



Bulletin

League of Women Voters® of Dane County, Inc.

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Brook Soltvedt
- Vice President** – Ingrid Rothe
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Presidents' Message

Kathy Fullin, fullin@execpc.com, 238-9465

Brook Soltvedt, soltvedtbrook@gmail.com, 274-5184

Corresponding with candidates to solicit their responses to our *Candidates' Answers* questionnaire is time-intensive and time-sensitive. Some of the reward comes in the gratitude expressed by candidates. One County Board candidate wrote:

“Thanks for the work the League of Women Voters does to make this a reality. With the embarrassingly low total of 4 contested races of 37, this is the primary way that the County-wide series of County Board candidacies will reach the voters.”

Others expressed their appreciation more succinctly:

“Thank you for all your help and work.”

“Thanks for always putting this together.”

“Thank you for your efforts to inform voters.”

“Thanks, as always, for all you do!”

“Thank you for reaching out to me - glad I had the opportunity to participate!”

“Thank you for doing a great job for the Dane County communities.”

This project involves hours of staff time to mail letters to all the candidates, and many more hours of volunteer time in developing the questions, contacting clerks and school districts to obtain contact information for all the candidates, emailing all the candidates, compiling their answers, proofing our on-line version, and then proofing our print version for *Isthmus*. Then other League volunteers pull our copies from the *Isthmus* and distribute those to libraries, clerks, and other locations.

(Continued on page 2.)

The Spring Election is coming soon on April 5th!

Watch for *Candidates' Answers* in the March 24th *Isthmus*.

Wednesday, March 2, 2016

Issues Forum, 7:00 – 8:30 pm

Redistricting: Why it Matters

David Canon, (Professor & Chair of Political Science, UW-Madison)

Andrea Kaminski, (Exec. Director, League of Women Voters® of WI)

The Capitol Lakes Grand Hall, 333 West Main St., Madison

(Free parking in the ramp across the street)

In addition, it costs at least \$3,000 to print the 55,000 copies distributed free to our community in the spring, and \$2,500 to print the fall version. *Candidates' Answers* provides excellent publicity for the League and we need your time and support to continue this major project. We have raised more than \$2,000 from community members toward this year's printing costs. If you have not responded yet to our Valentine mailing, please consider making a donation to ensure that we can continue to educate Dane County's voters about their electoral choices.

Money in Politics Consensus

Edith Sullivan, Program Chair

About 28 members participated in the Money in Politics consensus on Saturday January 16. **Brook Soltvedt** ably led this discussion and **Sybil Better** recorded the consensus. Thanks to both of them, the consensus went smoothly - the responses and additional comments were recorded, all voices were heard and we finished with time to spare.

Brook followed the LWV's *Handbook for Successful Consensus Meetings*, by declaring "no consensus" where there was substantial disagreement and where only a handful disagreed, she asked whether those individuals could "live with" what the much larger number thought.

Our responses are on our website. There were about 33 individual questions to answer and three sections for additional comments; we used two. When you read the responses online, you'll see that we did not reach consensus on many of the questions. Because of the wide range of responses, it is not practical to summarize them here. If you are unable to use the website and want a hard copy, there will be a few available at the March 2 Forum.

The consensus questions were divided into three parts. Part I addressed the goals and purposes of campaign finance regulation and evaluated various activities to determine whether or not those activities are types of political corruption. The questions in part II asked whether various types of donors should be limited in the amount of spending to influence an election. The press in its various forms fell into a separate question in Part II- Interestingly this set of questions (Part II-2) was the only sub-question in which we reached "no consensus" for each sub-sub question. The questions in Part III asked whether the League

should support various approaches to achieving the goals for campaign finance regulation.

For many of us, the consensus process was an opportunity to do something new. It would be very interesting to hear, formally or informally, what you thought of the entire process, whether or not you were able to participate in the actual consensus.

Outstanding Voter Service Award

At our Lively Issues Forum on January 16, the League of Women Voters of Dane County presented the League's Outstanding Voter Service Award to Michael Haas, Administrator of the Elections Division of the Government Accountability Board.

We presented this award to honor his exemplary service to the citizens of Wisconsin:

- In leading his division in its administration of Wisconsin's elections in a professional, non-partisan manner;
- By ensuring that the Elections Division staff provides timely, helpful, and accurate information to municipal and county clerks to assist them in conducting elections; and
- In maintaining exceptional service to the state's voters throughout an extremely challenging period of multiple special elections and heightened scrutiny of all policy decisions.

Looking for Forum Ideas!

What forums would you like us to consider for next year, Sept 2016-May 2017? How can we build on this year's topics? What important topics did we leave out? Please send your ideas for next year to Edith Sullivan (etsesq@aol.com) by April 2, 2016.

