



The League of Women Voters of Washington County, AR

www.lwvarwc.org

September-October, 2010 VOL. 57, ISSUE 5

Calendar

SEPT. 13, Mon., 6:30 pm, Board Meeting, Joyce Hale's home 285 W. Cleburn.

SEPT. 14-20, Early Voting Fayetteville High School Phase 2 Millage Vote

SEPT. 21 – FHS Millage Vote Election

SEPT. 22, Wed., 6:30 pm, Redistricting. Washington Regional Education Center at Pat Walker Center for Seniors, 12 E. Appleby Rd., Fayetteville. **See article inside.**

OCT. 20, Wed., 6:30 pm, Rising Child Poverty in NW Arkansas. Washington Reg. Education Center at Pat Walker Center for Seniors, 12 E. Appleby Rd, Fayetteville.

From Joyce's Desk

Now that we are seeing our first period of relief from this scorching summer, I hope you will be energized to come out for the upcoming September League program. Recently when holding our orientation for new board members, we were made aware of the fact that non-members attending our programs did not always realize they were attending "League membership meetings" and not just events the League was presenting as a public educational service. Of course, the public is always welcome to attend all League programs, but it seems we have been missing the opportunity to invite non-members to actually **join** us. If you invite someone to attend a program and they find it of interest, please take the next step and ask them to join!

To begin our new year and celebrate the importance of the League of Women Voters' 90th Anniversary, I hope you will come to renew your membership, see a display of League materials, and enjoy refreshments before hearing our guest panel discuss redistricting.

In earlier *Voters* this year, I have enjoyed sharing information from the formative days of the Arkansas LWV and paid particular attention to the first president, Florence Brown Cotnam. In a book by Lorraine Gates Schuyler, *The Weight of Their Votes*, she shares an interesting Arkansas account which took place just five years after passage of the 19th Amendment.

"It would be easy to assume that women's engagement in electoral politics of the 1920's, like Southern women's suffrage activism, was mostly an urban phenomenon. Yet the men of Winslow, Arkansas were the first to be governed exclusively by women. Frustrated by the way that men had governed the town, a group of white women organized an all-female slate of candidates for the April, 1925 elections. In what has been described as "bemused condescension," the men of the town agreed to "let the women take a turn" and offered women no opposition on the ballot. As the election drew near, however, some men grew wary of this gender bending, and they organized a write-in campaign to challenge the women. Their efforts were unsuccessful, and the women's slate defeated the men by a margin of two to one."

September Member Program – Redistricting

(Go to the LWVWC website for excellent materials on this topic: www.lwvarwc.org)

Now that the 2010 Census is being completed, Arkansas will soon be drawing new legislative districts to represent the changes in population. Northwest Arkansas is expected to gain two new seats and with it will come a greater opportunity to influence state policy. A panel made up of Steve Clark, former Attorney General and participant in redistricting, and the two Secretary of State Candidates, Pat O'Brien (Democrat) and Mark Martin (Republican) will discuss redistricting in Arkansas with Dr. Janine Parry acting as moderator. The audience will have an opportunity to ask questions. The program will take place in the auditorium of the Pat Walker Education Center for Seniors at 7:00 pm.

The national League of Women Voters has been concerned about this issue for some time and the following is taken from one of their statements: Redistricting reform is an issue that goes to the heart of our democratic system of government. Representative democracy depends on the voters freely choosing their elected officials. When, instead, officials choose their voters, our system cannot work for long.

The problems with unfair and partisan gerrymandering are as old as the Republic. But today, with the advent of modern computers and intensifying partisanship, it is possible to create legislative districts where the results of an election will be known before any votes are cast or tabulated. This is just what is happening across the nation. And it threatens our democracy.

In some states, incumbents of both parties get together and protect themselves from real elections. In other states, one party or another draws the districts so they will have many more seats than they would be entitled to if fair lines were drawn. In either case, the people are locked out. Decisions are not made by the electorate, but by politicians manipulating the electorate.

