

La Crosse Wisconsin Voter

No. 99 League of Women Voters of the La Crosse Area Newsletter Nov./Dec. 2008



THE PRESIDENT'S PODIUM

Nancy Hill, President, LWV of the La Crosse Area

It's that exciting and interesting time during a presidential campaign when you can see that the general election, November 4, is almost here, but can't believe a two year marathon is coming to a close. League has been working hard to get people registered, ready to be poll workers, and willing to work at the elections. We have been encouraging people to educate themselves and hosting/moderating forums and debates. WHEW! By the time you get this, the election may be over, and perhaps the ballots will have been counted and counted correctly. AND THANK YOU for all you did to help democracy thrive.

At this point, many folks will have breathed a sigh of relief that the election is over for awhile. They might not want to hear another word about elections for a long time. This is exactly when we as Leaguers need to examine how the system functioned. We need to know that registration and voting was smoother than last time, and figure what to do to make it better next time. We need to be alert to efforts to change or challenge the registration system. We need to demand campaign finance reform, starting at, but not ending at the state Supreme Court level. We must be aware there will be redistricting efforts. Our work is not done.

I've learned that normally there is more than one thing happening at any given time. If my computer is feeling poorly, there's probably more than one cause and it will blind me to another underlying problem. That computer

becomes my metaphor for a lot of life's complexities. Somehow, current affairs are much the same way. Keep your eyes on the election, and the economy has problems. Watch the economy, and the war becomes worse. I'm not sure what mischief economic problems will cause, but we in League have been positing change based on the status quo. It is probable that tax revenues will fall and squeeze programs we believe in. We must be vigilant. Choices of what gets cut and what gets saved will be major issues. Much is likely to change...and even change between election and inauguration. We cannot be distracted from those policies and issues we value.

There will be positive change and the economy will recover. It would be great if League members and other thoughtful people would make sure that as we recover, we

redesign ourselves and our institutions in a positive way. We know we can do many things better than the status quo...from education, health care, fiscal policy, regulation of financial entities and our food supply.

The list is long. League can have an influence on positive change.

League IS multitasking. We CAN keep track of several things at once. Please plan to be actively monitoring the various levels of government as we move into a new era.

Health Care Policy

By Ellen Rosborough

Last June, in Portland, Oregon, the LWVUS membership decided to take on the Health Care issue again. This topic really never leaves our list of issues to focus on, but we



As part of a LWVLA voting campaign, signs were posted in area MTU buses.

are going to renew ourselves in the state of health care in America. The current LWVUS position:

“The League believes that quality, affordable health care should be available to all U.S. residents. Other U.S. health care policy goals should include the equitable distribution of services, efficient and economical delivery of care, advancement of medical research and technology, and a reasonable total national expenditure level for health care. Furthermore, the League believes that all Americans should have access to a basic level of care that includes the prevention of disease, health promotion and education, primary care (including prenatal and reproductive health), acute care, long-term care and mental health care.”

SO WHAT'S HAPPENING?

The National League is starting with the formation of a Health Care Task Force. The website describes the Task Force:

“The LWVUS Health Care Education Task Force (HCET) will be established to design a program for educating our members about health care. The term of the Task Force shall be determined by the Board, with an initial period of not less than three months for purposes of recommending the scope of the education project and thereafter, at the discretion of the Board, but not to exceed two years.” In her letter to the next President, Mary Wilson includes a section on Health Care. If you haven't read it in the *National Voter*, do so. It's a good letter.

For more information, check for a copy of the “Health Coverage Programs: Building Blocks for Coverage of the Uninsured” in the February 2008 issue of the *National Voter* or the pdf copy at <http://lwvlacrosse.org/Newsletter.html>.

So at this time, we do not have a program study direction from National, but we would like to begin our education at the local level anyway. Join us for a beginning look at the current state of health care in the La Crosse area. Doug Mormann, Director of La Crosse County Health Services will discuss the latest community-wide COMPASS Survey from the health perspective, and a representative from the La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium will discuss their recently published Health Scorecard, an online tool that brings together health data, trends, and rankings from around the region. The program will be held Monday, November 10, 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM, at the Health Science Center, Room 2012, 13th and Badger Sts, La Crosse. Free parking is available onsite.

Issue Discussions Dominate Busy LWV Election Season

By Catherine Kolkmeier

We all knew this was going to be a busy election season, with the first presidential race between two non-incumbents since Roosevelt. But this year, the forums League has been involved with and helped organize have largely been issue-oriented rather than geographic, as they have tended to be in past races. In October, we were asked to assist with forums focusing on poverty, the United Nations, and presidential platforms. The good news is that the candidate forum model has become quite popular, and so many forums were scheduled around the area throughout the campaign season, sponsored by many area organizations. The bad news is that the busy schedules of the candidates made it difficult for some of these forums to actually come to fruition, but suffice it to say, there has been a great deal of discussion on the topics that matter this election season, and that is what's important.

