



Making Democracy Work®

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FORWARD

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WISCONSIN EDUCATION FUND, INC.

State Annual Meeting, June 18-19, 2010

Contributors to this article include Joyce McCollum, LWV Greater Green Bay, and Louise Petering, LWV Milwaukee County

The state Annual Meeting took place in La Crosse in mid-June, with a teleconferenced site in Oshkosh. The theme for the meeting was sustainability. Distinguished speakers discussed sustainable transportation options, the sustainability of our fair and impartial justice system and the sustainability of the League itself. The La Crosse event began with an optional Mississippi Explorer Cruise, followed by a reception hosted by LWV La Crosse Area and LWVWI President Melanie Ramey at the Myrick Hixon EcoPark, a nonprofit conservation area with an environmental education center.

Earth-Friendly Transportation Options for Wisconsin

Steve Hiniker, Director of 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, discussed transportation from the post-World War II vision of highways across the U.S. to the vision of skyways for transport portrayed in the futuristic *Jetsons* cartoon. He said that the portion of the average American's living expenses spent on transportation has increased from about 3 percent in 1918 to 25 percent today. The time spent in traffic has more than doubled since the early 1980s.



Delegates listen to a presentation in La Crosse.

Hiniker described how Americans benefit from public transit and asserted that if we made 10 percent of trips away from home by public transit, as Europeans do, our consumption of foreign oil would decrease by 40 percent, or the amount imported from Saudi Arabia each year. As an added benefit, studies have shown that young professionals prefer to settle in communities with public transit, particularly light rail, which creates a vibrant downtown that is easy to navigate. Policy changes needed to attain Hiniker's vision include:

- Better transportation planning and use of land
- Transportation decisions based on community values

- Increased funding for public transit
- Regional transit authorities for sound planning
- Streets built for mixed-use transportation modes

Promoting Fair and Impartial Courts

Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Ann Walsh Bradley spoke at the Annual Meeting about recent developments threatening the public's confidence in the impartiality of our courts. She suggested ways the League can help promote an impartial judiciary:

1. Show up at the Supreme Court's open administrative hearings and conferences.

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President's Message

Melanie G. Ramey

As we launch another League year, I want to thank Kathy Allen and Peggy Cox, who are stepping down from the state board. Kathy will be active politically this fall and Peggy will continue to work on behalf of the state League through the Membership Recruitment Initiative. We welcome Laura Boettcher from Janesville to the board and look forward to her insights at our annual planning meeting on July 30-31.



At this meeting we will assess progress on our strategic goals and set new goals and performance measures for the year ahead, including:

1. Increase membership
2. Increase impact and visibility through marketing, advocacy, collaborations and use of the media
3. Increase services to local Leagues and all members
4. Increase revenues to a level sufficient to support our strategic plan

Of these goals, increasing membership is our greatest challenge. Many membership organizations are struggling to recruit and retain members; clearly a new approach is needed to engage people in the 21st century. The state League is participating in the national League's Membership Recruitment Initiative to assist local Leagues in developing their membership (see article at right). Thanks to generous funding from the Otto Bremer Foundation, we also are following up on work by membership consultants Dorothy Lagerroos and Wendy Kloiber, who surveyed League members and friends to find out what the League means to them and how the state League can make membership more relevant in today's electronically connected world. Already a Technology Improvement Committee is working to implement some of the consultants' recommendations.

The state League has made considerable progress in the area of impact and visibility. For example, the League's petition for a judicial recusal rule sparked debate about the influence of money in judicial elections and continues to be cited in newspaper articles and editorials across the state. The League will continue to contribute to recusal reform through participation in the Joint Legislative Council's Special Committee on Judicial Discipline and Recusal.

We have worked to improve services to local Leagues, with Andrea and Laurel in the state office keeping local officers informed and responding quickly to inquiries and requests. The state League also administered a pass-through grant program this spring, thanks to the Joyce Foundation, which helped ten local Leagues promote Census participation in their communities.

Our weekly e-news, timely action alerts and quarterly newsletter keep individual members informed of state-level issues and let them know when and how they can make a difference by contacting legislators or writing a letter to the editor.