50 Year Members

At our annual meeting in May, we honor any members who have belonged to the League for 50 years. We do our best to keep our records up-to-date, but to be sure that we don't miss anyone, we ask that you contact the League office if this year marks your 50-year anniversary with the League or if you know of any members in our League who reached their 50-year anniversary this year.

Follow the Money

Katie Mulligan

Vice President **Ingrid Rothe** opened the Annual Lively Issues Forum by bringing the audience an unconventional view about a familiar topic. Everyone is lamenting the power of money in politics, she said, but we don't fully understand how it works.

Forum speaker Eleanor Neff Powell, Assistant Professor of Political Science, UW-Madison, offered an unusual take on how money affects legislative outcomes in Congress.

According to Powell, much academic research has focused on quid pro quo exchanges such as the buying of votes. Those activities (bribery in the most blatant form) are often illegal and not easily observable. Traditional research, therefore, has not been able to establish a strong connection between money and legislative outcomes.

Instead, Powell tried to trace the subtle ways money affects behavior by shaping the Congressional power structure. Who rises to legislative leadership? Who establishes legislative priorities? Who sits on the most powerful Congressional committees?

The ability to fundraise is key to determining a member's position within the power structure. The Democratic Party has established fundraising requirements. The House Speaker, for example, must raise \$26,300,000. Members of "power" committees must raise \$450,000, and the chairs of those committees must raise \$1,500,000.

Members use indirect methods of fundraising that reduce transparency and reinforce the existing power structure. A member might share a donor list, for example, leaving no public record of the impact of that help on fundraising. Powerful members host fundraising events for other members, creating a need for the return of those favors that could involve votes.

The existing power structure is reinforced because members with "safe seats" are free to devote their fundraising efforts to the benefit of other members, thus accumulating favors. Similarly, members who can rely on wealthy donors accumulate favors and rise in the power structure.

Audience members asked questions about possibilities for reform. Powell was skeptical that the current Supreme Court would permit any effective methods of public financing of elections. The Federal Election Commission, she pointed out, is underfunded and hamstrung because of its structure. New Speaker of the House Paul Ryan has said he will not spend as

much time fundraising as previous speakers. Other members have lamented about the time they spend fundraising. It is too soon to tell if their disgust with the system will help bring about change.

Voter ID Coalition Update

Ingrid Rothe, Vice President

The Dane County Voter ID Coalition, founded by the LWVDC and the Dane County NAACP in order to expand our ability to reach Dane County voters, has had a busy month. Over the Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend, beginning with the Friday night community dinner on January 15, the Coalition was represented by LWVDC members **Molly McGrath**, also of VoteRiders, and **Paul Malischke**. Coalition members also attended the Sunday breakfast at Edgewood and the Monday celebration at the Overture Center, and were able to connect with many celebrants. The events' MC's announced the presence of the Coalition so that attendees could talk about Voter ID and voter registration. Coalition members talked with more than 120 people, including 10 UW students without a valid Voter ID, and registered 10 voters.

On January 23, the Coalition held a successful "Check Out Voting" event at 13 Dane County libraries, including all 9 Madison libraries. The event was organized by **Jyl** and **Randy Molle** and Ginger McIntosh, who are also members of Team Gold, a neighborhood organizing group. While the final tallies are not yet complete, having crews of SRD's in all 13 libraries resulted in talking with at least 60 people about Voter ID, as well as registering more than 25 people. Oregon Progressives members helped staff Madison libraries after filling time slots at the Oregon library.

In March, 2016, the Coalition, with the invaluable assistance of Maribeth Witzel-Behl, Madison City Clerk, will organize a number of events to celebrate Voter ID Month. We expect that public officials will proclaim the celebration of the Month, and there will be ample opportunity for all League members to participate.

The Dane County Voter ID Coalition is a non-partisan organization, and all who work with it must agree to work in a non-partisan way, assisting all voters regardless of their political or candidate preferences. No partisan organizations may join the Coalition, but all individuals are welcome to join if they agree to conduct all their Coalition activities in a non-partisan way and they seek to promote the Coalition's mission to enable all eligible Dane County citizens to vote.

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While the League is an important component of the Coalition, our efforts to create and help sustain the Coalition mean that our volunteer energies can be used to reach even more people than we would have been able to, had we acted on our own. If you know of an organization or individuals who would like to work in tandem with others to help secure the right to vote for all eligible Dane County citizens, please ask them to contact **Ingrid Rothe** (Ingrid.Rothe@att.net), Co-Chair of the Coalition.

Government Accountability Board Replaced

Paul Malischke

In spite of fierce opposition from the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin, Common Cause, the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, and the editorial boards of fifteen Wisconsin newspapers, the legislature voted to replace the current Government Accountability Board (GAB) with two new partisan commissions.

