myanmar and Southeast Asia; Intervention; Iran; China in Africa; and Threat Assessment.

6 Ozaukee County: President Claire Vanderslice participated in a panel discussion at the Ozaukee County NAACP Branch’s 22nd Annual Freedom Fund Dinner.

7 Whitewater Area: Presented its annual Making Democracy Work Award to Michele Smith, Whitewater City Clerk, for her 12 years of fair and efficient administration of elections with integrity and administrative professionalism.

8 Winnebago County: Studying the scope and prevalence of poverty in the county. ❖



Find the League on Facebook!

facebook.com/pages/League-of-Women-Voters-of-Wisconsin/166060673456299

A Long History of Gun Control Advocacy

The League's advocacy on gun control issues goes back a long way. In 1990 delegates took the then rare step of adopting the gun control position by concurrence at the League's national Convention. Following this action, the LWVUS wrote to all members of Congress, announcing the League's new position and urging passage of federal legislation to control the proliferation of handguns and semi-automatic assault weapons in the United States. A timeline of subsequent key actions by LWVUS includes:

1991: joined with other organizations to support legislation banning semi-automatic assault weapons.

1992-1993: supported congressional passage of the Brady bill to institute a five-day waiting period and background check for the purchase of handguns.

1994: led a successful 1994 House campaign to force inclusion of the assault weapons ban in the final conference report on omnibus crime legislation. Convention voted to amend the position based on federal court decisions limiting the meaning of the Second Amendment's "right to keep and bear arms." This was later nullified by the Supreme Court decisions in *District of Columbia v. Heller*, 2008 and *McDonald v. Chicago*, 2010.

1995-1996: opponents of the assault weapons ban and Brady bill pushed for repeal, but the League and others convinced Congress otherwise.

1998: Convention again amended the position with: "The League supports regulating firearms for consumer safety."

1999: worked for gun control measures to close major loopholes in current law. Although the Senate passed legislation mandating background checks for all gun show purchases, the House derailed this and other attempts to control gun violence, including child safety locks on guns.

2000: endorsed and League members joined the Mother's Day 2000 Million Mom March to demonstrate citizens' support for common-sense gun control measures.

Time for Common Sense on Guns

President Obama's announcement that his administration will seek common sense solutions to the gun violence that plagues our nation is good news for all Americans. His announcement came in the wake of four school shootings in a five week period. The national League sent Vice President Biden, who led a panel looking at gun violence, a letter urging him to propose methods to help stem the tide of gun violence in this country. The White House proposal includes many of the provisions that the League of Women Voters supports.

Since 1990, the League has lobbied in support of banning assault weapons and requiring all dealers to run criminal background checks at gun shows, and opposing laws that grant special protection for the gun industry.

Now that we have a plan for tackling this critical national issue, it is up to our elected leaders to keep these reforms moving forward quickly and not let them get bogged down in the wrangling so familiar to Washington, DC.

Gun control is a matter of public safety and public health. It is long past time for vital measures to stop the carnage.

On behalf of our members and supporters from across this country, we urge Washington to help put a stop to this violence. ❖

Adapted from a blog post that appeared on the LWVUS website, lwwus.org/blog, on January 16, 2013.

2004: voiced strong concern over the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act, which would grant special protection for the gun industry by barring city, county or individual lawsuits against gun manufacturers and dismiss pending cases; supported legislation to extend the Assault Weapons Ban, which expired in September 2004; supported language to close the Gun

The League's Position

Statement of Position on Gun Control, as adopted by 1990 Convention and amended by the 1994 and 1998 Conventions:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the proliferation of handguns and semi-automatic assault weapons in the United States is a major health and safety threat to its citizens. The League supports strong federal measures to limit the accessibility and regulate the ownership of these weapons by private citizens. The League supports regulating firearms for consumer safety.

The League supports licensing procedures for gun ownership by private citizens to include a waiting period for background check, personal identity verification, gun safety education and annual license renewal. The license fee should be adequate to bear the cost of education and verification.

The League supports a ban on "Saturday night specials," enforcement of strict penalties for the improper possession of and crimes committed with handguns and assault weapons, and allocation of resources to better regulate and monitor gun dealers.

Show Loophole to require all dealers to run criminal background checks at gun shows. These efforts were not successful.

2000s: opposed congressional attempts to repeal District of Columbia gun safety laws because such action interfered with the right of self-government for DC citizens. ❖

State Board Asks Local Leagues to Weigh In on State Policy Positions

The State Board is asking local Leagues to help update and review positions on redistricting, administration of justice and natural resources to ensure that our positions on these issues remain relevant and useful for vigorous advocacy. Here is how you can weigh in:

Redistricting:

The state Legislative Committee will recommend updating and clarifying language on this issue. The proposed revision will go to the State Board for consideration and then to local Leagues in the Annual Meeting packet for review and discussion. Delegates at Annual Meeting should be prepared to vote to adopt or reject the revised position.