This year, we have partnered with a number of groups to help keep the discussions going. With the Vernon County Business and Professional Women, we co-sponsored a forum for the 32nd Senate and 96th Assembly races in Viroqua focusing on community and statewide issues. With the La Crosse County Poverty Task Force, we co-moderated a forum for the 94th, 95th, and 96th Assembly and 32nd Senate races along with the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families to discuss poverty and economic opportunity.

On Election Day itself, we are partnering with AAUW to provide volunteers at the polling places to help distribute “I Voted Today” stickers that were so popular in the last presidential election. And this time, we are attempting to get them

distributed throughout La Crosse County, not just in La Crosse and Onalaska. But only the early voters will get one--our goal is to bring people to the polls, so we hope to run out before it's all over so those stickers can go out and do their job of recruiting those who haven't voted yet that day.

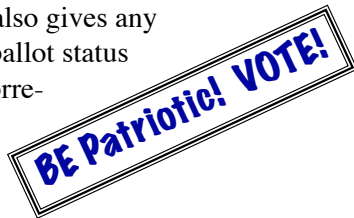
You may also have seen our logo on the streets this fall. In cooperation with *La Crosse Magazine*, we were able to place posters inside all MTU buses and on the outsides of three buses encouraging people to make an informed vote and to seek out election information at the National League's website www.vote411.org. We also appeared inside the front cover of *La Crosse Magazine* in October.

With all these efforts, word is we are to expect a nearly 90% turnout at the polls this year. Let's hope it's the start of a trend.

VOTER PUBLIC ACCESS WEBSITE

<http://vpa.wi.gov/>

If you want to confirm where you vote, check the Voter Public Access website. By typing in your name and birth date, you can easily pull up information on when the polls are open, the polling place address, your voting record (the elections where you cast a ballot), and a sample ballot for the November 4 Presidential and general election. The VPA website also gives any information on provisional ballot status and current office holders corresponding to the district.



LWV DUES

In early June, each year, we ask you to renew your membership to the La Crosse Area League of Women Voters and to our pleasure most of you renew soon after the request goes out. What many of you may not know is that almost 100% of the \$50.00 fee goes to the national league and does not help the local league. We have not increased our dues as the national dues have gone up and at this point we will continue (is this what we decided) with the same dues request but we ask you consider whether or not you could provide an additional gift to help the local league accomplish our work along with the work of the national league. Please consider adding \$10, \$20, \$30 or perhaps your age in dollars, to the base dues required each year.

If you have an envelope attached to your newsletter, League doesn't have a record of you paying your 2008-09 dues. If you have any questions, please e-mail Jean Marck or call Dee Peacock (788-5160).

Thank you for renewing your membership, for encouraging others to join, and any additional contribution!

LWV Guest Column

Domestic Violence – Break the Silence

By Grace E. Jones, Executive Director, Couleecap, Inc.

Anyone can become a victim of domestic violence. Abuse occurs in all racial, ethnic, economic, religious and age groups across the lifespan. Victims are primarily female, although men can also be harmed. Abusers can include spouses, partners, adult children or other family members and some caregivers. Abusers use power and control to manipulate their victims.

Domestic abuse is a pattern of coercive tactics that are used to gain and maintain power and control in an ongoing, familiar relationship. Generally, several forms of abuse, such as psychological, emotional, physical, sexual and/or economic, are used in combination. Abusers believe they are entitled to control how their victims think, feel and behave. This control extends to the entire household, and children in the home are harmed by the behavior and parenting tactics of the abuser. Physical and sexual violence may be a component of the abuse but some victims are controlled through intimidation, threats, emotional and psychological abuse and isolation – no physical abuse is necessary. In an abusive relationship, one party fears the other and attempts to comply with the other's wishes to avoid harm. The abuser may even hurt or threaten family pets.

In the state:

- Wisconsin prosecutors reported 25,531 domestic abuse incidents referred to their offices by law enforcement during 2006.
- The typical victim was an 18-29 year old female battered by a spouse or ex-spouse.

- There were forty domestic homicides reported in 19 Wisconsin counties during 2006. Victims of these homicides were most often females killed in their residence by a family member who used a firearm or a knife.
- One-fourth of all domestic homicide victims were children, the majority of whom were killed by a parent or someone their parent was dating.

Local Facts: 2006 Law Enforcement Response and Comparison by County

County	Population	# Incidents	Arrest Rate
Crawford	17,060	29	NA (*22 arrests)
La Crosse	109,404	435	85.7%
Monroe	43,028	289	83.7%
Vernon	29,188	81	NA (*41 arrests)

*Arrest “rates” are not meaningful in counties with low number of incidents and/or arrests. For that reason, arrests are presented as totals, not rates.

Why Does Abuse Occur?

Abuse happens when an individual chooses manipulative, threatening or physically violent behavior to gain power and control over another individual. Even though abusers can be angry at times it is never okay to abuse. Anger is a normal and healthy emotion and does not cause abuse. Abusive tactics may occur without any anger evident in the abuser.

