



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WISCONSIN

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587 Words

To the Editor:

Democracy faring well so far in state in 2007

As we enter a new legislative session, Gov. Jim Doyle and bipartisan leaders from the Senate and Assembly have already agreed on a plan for ethics reform. The new ethics bill has been introduced in a special session of the Legislature and hearings on it begin this week.

Like Senate Bill 1, which never had an Assembly vote last year, the proposal would combine the current state Elections and Ethics boards into a Government Accountability Board, which would also include an enforcement division.

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin looks forward to working with legislative leaders and our colleagues in other good-government organizations to bring about ethics reform, and to extend this drive of bipartisan reform to include true campaign finance reform.

We are pleased to hear legislative leaders talk about working together with their colleagues across the aisle. With the Democratic and Republican parties each holding one house by a relatively small majority, they will need to work together if they are to get anything done!

In her inaugural address, state Senate Majority Leader Judy Robson, an active member of the League of Women Voters of Beloit, said: "For better or worse, the manner in which we work, the manner in which we speak, and the manner in which we act inside the walls of this chamber places a public face to this process of trust. We may have different approaches, but we have shared interests: working for the best interest of a representative democracy."

Likewise, Assembly Speaker Mike Huebsch has vowed that members of that house "will work together to make Wisconsin the best place in the nation to live, work, raise a family and retire."

One thing the league is doing to strengthen our democracy is recruiting more poll workers. In particular, we are recruiting students and people of color. There is good reason to focus on these two groups to learn from and work alongside our experienced poll workers.

Under state law, students as young as 16 years old may be poll workers, even though they are not eligible to vote until age 18. Studies repeatedly have found that people who vote at 18 are more likely to make voting a lifetime habit. What better way to encourage young people to become engaged in the electoral process than to invite them to work at the polls on Election Day?

We are also focusing on minority population groups because they are traditionally underrepresented among voters and among poll workers. By recruiting a younger, more diverse election work force, we hope to encourage a more representative electorate by making polling places more reflective of the populace and a more welcoming place for voters.

People should contact the city clerk directly if they want to sign up to be poll workers. They can either call the office at 266-4601 or apply online on the city clerk's Web site, www.cityofmadison.com/clerk/. The Web site outlines the requirements to be a poll worker.

The state league office, 256-0827, can answer questions about our recruiting program for example, if a teacher doesn't want to be a poll worker, but wants info to promote this in her or his school. The year is off to a good start with bipartisan action on ethics reform, a commitment to the democratic process, and, we hope, more people involved as poll workers. We have every reason to believe that we can work together with our officials to tackle the problems that threaten our families, our economy and our environment. Let's get to work!

Sincerely,
Andrea Kaminski, Executive Director
League of Women Voters of Wisconsin

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