The LWVUS has played a leading role in conferences and reports dealing with these complex issues. In addition, many Leagues have worked vigorously to secure representative redistricting plans in their states after each census and are seeking reforms to assure that the redistricting process is nonpartisan, equitable and open. The League plans to continue its focus on this important issue.

LWVAR Study on the Arkansas Lottery Seeks Interested Participants

The LWVAR Council meeting in April approved doing a state study on the Arkansas Lottery. Chairing this effort is Linda Okiror, Member-at-Large (MAL) from Pine Bluff. This is a topic that has interested a lot of people. It is having a major affect on Fayetteville and the University of Arkansas. If you would like to participate in this activity, please contact any LWVWC board member or Linda Okiror, lokiror@yahoo.com.

National League's June Convention Activity in Atlanta

As one might expect when bringing together 800 LWV members from around the country, the LWVUS Bi-annual Convention voiced many issues and concerns along with the celebration of our 90th Anniversary. The issue having the greatest amount of debate and impact was the convention's vote to support two national studies to be conducted simultaneously against the recommendation of the LWVUS Budget Committee. Supporters for each of the studies felt they were too critical in nature to wait for the next convention in two years. Since the cost of a study can run as high as \$35,000 per year, the result of this action has led to a significant increase in per member payment (PMP) dues for the next two years. The studies are as follows:

1. The Federal Role in Public Education - The study will focus on the role of the federal government in education policymaking, with possible consideration of funding, common standards and/or governance relationships among all levels of the government. The scope will be dependent on available resources, including committee and LWVUS staff time.
2. A Study on Privatization – This will analyze the government's policy agenda to transfer functions, services and assets to the private sector.

Additional items that were adopted by concurrence on the convention floor:

- An updated Arms Control Position.
- An addition to the LWVUS position on selection of the president: "We support the use of the National Popular Vote Compact as one acceptable way to achieve the goal of the direct popular vote for election of the president until the abolition of the Electoral College is accomplished.
- An addition to the LWVUS Equality of Opportunity position: "The League of Women Voters of the United States supports equal rights for all under state and federal law. The LWVUS supports legislation to equalize the legal rights, obligations, and benefits available to same-gender couples with those available to heterosexual couples. LWVUS supports legislation to permit same-gender couples to marry under civil law. The League believes that the civil status of marriage is already clearly distinguished from the religious institution of marriage and that religious rights will be preserved.

Convention also supported the following resolutions:

- To support lifting the travel restrictions for Americans going to Cuba.
- To call upon the Board to use the resources of the League to support and lobby for significant strengthening of appropriate regulation, oversight, inspection, and penalties associated with the development of fossil fuel resources. This strengthening should include elimination from national legislation of the exemptions for drilling and mining, as well as additional legislation requiring the federal agencies to regulate drilling and mining in a manner consistent with the preservation of a healthy environment. We also call on the Board to communicate with the President and the Congress putting them on notice that Leagues across the country are deeply concerned about this issue.

- To call upon the Senate to change its rules to limit the use of the filibuster.
- To add the principle of TRANSPARENCY to the SARA Resolution, as adopted by the LWVUS Convention of 2005. Revised to include the following Principles: Security; Accuracy; Recountability; Accessibility; and Transparency.
- To call upon the LWVUS Board to advocate strongly for bills that legislates for improved Medicare for all.
- To call upon the LWVUS to highlight the need for those responsible for the oil spill to be held accountable. Further, the LWVUS demands that our government hold those responsible for the environmental disaster accountable for the clean-up. The LWVUS further urges the legislative and executive branches of the federal government to immediately take all necessary steps to maximize to the extent practicable the ability and efforts of all relevant federal agencies and departments to take action, and to work with the U.S. coastal states and communities most directly and immediately affected, to respond creatively, efficiently and effectively to the environmental, health and economic crisis created by the oil flowing from the out of control BP oil well in the Gulf of Mexico and by the efforts to contain and disperse it.