There will be an Elections Commission and an Ethics Commission. The changeover will take place on June 30, 2016, a little over four months before the presidential election. The position of Director, currently held by Kevin Kennedy, is being eliminated. Current top administrators, Michael Haas and Jonathan Becker, will not automatically retain their spots. Other existing staff will be moved to the new commissions, although there are currently many open positions. The uncertainty during the bill debate phase prompted an exodus of staff unwilling to wait to see how their positions would be affected.

Each commission will have six members, four appointed by legislative leaders and two by the Governor. The process appears to be designed to provide for an equal number of partisans from each of the two major parties. Two members of the Elections Commission will be former county or municipal clerks. Two members of the Ethics Commission will be retired judges. Commission members may not hold state or local office, except reserve judges. Commissioners may be appointed to serve on the GAB as non-voting members from February 1, 2016 until the commissions begin operations.

All rules, formal opinions, and orders remain in effect, unless changed by the new commissions.

The new commissions do not have the authority to initiate investigations of alleged violations of campaign finance, elections, ethics and lobbying law. The commissions may only respond to a sworn complaint.

The process for responding to sworn complaints involves new protections for the alleged violators.

The commissions may spend up to \$25,000 on an investigation. A request made by a commission for supplemental investigation funding is subject to passive review by the Joint Finance Committee. The GAB did not have these restrictions.

On November 12, 2015, the editor of the Eau Claire *Leader-Telegram* wrote, “The last time we operated under such a system, the result was political parties paying their staffs with taxpayer dollars and legislators tying positive action on bills to campaign contributions — also known as pay to play.”

View the WI Legislative Council’s memo regarding these changes at: tinyurl.com/replaceGAB.

Fundraising Report

Sue Ann Larson

One of the first things I learned when becoming Fundraising Chair was the impact that strong member support has on the work of the LWVDC. The generosity of our members has helped carry our organization through very challenging times, even during the years when it was impossible to keep the budget in the black without borrowing from long-term savings.

Our annual budget gains some income from sharing office space with other organizations, from contributions included with member renewals, and through two major fundraisers, the Valentine Day LWVDC Birthday appeal, (now in progress), and the May Member Challenge. Beginning in the fall of 2014, we also began a fall non-member fund appeal and we welcome end-of-year member donations. The other significant resource that allows us to keep up with costs and expenses has been investment income from grants and bequests. Since 2011, annual distributions from the estate of UW-Madison Political Science Professor Frederick Ogg have added approximately \$2,000 - \$6,000 to our budget each year.

Included in the December League mailing was a “Funding Opportunities” brochure that outlines a variety of ways to support LWVDC during estate planning. The Valentine Day LWVDC Birthday appeal includes a form to place in one’s files to designate memorial gift distributions at the time of death. We invite you to consider how important memorial gifts and bequests designated for the LWVDC can be to ensure that the critical work of League continues on in future years!

Contributions

Between January 1 and January 31, the following people contributed to our League. Thank you to all of our generous donors.

Jesse Kehres
Anna Kraft
Ann Nelson
Ingrid Rothe

Alice Kissling
Clare McArdle
Frederic A. Ogg Trust
Marcella Worzala

In Memory of **Pam Rewey:**

Karen Gunderson Dale Schultz
Mark Theby

Candidates' Answers:

Janet Axelson Frank Nick, Jr.

Climb Aboard the Board!

Clare McArdle, Nominating Committee Chair

We need volunteers who will work to continue refining our best practices, principles and public policy positions. The Nominating Committee is looking for more of the good folks already helping out, as we have much to do in this election year. Several of our strong leaders have agreed to continue steering the ship, so this is an excellent time to climb aboard the Board.

We also need to fill vacancies in the Nominating Committee. Look at the website and get inspired about the special talents you can bring to the organization. Then call Clare McArdle at 255-3557 to sign on.

We have a richness of information about our organization in files at the office. We have a website that also tells what we are currently doing. We are most involved in Voter Rights and Responsibilities, as we should be. Our opinions are well-respected by the general public.

What we need is a passion for the nurturing of our members as a group of folks who want to Make Democracy Work. Our League Board keeps the organization on track and often in the forefront of offering opinions on issues such as Urban Policy, amending the Constitution, Redistricting and Environmental Protection, to name a few. Think about what you can contribute to the ongoing work of the League.

Thank You, Volunteers!

Our League would not be able to do all that it does without many hours from our volunteers. We'd like to thank the following January volunteers:

Cathy Berndt
Eileen Hanneman
Jesse Kehres
Ingrid Rothe

Mary Conroy
Rita Kades
Pat Kippert
Brook Soltvedt

New Members

The following members joined our League from January 1 through January 31. Welcome!