With generous support from members and grants, we have increased revenues for the state League and continue to seek grants and contributions—essential if we are to continue to have impact and effectively serve Leagues and members.

Please watch for opportunities and resources in the coming year to help us meet these goals, and more. ❖

Membership Recruitment Initiative Seeks Volunteers

by Louise Petering, LWV Milwaukee County

The League of Women Voters has a highly respected reputation and a proud history of service. Nevertheless, the League struggles with attracting and retaining members. To assist our local Leagues, LWVWI is participating in the LWVUS Membership Recruitment Initiative (MRI). The project is funded by a generous gift from League member Walter Shur in honor of his late wife, Ruth S. Shur, a longtime League leader at both the local and national levels.

The purpose of MRI is to be intentional and consistent when discussing the value of League membership with target audiences and to speak to them throughout the year, using every opportunity to invite or ask them to join League. Participating local Leagues will receive useful resources and strategies to complement their own programs and activities.

Louise Petering, LWV Milwaukee County, Peggy Cox, LWV Winnebago County, and Vonna Pitel, LWV Ozaukee County, will serve as Wisconsin MRI coaches, and each will work with two local Leagues, providing ongoing support through conference calls, face-to-face meetings and email. One additional coach is sought so two more Leagues can participate.

Local League presidents have received an application, due August 15, for participating in the MRI. If selected, participating Leagues must designate a team of two or three members to attend training on October 1-2 in Madison and serve their local League in its MRI efforts. The October training and meals are free; travel expenses are not included.

For more information or to volunteer as a state coach, contact Louise Petering at l.petering14@att.net. ❖

These events are taped by Wisconsin Eye, but rarely attended by journalists. The presence of citizen observers will make the justices more accountable in a way that the Wisconsin Eye camera does not, she said.

2. Don't give up on recusal. In a 4-3 decision, the Supreme Court rejected the League's petition to require judges and justices to withdraw from cases involving major campaign supporters. They instead adopted rules written by the very business lobbying interests that contribute to judicial campaigns and run independent campaigns to influence elections. Justice Bradley urged the League to get a representative on a new Joint Legislative Council Special Committee on Judicial Recusal.
3. Hold brown-bag lunches with local judges and ask them about issues related to justice in our communities.
4. Continue to educate voters about the need for an independent and impartial judiciary.

Working for a Sustainable League
Membership consultants Dorothy



League members attended the Annual Meeting in Oshkosh via teleconference.

Lagerroos and Wendy Kloiber presented their findings from their 2009 survey of Wisconsin League members and friends and offered recommendations for a stronger League. They said changes in communication over the last 10 years necessitate changes in the way the League communicates. Organizations used to send messages mostly in a linear fashion to a defined set of recipients who did not communicate with one another. Today, more organizations use the Internet to send messages, which are in turn forwarded multiple times. Consequently, a posting may engage a network of people unknown to the League. Recipients of messages develop an immediate impression of the sending organization,

which they may communicate to others; alternately, recipients may filter out the message altogether. The challenge before the League is to develop a style that clearly communicates while maintaining League's organizational uniqueness and integrity.

The consultants recommended that we update our website, change our definition of membership, develop more personal messaging and brand ourselves well. This means we need to be a hybrid organization—one that is professional yet personal, objective yet forceful, thoughtful and authentic, managing our messages with the latest electronic media while still serving those who prefer printed materials. The state board has formed a Technology Improvement Committee to implement these and other recommendations. ❖

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 impact policies that affect their lives and liberties.

You can help advance these efforts in Wisconsin and leave your legacy by making a gift to the LWVWI Endowment Fund. 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. ❖

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 or all of the following (be sure to tell us which items you wish to receive by email):

- *Forward Newsletter*
- *Wisconsin League Leader Update*
- *Action Alerts*

MEG MCLANE AWARD FOR ADVOCACY

Barbara Hussin, LWV Milwaukee County, was the recent recipient of the 2010 Meg McLane Award for Advocacy in honor of her leadership on the LWVWI Legislative Committee since 1995 and her outstanding advocacy for the rights of incarcerated people and those reintegrating into society following prison.

Barbara made the following remarks upon accepting the award:

When I first became a League member, I was so impressed with our process of gathering information on all sides of an issue and then basing agreement on the elements of that issue which best serve all citizens. After that, the natural progression is to take action on those positions.

