



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

of the Ann Arbor Area **LWV-AAA**

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LWV is a nonpartisan political organization encouraging the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influencing public policy through education and advocacy

★ President's Corner

In November, the citizens of the United States voted in the 44th president for a 4 year term. It was a very exciting time for the League because the League at the state and local levels were organizing voter registration drives, organizing candidate debates, and speaking on ballot issues. The Ann Arbor Area league was involved in all three of these events.

Our national president, Mary Wilson, was at the Marriott in Ypsilanti for the vice-presidential debate. Our league was represented by Pauline Walters, Shirley Axon, Sue Smith, and Zoe Behnke. We enjoyed listening to Mary in regards to the different states that she had visited especially the states who had voting problems in the primary. Mary was scheduled to be in Detroit the next day to learn about Detroit and how they were going to respond to the huge turnout that was forecasted for the national election.

I would like to thank Jeanine DeLay and Gwen Reed for their thoughts, inspiration, and guidance in planning the candidate debates. Jeanine's organizational skills were superb. Gwen did a phenomenal job in advertising the debates. I would like to thank everyone who assisted in voter service activities for this election year. I have a column for each activity in the newsletter.

On December 9th, Shirley Axon has graciously volunteered to host the December potluck at her house. Please call her by December 5, 2008.

Tables and Tea at the Ann Arbor City Club was a success. Judy and I handed out copies of the state voter guides and answered questions regarding voting, registration, and the League. I would like to thank Judy for arranging this event and to setting the table with her tea set and strawberries. I would like to thank Shirley Axon for donating her tea pot for the event. Several people made comments about her tea pot.

Nancy Schewe will be chairing the National Popular Vote study. Please call her if you are interested in working on this timely issue. This is a study that will be completed and voted on by May, 2009.

Carolyn Madden is chairing the prison study. If you are interested, please call or e-mail her. This is another short study. It is an update to the Michigan State League position. This study should be done either by May, 2009.

On January 17th, Fran has made arrangements for a luncheon meeting at Paesano's on January 17, 2009 at noon. We will be looking at the state positions and program planning for the upcoming state convention to be held in May. This is an important meeting to hear your opinions on the state positions, should the positions be updated, and should our league recommend a new study(ies). Our league board has talked about a state study on re-districting. We hope you can make it. Please RSVP to me at bliz468@yahoo.com by January 13th, 2009.

On behalf of the League, I would like to thank Gwen Nystuen for publishing our newsletter for this month. The Ann Arbor League is looking for a league member to put together the next newsletter in February. If you are interested please call or e-mail Zoe or another board member.

★ **Zoe Behnke, President, LWV-AAA**

<bliz468@aol.com> or 734-663-1664.

Sticker Shock

So, it's the last Bulletin and it's time to talk dues. Our LWV-AAA membership year is the calendar year, January 1 to December 31. We must report our paid membership to the LWV-US by January 1; so I and the inserted flyer come to you now asking "Please Renew Your League membership." Fill out the form completely and return in the mail or bring it with you to the next meeting.

Member dues have increased (by \$5 each) to \$55 for an individual and \$80 for a household, two or more members at the same address. For each member the Ann Arbor League pays over \$47 in per member payments (PMP) to the LWV-MI and LWV-US. Add to that basis, fixed costs for meeting rooms at the City Club, insurance, bulk mail permit, postage, P. O. Box., the bulletin and the monthly telephone bill. The cost per member exceeds the dues each of us pays. We are sustained by contributions, our own Ed Fund, and our savings.

If you can, be generous. Local contributions may be made (in the same check) to our local league LWV-AAA. These contributions can be used for any league work and since that may include lobbying for a league supported issue, they are not tax-deductible. A SEPARATE check to LWV-EF goes separately to our league's account in Washington, DC, and can be used ONLY for education/voter service activities. Donations to the Education Fund are tax deductible. You make the choice....or do both. Scholarship memberships remain available for active members who cannot afford the amount or prefer to pay over the course of the year. Active student members pay \$20. Contact me for either.

Please act now. Fill out the form and find your checkbook. If you haven't paid since July 1, 2008, your dues are due. No matter what, we can't do without you. Invite others to join the League; we can do more with more.