Administration of Justice (specifically, the position dealing with judicial selection):

A review of this position is already underway by the state League committee, which provided every local League with a binder of materials to be used for educational sessions about judicial selection and recusal. The materials are also available online at: lwvwi.org/IssuesAdvocacy/JudicialIndependenceResourcePacket2012.aspx

The committee has found that: (a) the current position is unclear; and (b) many League members are confused as to what the League's position is on appointment vs. election of justices.

The committee sent an online survey to local Leagues in January, asking for a response (as a League) to two questions:

1. Should we keep the current LWVWI position on judicial selection?
2. If not, what does your League think we should do about it? For example: clarify the position; change the position without a full study (e.g., by surveying Leagues and then bringing a resolution to the Annual Meeting); launch a full League study. Local leagues should discuss the current position on judicial selection and respond to the survey by February 15. The committee will consider the responses and make a recommendation to the State Board.

Natural Resources:

A preliminary review of our Natural Resources positions identified a number of areas that are outdated or that do not seem to be adequately addressed. While an overall review of the Natural Resources positions would be a huge undertaking, the state board believes it would be possible to identify a few parts of most interest to members for review in the 2013-14 League year.

The State Board also wants to know if there are people who would be able to help conduct a review. An online survey was sent to local Leagues in January seeking input on which area(s) need attention and whether there are volunteers who could assist. Leagues should review the current state and national LWV Natural Resources positions as part of program planning and then respond to the survey by the end of March. ❖

The state League's current positions are available online at lwvwi.org. You can also access the position review memos on judicial independence and natural resources on the "Members Only" section of the website. Click on "Members" and follow the directions for "Member Login."

SAVE THE DATE! SAVE THE DATE! SAVE THE DATE! SAVE THE DATE! Annual Meeting, June 7-8, 2013, Hilton Milwaukee City Center, Milwaukee

Make plans now to attend the 2013 Annual Meeting of the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin Education Network on June 7 and 8. LWV Milwaukee County will host the meeting at the Hilton Milwaukee City Center.

The meeting will kick off with a public event on Friday night featuring a keynote address. Saturday will have speakers, training sessions and the business meeting.

The Annual Meeting is your opportunity to hear distinguished speakers discuss key League issues and to participate in setting the direction and leadership for the state League in the coming year. Watch for more details soon and then join us at the Annual Meeting!

Revision of Redistricting Position Proposed.

The LWVWI legislative committee has recommended modifying the LWVWI position on redistricting. The matter will be taken up at the 2013 annual meeting on June 7-8 in Milwaukee.

In 2009 the LWVUS participated in a nationwide redistricting conference at the Pocantico Conference Center which resulted in the adoption of four principles to guide the redistricting process: an accurate and complete census count; public transparency; tools and opportunities for direct public input; and redistricting plans which reflect the diversity of the populace. The legislative committee believes the proposed revisions reflect these principles to which LWVUS has subscribed and preserve the spirit of the current LWVWI position, while providing more flexibility to respond to proposals as they may arise.

Following is the revised position, which shows insertions (underscored) and deletions:

Support of:

- Regularly scheduled apportionment based primarily on population equality, but also with consideration of the compactness and contiguity of districts; maintenance of equality representation of diverse populations; and, insofar as is possible, recognition of community of interest as defined by town, village, city, county or ward boundaries and major geographical characteristics.
- A redistricting process characterized by objectivity, accountability, timely and efficient completion and a reasonable degree of flexibility
- Citizen participation and access at all levels and steps of the process
- Establishment of an independent commission or designation of an independent agency to be responsible for the development of a Legislative and Congressional redistricting plan
- Streamlined court review of any legal challenge.
- The commission should include citizens at large and legislators. A combination of commission members could include representatives from political parties and public interest groups.
- ~~The commission should be appointed by the majority and minority legislative leaders, a panel of members of the Wisconsin Supreme court or a combination of appointees. Various combinations could include the legislative leaders, the governor, the Supreme Court members and/or the Chief Justice.~~
- ~~The commission should have the initial responsibility for developing the redistricting plans.~~
- ~~If the legislature retains the initial responsibility, the commission should assume responsibility if the legislature fails to adopt a plan by a specified deadline.~~
- ~~Whichever body has the initial responsibility, the commission should be independent of the legislature and the only role for the legislature should be ratification, i.e., no amendment.~~
- ~~Court enforcement if the designated body fails to act within the designated time period.~~

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

MEG MCLANE AWARD FOR ADVOCACY

Each year the state League board recognizes and honors an outstanding advocate for good government with the Meg McLane Advocacy Award.