We do not engage in advocacy because of ideology. We do not engage in advocacy to protect our wallets, and we do not engage in advocacy in response to someone's outrage or hyperbole. We work on public policy and legislation for the benefit of citizens in the community or the state or the nation.

This was a compelling principle ninety years ago when this organization began, and it is just as important today.

The \$500 Meg McLane Advocacy Award is presented annually to recognize and honor leading advocates for good government. Nominees are submitted by Leagues and League members statewide. Past recipients include June Kjome, LWV La Crosse Area, Nancy Stabb, LWV Janesville and Connie Threinen, LWV Dane County. Watch future issues of *Forward* for 2011 nomination information and deadlines. ❖

Delegates Receive Training and Select Program at Annual Meeting

Peggy Cox, LWV Winnebago County, and Debra Cronmiller, LWV Appleton, contributed to this article.

Delegates to the state Annual Meeting learned and shared in training sessions led by League members. They also conducted League business in preparation for the coming year.

Let the Sun Shine In: Activate an Open Meeting Observer Corps

Susie Kohout, LWV Door County, presented a new vision of the League Observer Corps. LWV Door County has reinvigorated its open meeting observer program, with seven regular observers and two substitutes (all League members) attending county board and city council meetings. Reported observations include whether there is advance notice and posting of the agenda, whether members are attentive/alert during meetings, and whether League issues are addressed. Information garnered through these observations helps the League remain visible and relevant in the community. For example, the League president uses reports when writing letters to the editor. Kohout said it is easier to make effective statements about issues if you have been following them through the committee process. Members of the audience shared that several Leagues follow specific meetings at which League issues are discussed; other Leagues follow government meetings on Wisconsin Eye or public cable access channels. Kohout distributed policies and procedures, a meeting report form and a list of resources, all of which are available from the state League office.

Election Observer Training

To help rebuild trust in how elections are run in Wisconsin, LWVWI is creating a statewide election observer corps. Carolyn Castore, LWV Milwaukee County, and Ellen Rosborough, LWV La Crosse Area, presented a pilot project to be rolled out

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this fall in a limited number of Wisconsin communities to recruit, train and mobilize observers who will help the League act on its position that elections should be transparent, secure, accurate, recountable and accessible. Observers will be witnesses and will not be charged with solving problems, assisting voters or intervening in the election. Rather, they will document what does and does not happen. Over time, the volunteer observers will help create a systematically collected pool of data that will prove or disprove anecdotal reports of fraud, thereby rebuilding the public's trust in elections.

League Business Meeting

Delegates adopted a budget for the 2010-2011 League year and elected new officers and directors (listed on page 7). They also adopted a new program for the coming year, including:

1. Create a committee to follow and advise state League board and staff on judicial issues, including but not limited to recusal, the lawsuits challenging the Impartial Justice law and a possible future state study.
2. Maintain the health care and climate change listservs, improving them by clarifying their purpose and offering clear instructions on how to use them. Form an interleague communication and action committee to explore various web-based platforms, use of conference calls and other methods to identify the best way to facilitate interleague information sharing and potential concerted action.
3. Seek the advice of the Legislative Committee in identifying state positions that are priorities and those that need updating. Match these needs with offers from local Leagues to study and update the positions for the purpose of seeking concurrence at a future Annual Meeting. ❖



Rep. John Lewis addresses the LWVUS Convention.

Report on LWVUS Convention

Wisconsin sent thirteen Leaguers to the LWVUS Convention in Atlanta June 11-15. In congratulating the League on our 90th Anniversary, Rep. John Lewis lauded our history of making positive change through participation in government and told Leaguers to “continue to get in the way, continue to get in trouble, good trouble!” The League’s new national president, Elisabeth MacNamara from Georgia, promised to do just that as she ushered in the LWVUS program agenda for the next two years. Delegates voted to support the following:

