

La Crosse Wisconsin Voter

No. 88 League of Women Voters of the La Crosse Area Newsletter Sept./Oct. 2006



THE PRESIDENT'S PODIUM

This issue of our newsletter comes to you after a two month summer break, but there has been no vacation from all the exciting League activities. What a busy summer we have had!

In May Gretchen Benjamin and I attended the State League Council in Cedarberg WI. We enjoyed a relaxing stay in this beautiful historic town while gathering lots of good information to use locally. Ellen Rosborough was also in attendance in her State capacity. She was elected as Treasure of State League and received kudos for her work on the State League web site. Thanks for all your important contributions Ellen!

June brought the National League Convention held in Minneapolis this year. We were well represented by Nancy Hill and Betty Kruck. Nancy took on the task of being our voting delegate, while Betty busied herself learning as much as possible. Both brought back myriads of information to share at our first new Board meeting, which took place in Nancy Hill's back yard in June. We had a wonderful potluck picnic while planning this year's activities.

Catherine Kolkmeier has had an extremely busy summer working with the State League on the Energy Task Force. She has been conducting interviews with local energy companies to submit to State for their study. Watch for our consensus meeting in early spring. Catherine also represented League as moderator for the Women's Health Forum held in La Crosse on August 23rd.

Since this is an election year and we had no Voters Service Chair, we took an exciting and different approach to this challenge. We now have a Voters Service team who have met, organized and are ready to handle any and all debates and forums this fall! Thanks to Peg Perry, Nancy Hill, Ellen Franz, Maureen Kinney, Ellen Rosborough, Catherine Kolkmeier, Gretchen Benjamin and myself for this great team effort!

Betty Kruck has put in countless hours making arrange-

ments for upcoming programs. Especially exciting is the September forum on the Marriage Amendment. Thank you Betty for all you do!

So as summer comes to an end, we have a busy fall approaching. I hope to see all of you at soon at an upcoming event!

Roxanne Reynolds
President, League of Women Voters of the La Crosse Area

Marriage Constitutional Amendment Topic of LWW September Program

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2006
7:00-8:00 P.M.
LA CROSSE PUBLIC LIBRARY

In November, voters of Wisconsin will be called upon to vote on the following constitutional amendment:

Only a marriage between one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in this state. A legal status identical or substantially similar to that of marriage for unmarried individuals shall not be valid or recognized in this state."

Our September program will address some of the effects of passing this amendment. Consideration of legal, economic, emotional and religious issues will be considered for gay and lesbian individuals as well as for seniors, singles and families.

Greg Bonney, La Crosse attorney and Bud Hammes, the medical ethicist from Gundersen Lutheran have agreed to speak to these issues. A third speaker will be announced later.

The League strongly opposes this amendment based upon our anti-discrimination policy and concern for equal rights for all citizens and all families.

Please encourage those you know to attend this program.

Voters' Guides from LWVWI

Please check out the Voters' Guides published on the LWVWI website at www.lwvwi.org. They were compiled in two parts this year. One part was a collaborative effort focusing on ethics, co-sponsored with Common Cause and Wisconsin Democracy Campaign. There are 6 questions on campaign finance reform, lobby reform and redistricting. The second is a questionnaire from LWVWI alone to candidates for US Senate and House of Representatives. Leagues are encouraged to contact any candidates in our area who have not responded and urge them to do so. The questionnaire form can be accessed on the State League website.



Death Penalty Program Slated for October

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2006
7:00-8:00 P.M.
LA CROSSE PUBLIC LIBRARY

An advisory referendum to legalize the Death Penalty will be on the November ballot. The October program will consider arguments pro and con on reinstating the death penalty in Wisconsin. Father McGarty will be speaking in opposition to this. A speaker in favor of the death penalty will be announced later. Everyone is welcome to attend the program.

Delegates at the LWVUS Convention in June voted to support the abolition of the death penalty as part of the program focus for the next two years.

Report from the National Convention

By Betty Kruck and Nancy Hill

Thank you for the opportunity to represent the League. We came away with new perspectives on what League is and what needs to be done. The issues before the League are daunting. There are many problems with maintaining democracy itself. It's difficult to decide to be optimistic or overwhelmed by the number of problems League must deal with. Seeing so many people with such talent, however, is inspiring and encouraging. There were 1,000 people at convention, over 700 of those voting delegates.