Alexandra Graff
James Knutson
Marianne McCarville
George Penn

Susan Gruber
Kathryn Leide
Molly McGrath

Election Observers Needed

Help the League monitor the elections in 2016!

State and local elections officials, as well as the media, consider the League's election observer reports a reliable source of information about what is working and what is not on Election Day.

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin is seeking volunteers to be Election Observers for the April 5th and November 8th elections. They will be monitoring whether new election laws are being uniformly applied statewide. In particular, observers will be watching for signs of voters being disenfranchised by election laws or election administration procedures.

LWVWI will provide online training and will try to assign volunteers to a polling place close to their home. You do not have to be a member of the League to participate. If you are interested, you can sign up on the LWVWI website at lwvwi.org/VotingElections.aspx.

Make a Difference

- Take some Voter ID brochures from our office or the Madison City Clerk to a meeting or place where they would be available to people who may need the information. Brochures are tailored for seniors, for Hmong or Spanish speakers, or for the general public.
- Post a poster with a picture of the acceptable ID's; glossy, color posters are available in our office and at the Madison City Clerk's office.

In Memoriam

Sadly, two of our long-term members passed away recently: **Pam Rewey** and **Beth Ross**. Obituaries can be found at: host.madison.com/news/local/obituaries.

Diane Martin Liebert shares memories of **Pam**:

We are very sorry to announce the death of **Pam Rewey** on January 19. Before moving to Madison, Pam was an active member of the League in Stevens Point, serving as President. Pam served as President of our Dane County League from 2007-2009 and then moved on to serve on several committees for the State League. In the past year, she was a member of the LWVWI Board, the LWVWI State Legislative Committee, the Meg McLane Advocacy Award Committee and Voter Service. She has been an active member of our LWVDC Northeastside Unit. Pam and her husband, Mike, raised five children. Pam will be missed by us all.

Sally Carpenter shares her memories of **Beth**:

The League of Women Voters has lost a dear friend who was a member for over 50 years. **Beth Ross** died Dec. 28, 2015 at the age of 88. Her favorite League activity was participating in naturalization ceremonies for the League, handing out information about voting and answering the questions of new citizens. Beth was a member of the Hill Farms Unit of LWVDC, which is where I met her. We subsequently became good friends and tennis partners for over 25 years.

Beth was a multi-talented woman. She taught piano until she was 80, was a life-long student of nature, and was a wonderful photographer. She made beautiful note cards with her photos. Beth was very proud of the book she co-authored with her husband, John, about the Aldo Leopold Reserve.

Beth is survived by John, five children, and seven grandchildren.

Keep Us in the Loop

If your contact information changes (address, email, phone), let us know so we can update our records. We want to keep in contact with you!

Please contact the office (lwvdc@chorus.net or 608-232-9447) regarding your changes.

Upcoming Events Calendar

- **Mar 2** – Issues Forum, 7:00 pm
Redistricting: Why It Matters
- **Mar 16** – LWVDC Board Meeting, 1:00 pm
- **Apr 5** – Spring Election
- **Apr 6** – Issues Forum, 7:00 pm
- **Apr 20** – LWVDC Board Meeting, 1:00 pm
- **May 18** – LWVDC Annual Meeting & Social, 6:00 pm
- **Jun 3-4** – LWVWI Convention

March Unit Locations

League members meet monthly in one of four units to discuss the topic of that month's Issues Forum, using study materials provided by the program planners. The discussion concludes with recommendations for further study or action. Please let the host know that you plan to attend.

If any of the units have questions or issues, please contact the Unit Coordinator, **Diane Martin Liebert**, at dwliefert@gmail.com or 608-698-4143.

MONDAY, MARCH 21, 2016

Monday Evening West/Middleton - 5:30 pm
Panera, 3416 University Ave.

Barbara Mortensen, 233-7563, morten21@att.net
Priscilla Thain, 233-5578, priscillathain@gmail.com

TUESDAY, MARCH 15, 2016

Tuesday Afternoon - 12:45 pm
Oakwood, D-76 (Jean Freese's apartment)

Parking on grounds or in P1 Heritage Oaks Parking Ramp
Nancy Simonsen, 230-3014, njsimonsen@gmail.com

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2016

Northeastside - 3:30 pm
Lakeview Public Library
2845 N. Sherman Ave.

Dorothy Wheeler, 244-4711, dorothywheeler@tds.net

Downtown Dinner Group - 5:15 pm
Capitol Lakes Retirement Center
Restaurant "The Seasons"

333 West Main St. - Free parking across street

June Weisberger Blanchard, 238-7337, jmweisbe@gmail.com
Katie Mulligan, 250-1896, katiemulligan@yahoo.com