Judy Mich, Treasurer, 668-6491
judithgmich@hotmail.com



A Fair and Impartial Michigan Supreme Court

“Judicial elections are becoming political prizefights where partisans and special interests seek to install judges who will answer to them instead of the law and the constitution.”

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, July 2007

On October 29th, five members of the Ann Arbor Area LWV attended a forum on removing the influence of money and politics from Michigan's Supreme Court elections. The forum, held at Schoolcraft College, was sponsored by the LWV of Michigan, along with local leagues from Oakland County, Ann Arbor, Dearborn, Detroit, Grosse Pointe, Northwest Wayne County, and Troy. Among the additional sponsors were the Washtenaw County Bar Association, the AAUW of Michigan and the Michigan Impartial Courts Coalition.

Representative Paul Condino, Chair of the Michigan House Judiciary Committee, served as moderator of a panel comprised of Judge Edward Thomas, Wayne County Circuit Court (retired); Brian Dickerson, a columnist for the Detroit Free Press; and Rich Robinson, executive director of the Michigan Campaign Finance Network. The three panelists discussed the problem of political interference in Michigan courts.

The main problem is that the cost of judicial campaigns is out of control—\$23.5 million has been spent on Michigan Supreme Court campaigns since 2000. In order to raise the huge amount of money necessary to run a campaign, candidates look to special interests for donations and the sources of these donations are often hidden from public view. Contributors often expect special treatment when cases involving their particular interests appear before the Court. Public trust and confidence in the courts is at risk as a large majority of Michigan voters believe that the courts are influenced by campaign contributions.

To remain fair and impartial, the Michigan Campaign Finance Network makes the following recommendations:

- **Full and timely disclosure of all contributions to judicial campaigns, including TV issue ads paid for by 527 organizations,**
- **Objective standards for justices to disqualify themselves from cases in which they have a campaign finance relationship**
- **Voluntary public financing for Michigan Supreme Court campaigns**



The Advisability of Using the National Popular Vote Compact among the States as a Method for Electing the President

Excerpted from the LWVUS Study on the National Popular Vote Compact Background Paper by Carol Mellor by Nancy Schewe

The League's History

A League study of the presidential electoral process culminated in its 1970 position supporting direct election of the President by popular vote as an essential element of representative government. The League also has supported national voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections to ensure equity for voters from all states and to facilitate the electoral process.

At the 2002 Convention, the League voted to expand and update its position. The League came to concurrence on a new position in June 2004. The new position takes into account the entire presidential selection process and supports a process that produces the best possible candidates, informed voters and optimum voter participation.

At the 2008 Convention, the delegates voted to adopt a new study, “The Advisability of Using the National Popular Vote Compact among the States as a Method for Electing the President.”

The League's Position

Statement of Position on Selection of the President, as Announced by the National Board, January 1970, Revised March 1982 and Updated June 2004:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the direct-popular-vote method for electing the President and Vice-President is essential to representative government. The League of Women Voters believes, therefore, that the Electoral College should be abolished. The League also supports uniform voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. The League supports changes in the presidential election system – from the candidate selection process to the general election. We support efforts to provide voters with sufficient information about candidates and their positions, public policy issues and the selection process itself. The League supports action to ensure that the media, political parties, candidates, and all levels of government achieve these goals and provide that information.

Explanation of the Position

The League strongly believes that the Electoral College should be abolished and not merely “reformed.” One “reform” which the League specifically rejects is the voting by electors based on proportional representation in lieu of the present “winner-takes-all” method. Such a system would apportion the electoral votes of a state based on the popular vote in that state. Instead of making the Electoral College more representative, such proportional voting would increase the chance that no candidate would receive a majority in the Electoral College, thereby sending the election of the President to the House of Representatives where each state, regardless of population, would receive only one vote. Election of the President by the House further removes the decision from the people and is contrary to the “one person, one vote” principle. The League also does not support reform of the Electoral College on a state-by-state basis because the League believes there should be uniformity across the nation in the systems used to elect the President.

