

La Crosse Wisconsin Voter

No. 98 League of Women Voters of the La Crosse Area Newsletter Sept./Oct. 2008



THE PRESIDENT'S PODIUM

Nancy Hill, President, LWV of the La Crosse Area

League of Women Voters National Convention Portland Oregon June, 2008

Tuesday, Aug 10, 2008

I've been reflecting on the National Convention I attended. I know that much of the content of the National meetings has been included in the news from National, and certainly there is more on the national website. This is my second National convention, and I appreciate being entrusted with representing La Crosse Area. We are a complex organization with initiatives at the local, state and national level. Most of what I intend to talk about here is national.

I'm now more or less accustomed to the format and formalities of the meetings. There are plenary sessions, caucuses and workshops and exhibits. Even wares to buy. It's exciting and fun, for the most part. The parliamentary procedures and rules of the meetings help give a voice to Leagues of all sizes from each of the states. There is a real

effort to make grass roots change possible even among the formality. I hope some of you try to go to at least one National Convention sometime. It makes me proud to be a member of such an organization. Naturally, arguments about procedural things get tedious, but are resolved fairly and as quickly as possible. The interesting thing is the layers of meetings. There are speakers who are informative and there are meetings where people can attend and learn from one another. The wide range of issues is one of the fun frustrations. One cannot be at all the meetings simultaneously. I showed up at 7AM in the morning and was back in the motel at about 11 PM, with my head full. Since I was going to be the sole representative from La Crosse, I chose to stay offsite from the meetings because I thought I could save some money for our group. I did. The second benefit was learning to use Portland's light rail system and becoming somewhat acquainted with a city known for its environmental progressiveness. I had lived across the river from Portland 52 years ago while in grade school, and would not have thought Portland could have evolved so nicely. Naturally, Portland also has its problems, not the least of which is number of seemingly homeless young people. I met folks en route who introduced me to how they lived in this town. One woman had sold her car and uses the cooperative system where she has a membership card that permits her to reserve and use a car when she wants – the card gives her entrée and there's a card to fill the tank.

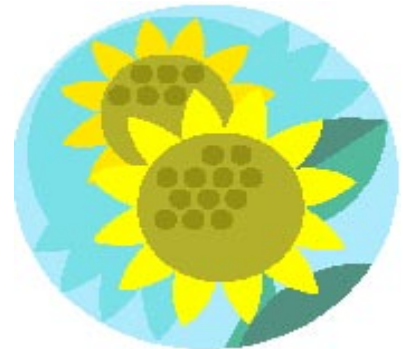
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League Kick-off Meeting on Sept. 10

Join us on Wednesday, September 10, 2008, at 5:30 – 7:30pm, at the La Crosse Public Library, Main branch Auditorium. We are having a Kick-off Meeting to start the year and would love to see as many of you as we can, plus guests! Our main topic of the evening will be a discussion on what you can do to help create our eco-municipality. Carolyn Mahlum-Jenkins and Glen Jenkins will explain numerous things for you to do personally, to improve your 'carbon footprint'.

We plan to discuss what our League can do and organize an Eco-Municipality or Sustainable Community Study group or team. We also will be spending a little time looking to the future – what things the League will be doing in the next year. Find out about the Voter Registration Drive, political forums, Poll Worker Initiative, Dental Health event next June and more.

If you know others who may be interested, or have thought about joining League, this is the meeting to come to.



Meeting with people from around the country is helpful in seeing what similarities and differences there are. The energy crunch, the election issues, health care and membership concerns are handled differently throughout the country. Some states are ahead of us or behind in trying to solve these and more, and the beauty is we can learn from interactions with the other leagues. I attended a lot of sessions on health care and the environment. I think these two issues were strong interests among the La Crosse League.

I was particularly interested in the state of Massachusetts and their efforts to make state insurance work for all. There are bugs in the new system, and plenty of goodwill to see that the system will eventually work well. I was so pleased to hear the present and previous governors of Oregon talking about their work. The previous governor is a woman who spoke about women as political leaders. The current governor is a physician who is trying to make some progress on health care.