1. A national study on the role of the federal government in public education.
2. A national study on the effects of privatization, the policy agenda to transfer government functions, services and assets to the private sector.
3. An amended and updated LWVUS arms control position.
4. Marriage equality.
5. The National Popular Vote compact as one acceptable way to achieve the goal of direct popular election of the president until abolition of the Electoral College can be accomplished.
6. Lifting of travel restrictions for Americans going to Cuba.
7. Safe drilling and mining for energy resources.
8. A resolution to call upon the U.S. Senate to change its rules to limit use of the filibuster.
9. Addition of “transparency” to the list of election principles supported by the LWV. The list will now include: security, accuracy, recountability, accessibility and transparency.
10. Advocacy for bills that legislate for improved Medicare for all.
11. A resolution from LWV Dane County to highlight the need to hold parties responsible for the oil spill disaster in the Gulf of Mexico accountable and for the government to take all necessary steps to respond to the crisis. ❖



LWV Executive Director Andrea Kaminski attended the national convention in Atlanta.

Parade of Leagues • Parade of Leagues • Parade of Leagues

This past year local Leagues contributed to the success of two national campaigns, the 2010 Census and League's 90th Anniversary. Local Leagues devoted nearly 1,000 volunteer hours to encourage participation in the 2010 Census, helping Wisconsin achieve the highest mail-back rate in the country. Local Leagues celebrated League's 90th Anniversary in a variety of creative ways, raising funds and our profile in the process. A synopsis of other local League activities follows; view the full listing online at www.lwvwi.org.

Appleton: helped achieve a 2010 Census response rate that put Appleton fourth in the nation and first in the state; hosted forum on Advancing Voting Rights; conducted a local energy study, summarized all local League positions for concise information sharing.

Ashland/Bayfield Counties: held forum on Clean Energy Jobs Act; continued work on sustainability, recycling and mining issues; cohosted two women from South America on a cultural exchange; worked with local tribal governments; studied the politics of food.

Beloit: celebrated 63 years as a local League with 30 events focused on local and national issues; developed a membership recruitment brochure; monitored local and county government meetings; made action contacts on a variety of issues.

Dane County: presented eight issue forums on topics including county government, alternatives to incarceration, health care and elected vs. appointed Supreme Court justices; provided moderators for cable TV interviews of local candidates; raised over \$5,000 through a challenge grant.

Door County: hosted three candidate and six issue forums; focused on coalition-building and outreach activities; monitored meetings of 12 governmental bodies with active Observer Corps.

Greater Green Bay: discussed passenger rail service at kick-off dinner; hosted health care reform events; cosponsored events addressing regional transit and equal pay for women; distributed a statewide survey on immigration.

Janesville: conducted a "lunch and learn" series on health care, local poverty and climate change; conducted televised candidate forums and interviews. In 2010-11, will review Juvenile Justice position, study the redistricting process and participate in LWVUS study on the role of federal government in education.

La Crosse: sponsored monthly "lunch and learns" and special programs on environmental, political, transportation and health care topics; hosted a breakfast with area legislators; helped advocate for a free mobile dental clinic; contributed to programming about women's history and outstanding local women; moderated five candidate forums.

Manitowoc County: cosponsored the Great Decisions series; hosted forums for local candidates; held several community events including panels on financing public education and changes in health care access and services for the elderly and disabled; hosted a presentation by League members who had attended the 2009 UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen.

Milwaukee County: helped new citizens register to vote; cohosted an event on the "Role of the Private Sector and Civil Society Working with the United Nations"; hosted a general meeting on Milwaukee Public Schools and student achievement; presented joint meeting with LWV Ozaukee County on 2009 UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen.

Ozaukee County: worked with Manitowoc and Milwaukee County Leagues to present information on the 2009 UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen; attended naturalization ceremonies in Milwaukee and helped new citizens register to vote; held annual

Women's History Month Celebration that featured "lunch with Eleanor Roosevelt."

Ripon Area: cosponsored panels of local/county and state/national level government officials; concluded a study on sustainability; sponsored a table on local government for the Education Foundation of Ripon's Great Discussions dinner; distributed USB flash with local, state and national documents to all board members; held candidate forums; adopted a study on the availability and quality of local water; offered programs on the Census, climate change, health care and groundwater.

Stevens Point Area: organized "Green and Healthy Schools," "Schools for Peace" and a December membership social; participated in community listening sessions and observed school board meetings and forums on two school referendums; sponsored candidate forums and a forum about the County Courthouse Referendum; continued to advance ecomunicipality/sustainability issues by working with other community groups and individuals.