The National Popular Vote Compact Proposal

The National Popular Vote Compact proposal offers a method of achieving the result of election of the President by popular vote without amending the Constitution to eliminate the Electoral College. Instead, this method uses the mechanism of the Electoral College to ensure that the candidate who receives the most popular votes is elected President of the United States.

Under the proposed legislation to enact the National Popular Vote Compact, all of the state's electoral votes would be awarded to the presidential candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The bill would take effect only when enacted, in identical form, by states possessing a majority of the electoral votes—that is, enough electoral votes to elect a President (270 of 538).

Current Status

Since passage of the National Popular Vote Compact is accomplished on a state-by-state basis, its status is fluid. As of September 1, 2008, the legislation necessary to activate the compact has been signed into law in four states: Maryland, New Jersey, Hawaii and Illinois, for a total of 50 of the 270 electoral votes required to activate the NPV Compact. NPV Compact bills have been introduced in 15 other states, where some have passed committee and others have passed one house.

Carol Mellor (NY) is a member of the LWVUS NPV Compact Study Committee.

LWVAAA Next Steps

National Popular Vote consensus meeting, March 10, 2009, 7:00 p.m. at the City Club, 1850 Washtenaw Ave.

Consensus question: Should the League of Women Voters support using the National Popular Vote Compact as a method for electing the U.S. President?

For more information, go to www.lwv.org and type National Popular Vote (NPV) in the search engine. There you will be able to find the entire text of the National Popular Vote Compact as well as other articles on the topic.

Voter Guides

7,700 Voter Guides were distributed in Washtenaw County. The Ann Arbor District Library received 3,000 voter guides. The rest were delivered to all district libraries in Washtenaw County. In addition, they were delivered the Ann Arbor City Club, Nicola's Bookstore, Zingermans, Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and Washtenaw County clerks. Voter Guides were delivered to assistant living centers including Glacier Hills, Sunrise North and South, Chelsea Retirement Center, Silver Maples, and Brookhaven. The two universities and WCC received voter guides. I would like to thank Shirley Axon, Trina Borenstein, Fran Lyman, Mona Walz, and Sue Smith.

Zoe Behnke

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Voter Registration

I would like to thank Barbara Peacock, Nancy Schewe, Joan Overmire, Meg Lynch, Suzie Buning, Katherine Uhle, Trina Borenstein, Diane Drayson, Dorothy Rehak, Liz Rogers, Marina Brown, Mona Walz, and Shirley Axon. If I forgot someone, I apologize. Voter Registration drives were held at the Department of Human Services (2x) and the Ann Arbor District Library (downtown) (September 19th and 20th). Voter registration is a very important League function.

Zoe Behnke

Speakers

Sue Smith, Zoe Behnke, and Mona Walz answered questions on the ballot issues at various organizations. Thank you.

Zoe Behnke

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2008-2009 Winter Calendar for LWV-AAA

- December 5 Deadline for reservation for potluck at Shirley Axon.
December 6 Diversity Network of Ann Arbor Area
11:30 - 1:30 p.m.
Charlie's Mediterranean (formerly "La Shishe" 2370 Carpenter Rd.
Program: Huda Karaman Rosen will talk about two Ann Arbor
organizations that she helped to establish: (1) Bustan al Funun:
Foundation for the Arab Arts, and (2) Zeitouna . All league
members are invited. Please RSVP to Zoe by Dec. 3rd.
- December 9 Potluck at Shirley Axon's Please come at 6PM with your potluck
dish to share to 2016 Seneca (You CAN park on the street). Let
Shirley know if you will come, so she can set enough table places.
shirleyaxon@comcast.net or 665-9349
- January 13th Board Meeting at Zingerman's
7:15 meeting starts
- January 14th Deadline for reservation at Paesano's Jan. 17th Program Planning
Luncheon. RSVP to Fran Lyman at 761-4113 or flyman@umich.edu.
- January 17th Program Planning Luncheon to discuss national and state
programs we'd like to emphasize in 2009
12:00 pm
Paesano's Restaurant 3411 Washtenaw Ave
- February 10th General Meeting at the Ann Arbor City Club
7:00-9:00 pm