There was a 3-person panel on climate change. I was very interested to hear Dr. Ramanathan who is a scientist from UC-San Diego who discovered global warming in 1980. One of his points that impressed me was his discussion of how food is cooked in India. He talked about what it had done to his grandmother's health. Cooking is done on charcoal braziers, and impacts the health of the cooks, endangering the people around the kitchen area and then further impacting global air quality. This session was just after I'd had a coffee with a woman whose uncle was involved in creating small inexpensive solar cooking systems. Hmm. Could we actually solve some of the air quality issue with current inexpensive technology? Or stop some armed conflicts, too? I believe the use of charcoal has impacted even gorilla habitat and efforts to have peace in the Congo. Now, this speaker didn't make that connection between India and Africa, but it's interesting that we of the more affluent and technical world could make a difference. It's not the usual effort of League, but individually, many of us look for good ways to invest our charitable giving.

I attended meetings on running a local league and on membership. I hope there is some payoff for our League. It's interesting hearing how small and large leagues function. One of the repeated ideas is have League members ask their friends to join. It works. Maintaining and growing membership is important and is the responsibility of the membership to help.

The protracted discussions of budget and PMP (per member payments) seemed much the same as two years ago. Most of the cost of running League is from grants and other donations. Less than half of the cost is paid for by our dues. We voted to increase the PMP by a modest amount for each of the next two years. At the La Crosse level, some Board members are mulling over raising dues some, or asking for donations, doing more fundraising doing monthly or quarterly deductions from checking accounts... Well, you get the drift. Some of the Leagues charge much more than we do already, but our Board has not the intention of doing any such thing. Ideas for solving these issues are always welcome. Budget tends to keep the number of program initiatives to a modest level. I still think we have more than enough good work to do. The two major programs are health and environment.

For Program for the coming biennium, we will retain all current LWVUS Positions in the areas of Representative Government, International Relations, Natural Resources and Social Policy; to amend the Principles by adding "The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that all powers of the U.S. government should be exercised within the constitutional framework of a balance among the three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial; "and to adopt a Health Care program to educate members and communities in order to be better prepared to do health care advocacy as needed."

Motions for consideration which passed are now added to the Program are 1) about making redistricting for elections meaningful 2) a multi-level educational and advocacy effort to fight global climate change and 3) national popular vote to replace the Electoral College. Other issues did not get passed, but there were interesting presentations. Perhaps one day we will have a Department of Peace.

I was hoping to hear something about the Immigration Consensus, but I guess I either missed it, or they figured we already knew everything about it. I found more on the LWVUS website that give more resources than I'll add here. Please read the background papers on the website.

The League Position states:

The League of Women Voters believes that immigration policies should promote reunification of immediate families; meet the economic, business and employment needs of the US; and be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises. Provision should also be made for qualified persons to enter the U.S. on student visas. All persons should receive fair treatment under the law.

One of the fun things about the Convention is the Parade of States where each tries to summarize the efforts they've made in two years. Beyond that fun event are the awards made for certain areas of accomplishment. Minnesota made great strides diversifying their membership. Fun to have that so close to home.

There is much more, but you've got the idea that maybe YOU should attend the next National Convention in Atlanta in two years.

Thank you again for the privilege of attending for you.

League of Women Voters State Meeting Madison, June, 2008

The interesting parts of this Madison meeting went beyond the meeting itself. It was a good time to spend time with Ellen Rosborough and Catherine Kolkmeier talking about League and other things. Also, the weather proved to be very interesting as we tried to get home through the tornado watches, rains and potentially flooded roads. We visited the new Madison headquarters – still in the same building. The new League offices are lovely and look efficient. We had a reception there on Friday night to “open” the new facilities. It was a great time to get to meet some of the other league presidents and active members. Some had things on their minds for action or for program. I received 2 DVD's on Wisconsin's funding of education for use on public access channels. They will be good for us to use. Please give me ideas of all the public access channels that are within our League Area. We should be sharing the great research with the general public.

The annual meeting went as efficiently as possible, but still seemed to have a lot of procedural “stuff” that Catherine felt would turn off younger voters, and I tend to agree. We did get through it. The possibility of streamlining, or of bringing younger members into the mindset of long procedures deserves more discussion.

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CANDIDATE FORUM TRAINING

Would you like to get involved in the fall election this year? How about next spring? A great way to get involved and learn more about the issues is to participate in a candidate forum.

We will be holding two training sessions (pick whichever works for your schedule--they are the same) to prepare you to host, moderate, keep time, and work with the media as part of a candidate forum for any local or state office. It's going to be a busy election season, and we're going to need your help, so everyone is welcome!

