



Bulletin

The League of Women Voters of Dane County, Inc.

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February, 2010

Executive Committee:

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

Editor – Brook Soltvedt

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President's Message

Kathy Johnson

Happy New Year, in more ways than one! We are starting another election cycle, with races for Dane County Board of Supervisors, a judicial race and many other races out in the county. *Candidates' Answers* for the primary will be published only on our Web site, with notice to the libraries on where they can download hard copies.

We have three more general meetings this spring, on health care, early voting/election issues, and juvenile justice, followed by our annual meeting in May. February and March bring the Great Decisions discussions. For more information, visit the Foreign Policy Association Web site, www.fpa.org. Each year I have found their eight topics to be very informative. With the governor's race in the fall, we will also be busy with voter registration throughout the year. We invite members to participate in these activities.

In these days of snow and cold it is easy to turn inward. But the early members of the LWV did not give up until women had the right. We salute them and wish the LWV a **happy 90th birthday** this month! Throughout 2010 we will be hosting special events and outreach in honor of this milestone. If you happen to have \$90 (more or less) sitting in your cookie jar, the League of Women Voters of Dane County could find a use for it. Watch for an opportunity to honor the League on its 90th birthday with a gift. And, remember to vote on Feb. 16 and April 6th!

Office Hours:

MWF: 9:00 AM–12:00 PM
TR: 9:00 AM–12:30 PM

Office Administrator:

Sara Markham

General Meeting
February 3, 2010, 7 PM

Healthcare Reform and Wisconsin

Karen Timberlake,
Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Health Services

Robert Kraig,
Executive Director, Wisconsin Citizen Action

The Capitol Lakes Grand Hall, 333 West Main St. in Downtown
Madison
(Free parking in the ramp across the street)

Recent Board Highlights

Approved minutes of Board meetings are available on the League Web site at www.lwvdanecounty.org/content/lwvdc-board.

Treasurer – Tom Vandervest, Treasurer-Elect, announced with regret that he will not be able to continue to serve on the Board. **Pat Levin**, having served as Treasurer for two two-year terms, will be retiring. **Helen Horn** spoke on behalf of the Financial Advisory and Investment Committees, proposing that Custer Financial Services manage our investments for a \$50 annual fee. The Board approved the plan.

Web Site / Bulletin – Because the primary edition of *Candidates' Answers* will be on the Web only, the process for preparing and proofreading is simplified, and the information will be public by January 25. **Brook Soltvedt** brought examples of the kind of information available to the Board about traffic on our Web site, which should increase as the public seeks voter information this spring. The national League's publication *eVoice* is also interested in doing an article on the Lively Issues Luncheon.

Fundraising – The Borders gift-wrapping effort raised \$378 (see related article). The community business fundraising letters that went out at the end of the year have garnered no response. **Fred Wade** shared a draft copy of a letter that will be sent to the membership, soliciting birthday contributions in honor of the League's 90th birthday.

Program – Carol Dutton reviewed logistics for the Lively Issues Luncheon. The April program on juvenile justice is still in development. We need to find a venue for the annual meeting in May.

Voters' Service – There will not be a Spanish edition of either the primary or spring election materials for lack of translators. **Priscilla Thain** noted a request for the League to moderate a forum in Stoughton on January 28th. **Earnestine Moss** agreed to moderate.

President Kathy Johnson reported that L&L Cleaners has been hired to clean the office suite monthly for \$45.

Your Nominating Committee Needs You!

Barbara Mortensen, 233-7563, morten@charter.net

Your Nominating Committee is in the process of identifying members to serve in positions on the Executive Committee, Board of Directors, and Nominating Committee, starting July 1, 2010. The Board meets monthly except for December and July. Meetings last two hours and are usually in the evening. Positions needed:

- **President-Elect**, one-year term leading to the position of President. Attends Board meetings and may preside over meetings in the absence of the President.
- **Treasurer**, two-year term. The current Treasurer, Pat Levin, is willing to continue with bookkeeping duties. The Treasurer will monitor her statements and financial reports. Attends Board meetings and serves on the Finance Committee.
- **Director**, two-year term. Attends Board meetings. Each Director has a portfolio. Directors are needed for the **membership, public relations, and fundraising** portfolios.
- **Nominating Committee**, one-year term. The committee consists of three members, plus the President and one other Board member. It meets (usually two or three times) in January, February, and early March to recruit members to serve in open positions for one- or two-year terms. Much of the work is done by phone or email.

For more information about the duties and time commitment for a position, you may contact the member currently holding the position. For contact information, see the first page of your membership directory or www.lwvdanecounty.org/content/lwvdc-board. You may also call current Nominating Committee members Barbara Mortensen, Jeannine Ramsey, or Lois Kiggins.

Lively Issues Luncheon

See photos of this event on our Web site at <http://www.lwvdanecounty.org/content/2010-january-issues-luncheon-and-forum>.

This year's forum was attended by about 60 members and their guests. **Thomas Basting**, past president of the Wisconsin Bar Association, and **Shirley Abrahamson**, chief justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, both spoke of their alarm over the current state of judicial elections in Wisconsin. The staggering amounts of money poured into judicial campaigns and thinly veiled issue-advocacy advertising lead to the widespread perception that judges are not independent (defined by Abrahamson as being fair, impartial, neutral, and nonpartisan). The speakers offered different solutions to the problem.

Basting began by noting that the federal constitution calls for judicial appointment, not election. He advocates a modified "Missouri Plan" such as Minnesota is considering. The governor would appoint judges from a pool recommended by a nonpartisan commission. Judges would be evaluated as qualified or not qualified to stand for retention election by the voters of the state. The evaluating group would have members appointed by the governor, the legislature, and the Supreme Court. The factual basis for their rating would be public. This method combines merit selection with voter approval.