Natural Gas Advocacy Efforts Continue

When Rep. Vic Snyder saw a screening of the documentary, *Gasland*, in Washington D.C, he thought it important enough to have the Clinton School of Public Policy include the film maker, Josh Fox, in the school's guest lecture series. This was a return trip to Arkansas for Fox, who had started collecting footage for his project in Booneville's gas well area. In order to expand the exposure of this film, LWVWC, Ozark Headwaters Group of Sierra Club, and the OMNI Center teamed up to bring the film to Clinton, Arkansas and Fayetteville. Private donors made it possible to advertise and rent quality venues. Fox attended each event and generously provided media interviews and Q&A periods at the end of each program. Individuals impacted by drilling problems also spoke. Over 700 people attended the three screenings that have helped energize individuals and organizations concerned about safety regulations for the natural gas industry.

Efforts are now underway to establish local controls on drilling through the Quorum Court of Van Buren County. Organizations interested in water quality are scheduling programs on the impact of natural gas.

LWVAR Provides Natural Gas Information to Legislators

A meeting of the Arkansas Legislature's Joint Performance Review Committee met June 29 in Rogers, AR to discuss water issues and the development of the Fayetteville Shale Play. A packet of materials was prepared by the League, which included article of natural gas development in other states and the DVD, *What You Need to Know About Natural Gas Production*.

New Members Join the LWVAR Board

Genie Donovan conducted the annual orientation for new board members and welcomed them into service for the 2010-2011 League year. Dot Neely will serve as Voter Editor and Environmental Chair, Sara Bartlett will serve on the Finance Committee, and Laura Kellams will be an Action Chair for Family Issues. All three women have been active in non-profits and community betterment activities. Their collective strengths will add significantly to the League's upcoming programs.

Barbara Farley Resigns to Relocate in Benton County

While LWVWC was pleased to have three new board members, we regret that Barbara Farley, 1st Vice President, has resigned and moved to Bentonville, where she and her family will be taking on new challenges. Before leaving she provided the leadership for the 2010-2011 year's program selection and scheduling. We hope our loss will be the LWV of Benton County's gain and provide future opportunities to see Barbara in a League setting.

LWVUS Introduces the Climate Change Toolkit

Since global climate change ranks No. 1 on the action list for LWVUS, a Climate Toolkit has been developed to help local Leagues learn more about this condition and what steps to take to save energy and reduce our carbon footprint. While the City of Fayetteville, several organizations, and the University of Arkansas have been focused on sustainability, the opportunity to combine League suggestions with the other activities will add an important educational component. Dot Neely, who has an extensive background in environmental projects and education, will act as coordinator to bring the best ideas to the League from all the varied sources. To learn more about the toolkit, go to

http://participate.lwv.org/c/9217/t/6398/p/salsa/web/common/public/content?content_item_KEY=3766

National League Launches New Membership Recruitment Initiative

The League is concerned about membership declines and the growing need for local leadership. To take this issue on boldly, LWVUS is directing funds from a major bequest to build leadership and member recruitment skills in local and state Leagues. Two national trainers will come to Arkansas for one-day training on Saturday, November 6, in Fayetteville. This information should also be helpful to other groups and in providing new techniques for strengthening organizations. If you would like to participate please contact Mary Alice Serafini, ma@maspeaks.com.



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME

Individual \$40 Household \$60 Student \$20

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____ City/Zip _____

Phone Number _____ E-Mail (Please print carefully) _____

Please mail your check to LWVWC, P. O. Box 4, Fayetteville, AR 72702

We don't have a tote bag or a coffee mug to offer, but we guarantee that you will be carrying on the work begun ninety years ago by brave and dedicated women. The issues have never been more complex or an educated public needed more than it is today. Join us and support the organization best known for its non-partisanship and careful examination of the issues.

Be Sure to Attend the September 22 Membership Meeting (Details Inside)

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OF WASHINGTON COUNTY
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