Join us to learn more about how to plan, organize, and conduct a League forum so you will be ready! Choose one of the following times:

SATURDAY, SEPT. 13, 9:30-10:30 AM
THURSDAY, SEPT. 18, 5:30-6:30 PM

Both sessions will be held in the Trustee's Room on the lower level of the La Crosse Public Library and hosted by Catherine Kolkmeier, Voter Services from our local League chapter.

Handouts and election information will be provided. Please RSVP in advance if you can to Catherine at (608)796-9090 or cathkolk@centurytel.net.

BE Patriotic! VOTE!

It was good to honor the second Meg McLain honoree. La Crosse's June Kjome was the FIRST. The interests of the two women are not the same, but hearing what good each did was inspiring. You will read of the new honoree in your Wisconsin Voter.

Wisconsin League has a deficit spending situation that seems to be not too worrisome, and Ellen tried to explain that there are grants to come in, etc. I never like negative numbers. There is belt tightening, also. Given all that gets accomplished from that state office, I don't know where there is fat to cut.

Judge Abrahamson talked to us at lunch. She used a Gresham novel to prove her points about outside money and influence in judicial races.

We reconvened for business meeting part two. We elected officers and dealt with approving the League positions. There were two training sessions and all three of us opted to be trained and certified as state voter registration officials, viable until Dec 21, 2008. We can have some voter registration fairs, attend fairs, and help out. None of what we do can be done very close to election day, so come up with your ideas soon where we should register people, and we could be useful. It's a likely scenario that one of us works with some other League folks to get the forms filled out. Catherine, Ellen Rosborough or I must sign that the form is filled out and signed by the applicant. We then mail in the applications. Ellen and many others have been working to streamline the voter process, while guaranteeing that voter lists created for all 1300+ municipalities are doing things the same.

The State meeting is a good opportunity to know what others in the state are working on or concerned about. Each League shares what we've been involved with over the previous year. We seem as busy and effective as any group. The variety of issues is impressive. I was particularly interested in what the Milwaukee League tried to do about predatory lending, and the Green Bay group did in their education study.

The State program has been getting the voting process to work. Later in the year, La Crosse League will have a meeting to show what has been accomplished. It's great having Ellen on the State Board, and also in another role with her so very involved in setting up a process to verify registered voter lists. She was in Madison working on this for over 18 months.

I'm always hoping you each will attend some state and national meetings. The amazing scope of League at the three levels is hard to overestimate. Our local efforts are important, too, of course.

Election Information

As information becomes available on election forums and candidates, it will be posted on the League's website. Check <http://www.lwvlacrosse.org/elections.html> for the latest information.

Making Democracy Work Summit

Register online at www.lwvwi.org or by mail for the 2008 Making Democracy Work Summit by September 22. The Summit will be held at the Ramada Inn Stevens Point on Friday, October 3, 6:30-8:30 p.m. and Saturday, October 4, 8:30 a.m.-3:15 p.m.

The National Voter

You can now get your issue of *The National Voter* as a digital copy. To subscribe, just register your e-mail address at www.lwv.org. You will not receive the paper copy, but your choice is reversible! Just notify national again well in advance your next issue. Electing to receive the electronic version saves the League money and is a "green" choice.

**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

March/April

LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST
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.*

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>

Assembly District 94 Rep. Michael Huebsch
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Member Contact Information

If your address, phone number or email changes, please let us know ASAP so you don't miss any communications from us.

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

Have You Paid Your Dues?

The League year starts on July 1. League dues of \$50 cover what the local League is required to send to the state and national organizations as an assessment for each member: what funding we have locally primarily comes from fundraising events.

Encourage friends to join who also are interesting in studying the issues and working to inform voters. The form is available for their convenience on the local League website: http://lwvlacrosse.org/join_form.html
Thank You.

Please send your dues and checks from new members to:
LWV of the La Crosse Area
P.O. Box 363

Calendar for Sept. - Oct., 2008
League of Women Voters of the La Crosse Area

LWV Board Meeting

Wed., Sept. 10 from Noon - 1:00 p.m.

*League Kick-off Meeting
La Crosse Public Library*

Wed., Sept. 10 from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Candidate Forum Training

See inside for details.

Sept. 13 and 18

*Forum on Campaign Finance Reform
La Crosse Public Library*

Sat., October 11 from 9:00 - 11:00 a.m.

LWV Board Meeting

Wed., Oct. 15 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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