Leagues and League members may nominate an exceptional League member for this award, which comes with a \$250 check payable to the tax-exempt organization of the recipient's choice. Past honorees are June Kjöme, La Crosse Area; Nancy Stabb, Janesville; Connie Threinen, Dane County; Barbara Hussin, Milwaukee County; Darlene Wellner, Manitowoc; and Pat Finder-Stone, Greater Green Bay.

Nomination paperwork is due to the state League office by March 1, with instructions and forms available at lwvwi.org. You can also request a nomination form from your local League president or the state office.

The 2013 award will be presented at the LWVWI Annual Meeting on June 8 in Milwaukee. Contact the state office with questions. ❖

Executive Director's Message



Andrea Kaminski

Wisconsinites know that Election Day is the one time when all citizens are equal in the greatest democracy in the world. With 2.9 million of its citizens voting last November, our state can be proud of this high turnout, which as usual ranked near the top in voter participation.

But as soon as the votes were counted, some politicians started talking about introducing new legislation to restrict voting in our state, including new voter ID legislation, despite the fact that two judges had ruled the last voter ID law unconstitutional.

Additionally, Governor Walker told an audience in California that he would favor ending Election Day Registration (EDR) in Wisconsin, saying it would take a burden off local election officials. Yet EDR allows many first-time voters to participate and ensures that recent moves or name changes do not impact a citizen's ability to vote. It has worked well for Wisconsin for more than 30 years. Any attempt to eliminate EDR would be an attack on voting rights, and it certainly cannot be justified as a solution to a problem that does not exist. Sadly, we have been down that road before with voter ID.

The League of Women Voters has placed observers in polls statewide in four elections over the past 18 months. These observers have consistently commented on the dedication and professionalism of our poll workers, almost all of whom consider it a privilege to ensure that all qualified citizens have the opportunity to cast a ballot and have it counted. We wonder how many local elections officials the Governor surveyed before he concluded that Election Day Registration is "difficult for them to handle."

In our democracy, it is the job of the legislature to write and pass bills; the Governor then has the power to sign a bill into law. Lawmaking should be done with humility and accountability. Legislation should address real problems and seek to fix them. In the process of introducing new legislation, lawmakers should seek public input—from their constituents, the citizens of Wisconsin, and not from potential donors in California or the national media.

On January 7, lawmakers took an oath to uphold the state and federal constitutions. If they cross the line and enact a law that violates the constitution, then citizens may challenge the law in court. Together the courts and the constitution protect citizens from politicians who seek to manipulate the law for personal or partisan gain.

In the new legislative session, the League of Women Voters is watching to see what lawmakers will do to support free, fair and accessible elections in our state. We are ready to call out anyone who introduces a bill that would restrict voting by Wisconsin citizens in the name of addressing a problem that does not exist.

That is how democracy works. ❖



Aadhavi Sridharan

League Welcomes New Intern

A growing number of medical schools now require community service internships as part of training to help students learn how to be more connected to their patients. The League is benefitting from this trend with the placement of intern Aadhavi Sridharan at the Center for Change.

Aadhavi, a third-year UW-Madison medical student, is working with the League's state legislative committee on health care policy and environmental health issues. She is studying the League's positions and learning how to track legislation, including the state budget. She is also assisting in writing statements for the League, and she hopes to present testimony at a legislative hearing.

Originally from Rochester, NY, Aadhavi has lived in Madison for five years. She completed her Bachelors degree and PhD in Neuroscience and is excited to learn more about the legislative process. ❖

Make the League Part of Your Legacy

The League of Women Voters is the organization where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement. Guided by principles that help nurture and protect our government systems, the League is a "trusted convener" that helps citizens understand and influence policies that affect their lives and liberties.

You can help advance these efforts in Wisconsin and leave your legacy by making a tax-deductible gift to the LWVWI Education Network Endowment. Income from bequests, gifts of stock and memorial gifts sustains the League well into the future. The next time you review your charitable giving plan, consider the League.

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

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

LWVWEN State Board Meeting
February 9, Madison

Nonpartisan Primary Election
February 19

Nonpartisan Election
April 2

LWVWEN State Board Meeting
April 6, Madison

LWVWEN Board Meeting
June 7, Milwaukee

LWVWEN Annual Meeting
June 7-8, Milwaukee

LWVUS Council
June 14-17, Virginia



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