



May-June 2009 Special Edition

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Office Hours:

MWF: 9:00 AM–12:00 PM

TR: 9:00 AM–12:30 PM

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Challenge Grant

May donations to LWVDC will be matched!

An anonymous donor will match all donations to the League of Women Voters of Dane County or League of Women Voters Education Fund made in the month of May, 2009, to a maximum of \$1500. This is an extraordinary opportunity to double the impact of your donation. Please mail a check today!

Annual Meeting Program Highlights

This year’s annual meeting, held May 6th at the Sheraton Hotel, was attended by about 40 members and guests. The fifty-year members in attendance were honored. They were Janice Baldwin, Fran Bicknell, Helen DeBardeleben, Mary Ann Halvorson, Hatheway Hasler, Libby Lewis, and Phyllis Reisdorf. Dorothy Wheeler was presented with the Carrie Chapman Catt Award for her activism with League and service on the Dane County Board.

The evening’s program was *LWVDC: Past, Present, and Future. Learn About the League and its Members*. A panel of three long-time members, Mary Bean, Fran Bicknell, and Sally Phelps, shared reminiscences about their work with the League. One story told how resourceful members carpooled to Unit meetings when wartime gas rationing was in effect. Each member would drive her car only to the next house, where it would be left, and the group would proceed in the next person’s car. Thus, no single member had to use too much of her precious ration of gasoline. With each new story, the group was reminded of how influential League has been on issues such as fair housing, marital property reform, environmental protection, and health care. League members also wrote a booklet about government in Dane County, as an aid to those who sought to understand its workings in the days before such information was readily available on the internet.

Mary Bean reminded us of a tradition that we plan to revive: the occasional inclusion of a *Bulletin* article “out of our past.” She read to us about a hair-raising carjacking of League officers returning from the 1938 national convention. The text appears on page 4 of this *Bulletin*.

For the *Present* and *Future* parts of the program, members at each table answered questions about how they became involved in League and how they thought it could be improved. The comments and suggestions are summarized in the article that follows.

Members Suggest Improvements for Dane County League

Gloria Meyer, Gloria.meyer@juno.com, 288-8160

Three themes for an improved League of Women Voters of Dane County emerged from the round-table discussions held at this year's annual meeting—more action, more mentoring of new members and more use of technology.

When asked, **“How would you suggest improving participation in League activities?”** answers from those attending generally fell into two categories—recruiting new members and engaging current ones. Recruitment suggestions included:

1. Targeting recent retirees (several responses)
2. Inviting people from single-issue organizations to a meeting
3. Interesting people in voters' service activities (unique to League)
4. Inviting friends and acquaintances to meetings that match their interests, especially local government issues
5. Attracting high school and college students

Answers for increasing participation among current members included:

1. Have mentors, a buddy system, invite new members to units, provide transportation, etc. (several responses)
2. Involve members in more action: something to fight for, local issues.
3. Give new members small jobs to do.
4. Identify skills for an activity and involve members who have those skills or want to learn them. Help members build skills.
5. Report more in the *Bulletin* about committee activities.

Members were also asked, **“How might League increase its influence in Dane County?”** Here are those responses:

1. More action—letters to the editor, including small newspapers.

2. Start a League blog.
3. More observers at government meetings.
4. Ask more officials to speak at League meetings.
5. Have meetings in government settings.

A common thread was an increased use of technology. Members suggested blogs, links to the website in the newsletter, and an upgrade of our website (underway).

Finally, members also suggested working with other groups, specifically Dane County United and Communities United.

If you were unable to attend the Annual Meeting and would like to submit your ideas for improving our League, contact Gloria Meyer at Gloria.meyer@juno.com.

Community Fundraising

Fred Wade, mtownlaw@execpc.com, 255-5111

The LWVDC is considering a new effort to raise funds from local businesses and professionals that would revive a fundraising approach that proved to be successful for a number of years. Teams of two or three League members would speak with local business owners and professionals, share what the League has done during the past year, and solicit contributions. In the past, teams generally contacted between one and three businesses or professionals a year, and ideally, followed up in subsequent years to build a continuing rapport with donors as well as an awareness of any funding cycles or criteria for making contributions that would help the team make future appeals more effective.