Abrahamson pointed out that any selection method can be problematic. Judicial appointments are subject to intense (private) lobbying by interested parties. In a contested election, two imperfect candidates vie for the position; each has strengths and weaknesses. In a retention election, the incumbent runs against an impossible ideal. Judges up for retention election can be the target of last-minute big-money media campaigns designed to unseat them. Even if Wisconsin decides to change its method of judicial selection, amending the constitution is a long process. Abrahamson wants the system repaired in the meantime. Judicial recusal rules, still to be adopted, could help (or hurt) judicial independence, depending on their final form. Recent public financing legislation is one step toward cleaning up judicial elections, although it is being challenged in the courts.

Fundraiser Earns \$378

In December, LWVDC volunteers and friends gift wrapped purchases at Borders Books in return for contributions to the League. In addition to raising money, these volunteers also raised public awareness of the League. **Cheryl Furstace Daniels** coordinated events at the east-side Borders. Cheryl and her son, **Owen Daniels**, **Diane Martin Liebert**, **Clare McArdle**, and **Miriam Simmons** raised \$100. **Joann Elder** coordinated events at the west-side Borders. Joann and her husband, **Joseph Elder**, **Gail Bliss**, **Helen Horn**, **Sue Lloyd**, **Marie McCabe**, **Myrna McNatt**, **Rose Sime**, **Mary Teselle**, **Priscilla Thain**, **Mary-Ann Twist**, and a friend raised \$278.30. Many thanks to you all!

Donations Appreciated

The League is grateful for your contributions in support of our efforts and in tribute to our former members.

Member contributors since December, 2009

Q. Lisa Bu
Annrita Lardy

In memory and honor of Mary Louise Symon

Fran Bicknell

In response to our fundraising appeal to former members

Nancy Dott
Max Gaebler, in honor of Carolyn Gaebler
Charles and Dolores Meyerson

From the public (unsolicited)

Mary B. Ray

Welcome New Members!

The LWVDC extends a warm welcome to these new, nationally recruited members:

Gary Gill
Gerda Lerner
Ann Thurber

Contact information is in the online directory. Login at www.lwvdanecounty.org.

The Impact of *Race to the Top*

Tom Vandervest, 836-8577, vandy@chorus.net

The Middleton Action Network and the education work group of Dane County Grassroots Network are sponsoring a panel presentation on the impact of President Obama's *Race to the Top* initiative to encourage innovation in public education. Panelists are

- Rep. **Sondy Pope-Roberts**, Chair of the Assembly Education Committee
- Dr. **Don Johnson**, Superintendent of Middleton-Cross Plains School District
- Dr. **Scott Jones**, DPI staff involved in *Race to the Top*
- **Thomas Beebe**, Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools.

Thursday, January 28, 7–8:30 pm at the Middleton Firehouse, 7600 University Ave.

Great Decisions 2010

Gail Bliss, 231-3511, gail3511@gmail.com

Our eight-week discussion series based on the Foreign Policy Association's Great Decisions program (www.fpa.org) **meets from 9–11 AM on Thursdays in February and March at the Madison West Senior Center, 602 Sawyer Terrace.**

Calendar of Upcoming Events

- **February 3** – General Meeting (**Healthcare Reform and Wisconsin**)
- **February 9** – LWVDC Board Meeting
- **February 10** – Deadline for March *Bulletin* and study materials
- **March 3** – General Meeting (**Early voting/redistricting**)
- **March 9** – LWVDC Board Meeting
- **March 10** – Deadline for April *Bulletin* and study materials
- **April 7** – General Meeting (**Juvenile justice**)
- **April 13** – LWVDC Board Meeting
- **May 6** – LWVDC Annual Meeting
- **May 11** – LWVDC Board Meeting

February 2010 Unit Locations

League members meet monthly in one of five units to discuss the topic of that month's General Meeting, using study materials provided by the program planners. The discussion concludes with recommendations for further study or action. Units meet regularly at different times and locations. Find a convenient meeting and participate! Please let the host know that you plan to attend.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2010

Middleton, 7:15 PM

Middleton EMS Building

2020 Parmenter St.

Park behind the building, near the fire station.

Study Topic Leader: Myrna McNatt, 831-5759

Unit Leader: Diane de Vos, 836-0070,

djdevos@chorus.net

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2010

Tuesday Afternoon, 12:45 PM

Jean Freese, Oakwood West

6225 Mineral Point Rd., D76

Study Topic Leader: Fran Bicknell, 233-3390;

fbicknell@tds.net

Unit Leaders: Jean Freese, 230-3540;

giggi@chorus.net. Elizabeth Lewis, 230-3101;

bettyfaylewis@gmail.com

Tuesday Evening West, 7:30 PM

Brook Soltvedt, 1034 Waban Hill, 274-5184

Unit Leader: Cristel Gjerde, 833-7638;

crisgjerde@charter.net

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2010

Northeastside, 3:30 PM

Lakeview Public Library

2845 N. Sherman Ave.

Unit Leaders:

Dorothy Wheeler, 244-4711;

dorothywheeler@charter.net

Mary Bean, 222-5783; marybean@charter.net

Downtown Dinner, 5:30 PM

Capitol Lakes Retirement Center Restaurant, "The Seasons," 333 Main St.

Unit Leaders: Sally Phelps, 251-4834,

phelpssa@charter.net and Priscilla Thain, 233-5578, priscillathain@gmail.com

Please RSVP, as reservations are required!