Throughout the four-day convention, there were numerous workshops, caucuses, business meetings, and speakers scheduled from early morning until 10:00 at night. The budget was driving what could be accomplished. A \$2.35 PMP increase to \$26.80 was adopted after a long, tiresome debate. Much effort was made to show the need for the change. The National office has pared down, and the computer age/email/internet have helped. Money is to be spent to keep the office up-to-date on equipment, and this made sense. We felt the increase in PMP was really modest and justified.

The slate of officers presented by the nominating committee was elected. Mary Wilson, an attorney from Albuquerque, New Mexico, was elected the 17th president of LWVUS. Only one of the proposed bylaw changes was adopted. It was a minor change recommended by the National Board.

The major order of business was adoption of program items. There were many issues that received spirited debate in a short period of time. The items recommended for adoption by the National Board were a 3-year study of Immigration, a position supporting the Abolition of the Death Penalty, and the retention of existing positions in the areas of Government, International Relations, Natural Resources and Social Policy. These were adopted by the delegates. Many state and local Leagues petitioned and caucused to have other items accepted. The items considered were: Refine 2004 SARA [Secure, Accurate, Recountable, and Accessible] Resolution—Voter Verified Paper Trails, Apportionment, Balance of Powers, Civil Liberties, LWV Name Change, Arms Control and Disarmament, Amend the Election of the President Position, Citizen Right to Know, Health Care, Energy and Climate Change, Web Material and Community Access Television, International Relations- International Criminal Court and Military Policy and Defense Spending. Ultimately, there were three of these issues that were adopted: Voter Verifiable Paper Trail; Elevate the Restoration of our System of Checks and Balances and Separation of Powers to a top priority; and Support the Concept of Internet Neutrality.

Report from the National Convention, cont.

Some of the keynote speakers we heard were Thomas Mann of the Brookings Institute speaking on American Democracy in a Partisan Era. We also heard a panel of judges speaking on the process of selecting the judiciary and the importance of keeping the judicial branch independent and maintaining the balance of powers.

The most memorable workshops attended were Membership, U.N., and Balance of Powers. The membership session focused on ways to maintain and grow our membership. There is a twelve-month pilot project involving five Leagues to employ some strategies for encouraging new membership. There was an interesting session on the difficulties of the U.N. in dealing with the budget cap vis-à-vis the effort to reform the U.N. This stalemate could force the U.N. to cease some core operations such as lifesaving humanitarian work. For more information see www.dontshutdowntheun.org. Dr. Stone, a law professor at the University of Chicago, gave a historical perspective on Civil Liberties in times of war and expressed concern that the infringement of liberties since 9/11 are more serious than any time in history.

We came back with loads of material. There are two interesting draft papers prepared by the Rand Corporation for LWV: Strategies for a Secure World and The Middle East, a Brief Historical Sketch. There is a report of activities of the LWVUS on Civil Liberties during the last two years. A League booklet called Local Voices: Citizen Conversations on Civil Liberties and Secure Communities was published by the Voters Education Fund as part of the Civil Liberties project. This was distributed to all members of Congress, key officials in the Bush administration, governors, homeland security officials, the media, interested organizations and to all League presidents. This book will be housed at the La Crosse Public Library. Packets of materials are also available on Health Care, Fair Vote and Election Reform. These will be available at meetings or by contacting us.

The next LWVUS Convention will be in Portland in 2008.

LWV State Council May 20, 2006

By Gretchen Benjamin

LWV of the La Crosse Area President Roxanne Reynolds and Board member Gretchen Benjamin served as representatives to State Council for 2006. At the meeting,

Jane Silberstein, UW Extension Associate Professor for Ashland County, introduced the unique partnership in northern Wisconsin, called ABC, which stands for the Ashland, Bayfield, and Chequamegon Bay Area Eco-Municipality Movement. These communities work together for a sustainable future in regard to reducing:

- ◆ Dependency on fossil fuels, underground metals and minerals
- ◆ Dependency on chemicals and other manufactured substances that can accumulate in nature.
- ◆ Dependency on activities that harm life sustaining ecosystems
- ◆ And meeting the needs of present and future humans fairly and efficiently.

The cities of Ashland and Bayfield have passed an Eco-Municipality Designation Resolution with the above provisions. The Ashland Agricultural Experimental Station donated by the University of Wisconsin has been focusing on the bio-based operation and will help the communities move toward a sustainable future with this work. Bio-based operations include the commercial or industrial products that are composed in whole or in significant part of biological products or renewable domestic agricultural materials. These local communities have also brought federal government into the commitment by getting them to agree to purchase wherever possible bio-based products rather than fuel-based products. This is progressive movement that should spread to the entire state.