While stress is a commonly used rationale for abuse, stress does not cause abuse. Everyone experiences stress. Most stressed people do not hurt others. Most abusers under stress do not hit their bosses or law enforcement officers because they would be arrested, fired and/or prosecuted. The behavior will not be tolerated. Abusers choose victims (such as family members) who have less power.

Some mental illnesses may have challenging or violent behaviors as one of their symptoms. Contact a mental health expert or doctor to find out more information about specific mental illnesses and combinations of medications to learn if violent behavior is likely or possible. Keep in mind that some abusers have used mental illness as an excuse to continue with their abusive behavior, just ahead of alcohol and drug use.

Many people use drugs and/or alcohol and are never abusive. Drugs and alcohol do not cause abuse or violence; however the violence may intensify when using drugs or alcohol. Sometimes abusers will use drugs and alcohol as an excuse for their behavior. Abusers who are addicted to drugs and/or alcohol have two separate problems – abusive behavior and substance abuse. Drug and alcohol treatment programs are designed to help an individual stay sober, not to eliminate the abusive behavior.

Why do victims stay with an abuser or return after they have left?

There are numerous reasons why victims maintain contact with abusers or feel they cannot leave an abusive relationship. Victims of abuse often love the people who hurt them. Keeping the family together may be very important to the victim for many reasons, including for the sake of the children, religious and cultural beliefs, and fear the family pet may be harmed. Victims often fear they may be seriously hurt or killed if they leave their abusers. Others do not have the financial resources and/or housing they need to leave. Medical conditions and disability may make living on their own difficult or impossible or the abusive individual may need the victims care.

What can someone do if they see or hear abuse/violence?

If you see someone being physically hurt or threatened with a weapon, call a law enforcement emergency line such as 911. If you suspect an adult you know is being abused try to talk to them. Tell them you are concerned for their safety and that you are there to help. Offer to accompany them to speak with an advocate at a domestic violence program or a social worker at an abuse agency. Be part of their “safety plan”. A safety plan is created by the victim with the help of a professional. The intent is to plan for a victim’s safety needs before another violent episode erupts. Again, if you believe someone is in immediate danger call 911.

The Coulee Cap website is: www.couleecap.org.

LWV HOLIDAY GET TOGETHER

On Sunday, December 7, Gretchen Benjamin is hosting a holiday gathering at her home from 4 - 7 p.m.

5605 Meir Court, La Crosse

Join us!

Watch for more details on upcoming LWV programs for 2008-2009

November

EDUCATIONAL FORUM ON HEALTH CARE REFORM

December

SOCIAL EVENT

January

FORUM ON CURRENT ISSUES IN EDUCATION

February

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION STATE STUDY - FORUM AND DISCUSSION

March

PROGRAM ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST, MARCH 28

April

CURRENT IMMIGRATION ISSUES

May

MENTAL HEALTH: UPDATE ON ISSUES, PLAN FOR JUNE
DENTAL HEALTH EVENT

June

ANNUAL MEETING
DENTAL HEALTH EVENT

*Comments about LWV programs for this year?
Please contact Ellen Rosborough.*

Legislative information from the Library
of Congress:

THOMAS

<http://thomas.loc.gov>

LEAGUE CONTACT INFORMATION

League of Women Voters of the La Crosse Area:
<http://www.lwvlacrosse.org/>

La Crosse Area League Phone: 791-1191

League of Women Voters of Wisconsin:
<http://www.lwvwi.org/>

E-MAIL AND PHONE NUMBERS FOR STATE REPRESENTATIVES

Senate Website: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/sen-home.htm>

Senate District 32 Sen. Dan Kapanke
(608) 266-5490 or (800) 385-3385
e-mail: Sen.Kapanke@legis.wisconsin.gov

Assembly website: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/asmhome.htm>

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Send correspondence regarding *La Crosse Wisconsin Voter*
to the Editor, Anita Evans, at anitalarry@centurytel.net

Calendar for Nov. - Dec., 2008
League of Women Voters of the La Crosse Area

- Presidential and General Election* *VOTE!* *Tues., Nov. 4*
- CWV Board Meeting* *Wed., Nov. 19. from Noon - 1:00 p.m.*
- State of Health Care Forum* *Mon., Nov. 10 from 6 - 8 p.m.*
Rm 2012, Health Science Center, 13th & Badger Sts, La Crosse
- League Holiday Get Together* *Sun., Dec. 7 from 4 - 7 p.m.*
Home of Gretchen Benjamin, 5605 Meir Ct.
- CWV Board Meeting* *Wed., Dec. 17 . from Noon - 1:00 p.m.*

Note: Contact LWV Board President or refer to the agenda for Board meeting locations. Board meetings dates and time are subject to change. For more program information, check the LWV calendar: <http://lwvlacrosse.org/calendar.html>.



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