Whitewater: partnered with Downtown Whitewater, Inc. and the Chamber of Commerce in programs and workshops; offered reading about Elizabeth Cady Stanton in public schools; contributed to design of a League-themed cube in local Arts Alliance decoration; held garage sale fundraisers; televised League programs for rebroadcast on the local public access channel.

Winnebago County: published "Parks in Oshkosh Area 2009" report; began community project to fund and install historic signs in Oshkosh parks; adopted local study of health department consolidation within county.

Wisconsin Rapids Area: sponsored a health care forum in October; cosponsored and participated in "How to Run for Public Office" forum; received grant to purchase recycling containers and "Recycling Rangers" T-shirts; sponsored forum in support of the Clean Energy Jobs Bill. ❖

Executive Director's Message *Andrea Kaminski*



Fall election preparations are underway at the state office. Our intern, Victoria Boucher, has sent questionnaires to almost 400 candidates for 130 seats in Congress, the state legislature and statewide offices, and we will post the candidates' answers in August. We expect to cosponsor a number of candidate forums, and are updating our voter service information in anticipation of the many calls and requests we expect to receive.

Meanwhile, the state League has joined with other civic groups to intervene in support of the new Impartial Justice law, which has been challenged by two lawsuits. This law provides public financing for state Supreme Court elections. We need this legislation more than ever in light of the disastrous U.S. Supreme Court decision that allows unlimited corporate and union treasury money to be used to directly influence the outcome of federal—and by extension—state elections.

I am pleased to represent the League of Women Voters on the Joint Legislative Council's new Special Committee on Judicial Discipline and Recusal. This committee will explore critical issues, given that the state Supreme Court has finalized the

new judicial recusal rules written by two major business lobbying groups and approved on a 4-3 vote by the justices.

The state League is committed to organizing an open meeting observer corps for the Supreme Court and other government bodies. Not every state high court holds open meetings, yet in Wisconsin these have become lonely events, taped by Wisconsin Eye but attended by few others. I observed a Supreme Court administrative conference last month in which the Court considered a new procedure for accepting petitions from the public to amend the rules by which the justices operate. The proposed process has a timeline that would severely hamper public participation. It is very important to shine a light on such discussions. To educate concerned citizens we wrote an opinion column, which was published by newspapers in Madison and Green Bay and emailed to League members and friends.

Delegates at the Annual Meeting approved the formation of a statewide committee to advise the state board and staff on judicial issues. We are seeking volunteers for the observer corps and the judicial advisory committee. These will be ongoing efforts, but there are also short-term projects in which you can become involved. You can help the League educate and advocate, even if you only have time to respond to action alerts or let people know they can get information on key public policy issues from the League of Women Voters. I look forward to working with you in the coming year in support of clean government in Wisconsin! ❖



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The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin Education Fund, a nonpartisan organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influences public debate through education and advocacy.

SAVE THE DATES:

Membership Recruitment Initiative Training

October 1-2, 2010

Madison

Friday afternoon-Saturday morning
(for participating Leagues—see page 2)

LWVWI Issues Briefing

Saturday, October 2, 2010

Madison

Distinguished speakers on state League issues
and voter service training

Lake Michigan League of Women Voters Annual Meeting

October 8-9, 2010

Manitowoc

Contact: Art and Marge Palleon
palleon@sbcglobal.net
(262) 377-8575

Watch for details in the mail and/or email!

Interleague Meeting to Plan Activities on the Environment Set for August 5

LWVWI members will explore ways that local Leagues can cooperate to promote environmental sustainability at a meeting in Wisconsin Rapids on Thursday, August 5 at the McMillan Memorial Library, 490 E. Grand Avenue. The meeting continues an online discussion of the 40-member sustainability listserv about implementing the 2009-10 LWVWI program adopted by delegates to the 2009 Annual Meeting.

If you would like to help determine the direction this working group will take, consider attending the meeting which takes place from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. We hope to have at least one representative from each local League.

Please contact Margi Kindig at mkindig@charter.net if you are interested in attending. ❖



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