Other information from the State Council:

Congratulations La Crosse Area LWV! Besides the newly established Platteville LWV, we had the highest percent increase (15.7%) and highest actual number of new members (11) of the 21 state leagues from 2005 to 2006. On a negative note, many of the other leagues lost members for the same time frame.

**LA CROSSE
AREA LEAGUE
HAS HIGHEST
PERCENTAGE
INCREASE IN
MEMBERS**

We were provided with the Legislation tracked for 2005 to 2006. This is an important summary that we will provide to league members at the next noon league meeting (September).

We received an update on the LWV State Energy Policy Study (limited to electricity) second year activities. The final version of value statements and related consensus question will be sent to local leagues in mid – September. A series of reviews will continue in January, February, March and April. In early June 2007, the LWV-WI convention will take action on the Consensus Report on the State Energy Policy Study.

League Members Honored

Many League members contribute to various areas of civic life. Some of those recently recognized are:

BARB FRANK is on the national board of the Sierra Club and also on the Executive Committee.

SHARON HAMPSON received the outstanding board of health member for the state of Wisconsin.

GRACE JONES executive director of Coulee CAP, received the 2006 President's Award from the state organization for helping expand community action agency services to all Wisconsin counties when she was president.

JANET KUSCH, executive director of the Options Clinic, was honored by the Wisconsin Community Action program for her work promoting healthy sexual practices and education.

LEAGUE INVITED TO MODERATE WOMEN'S HEALTH FORUM

The League was invited by Maggie Keneen of Family Planning Health Services to moderate the first in a state-wide series of Women's Health Public Policy Congressional Forums on August 23 at UW-La Crosse. Catherine Kolkmeier served as the moderator. This series of forums is an opportunity to generate community dialogue on issues facing the health care system and how these issues specifically impact women. It was sponsored by the Wisconsin Women's Network, Wisconsin Public Health Association, Wisconsin Women = Prosperity, Wisconsin Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association, Family Planning Health Services and AAUW.

Four panelists participated: US Representative Ron Kind; Lon Newman, Public Affairs Committee Chair, WI Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association; Sarah Peterson, Public Health Nurse, La Crosse County Health Department; and Mary Lu Gerke, RN, PhD, Vice President – Clinical Operations at Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center. Questions centered around controlling health care costs, especially for low income women and their families, access to care, disparity for minorities and the mentally ill, and emphasizing prevention in our health care system

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

Voter Services Gearing Up for Fall Elections

Election season is fast approaching, and with all the races going on this fall, League is preparing for a series of candidate forums to be held after the fall primaries. Candidate races to be covered at this writing include 3rd U.S. Congressional District (currently held by Rep. Ron Kind), 94th State Assembly District (currently held by Rep. Mike Huebsch), 96th State Assembly District (currently held by Rep. Lee Nerison), and La Crosse County Sheriff. Others may be added as the fall progresses. Check the local League website for dates and times of these forums as they are added to the calendar — www.lwvlacrosse.org.

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Assembly District 96 Rep. Lee Nerison
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County & State

La Crosse County web site (information on Board of Supervisors and Committees):
<http://www.co.la-crosse.wi.us/Default.htm>

State Legislative Hotline:
(800) 362-9472

Wisconsin State Legislature (including Wisconsin Blue Book): <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/>

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/>

League of Women Voters (National):
<http://www.lwv.org/>

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE LA CROSSE AREA

2006/07 BOARD MEMBERS

President

Roxanne Reynolds

Vice President

Open

Secretary

Sandy Sechrest

Treasurer

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Directors:

Gretchen Benjamin

Anita Evans

Nancy Hill

Maureen Kinney

Jane Klekamp

Catherine Kolkmeier

Betty Kruck

Jean Marck

Ellen Rosborough

CALENDAR FOR SEPT. - OCT., 2006
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE LA CROSSE AREA

VOTE: Partisan Primary

Tues., Sept. 12

CWV Board Meeting

Wed., Sept. 20 from Noon - 1:00 p.m.

*Program: Marriage Amendment
La Crosse Public Library*

Mon., Sept. 25 from 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.

*Program: Death Penalty Advisory Referendum
La Crosse Public Library*

Tues., Oct. 17 from 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.

CWV Board Meeting

Wed., Oct. 18 from Noon - 1:00 p.m.

*Issues Briefing
Best Western InnTowner, Madison*

Sat., Oct. 21 from 8:30 a.m. - 2:30 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.



League of Women Voters of the La Crosse Area
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