Such an initiative is important because the League has had budget shortfalls for a number of years, and the budget for 2009-2010 projects a large deficit as well. Those who have discussed the idea have concluded that personal visits are likely to be much more effective than a letter soliciting a contribution.

If you are willing to serve as a team leader or member, please contact Sara at the League office to volunteer. If you know business leaders or professionals that you would be willing to visit as part of an LWVDC team that would seek contributions, please let Sara know when you contact her.

2009–2010 Board

Officers:

Kathy Johnson	President
Earnestine Moss	President-Elect
Helen LeRoy	Secretary
Pat Levin	Treasurer

Directors:

Carol Dutton, Teague Harvey, Gloria Meyer, Brook Soltvedt, Priscilla Thain, Tom Vandervest, Fred Wade

Adopt-A-Highway

Brook Soltvedt, soltvedt@tds.net, 274-5184

Eight hardy League members enjoyed a gorgeous spring morning cleaning up “our” stretch of Highway 14, just west of Middleton. We gathered 13 bags of trash and 3 full bags of recyclables. And Mary Bean went home with a treasure trove of found objects! Join us in October when we clean up the summer’s trash.

In Memoriam

April saw the passing of another feminist icon from Madison. **Midge Miller** served in the Wisconsin Assembly from 1971–1985, founded the National Women’s Political Caucus, and served on the Democratic National Committee for nine years. She worked tirelessly for peace, social and economic justice, and open government. John Nichols’ tribute to Miller in *The Capitol Times* is well worth reading: www.madison.com/tct/news/stories/447491

Coordinator for Capitol Square Voter Registration Needed

We thank **Myrna McNatt** for her service as coordinator of voter registration at the Capitol Square Farmers’ Market. Myrna has stepped down, and we need a volunteer to replace her as coordinator. The coordinator recruits members to register voters at the Square from June through September. The table/chairs and materials are kept in the office. Please consider volunteering for this important job, which can be handled entirely from home. Please contact Priscilla Thain (233-5578) for information.

Bratfest

Fred Wade, mtownlaw@execpc.com, 255-5111

By the time you read this Bulletin, the Bratfest will be underway or behind us. Thanks to the many members who volunteered to cook, wrap, serve, and clean up at Bratfest, while earning money and providing visibility in the community for the League.

New LWVDC Website

Brook Soltvedt, soltvedt@tds.net, 274-5184

Our new website is nearly ready to launch. Over the summer, renewing members with email addresses on file with the League will be sent login and password information for access to the members-only area of the site. There you can update or expand the information you share with other members.

League of Women Voters of Dane County, Inc.
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Out of Our Past

This item was originally published in the *Wisconsin State Journal* and *Capitol Times* on April 30, 1938.

MEMBERS OF VOTER LEAGUE WAYLAID BY TWO ARMED BANDITS

Say Bandits "Used Good English, Seemed Nice Boys"

Springfield, Ill.—Four prominent Madison women and one from Wausau were kidnapped and robbed of between \$50 and \$70 by two young desperadoes near here...as they were driving home from the convention of the National League of Women Voters at St.Louis. [The women were Mrs. Ray A. Brown, State President, Mrs. F.A. Marshall, Executive Secretary of the State League, Mrs. Walter E. Cain, Mrs. Harold E. Marsh, all of Madison and Mrs. John Meiler of Wausau.]

At gunpoint one woman was forced to ride with a bandit in his car while the other bandit took the wheel of the League member's car. The two cars were then driven for about 30 miles over side roads until stopped in a country lane, whereupon the bandits robbed the women and drove off with both cars. About a mile down the road the women found their car abandoned. They then drove to Springfield, Ill., reported to the police, and viewed three suspects who had been taken into custody but were later released because the women could not identify them as the two young, unmasked bandits.

Said Mrs. Brown, "I think it's disgraceful that women, on a main highway at 4 o'clock in the afternoon cannot drive safely from St. Louis to Madison. I object strenuously to a condition which would permit such a thing."