

RRV VOTER

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A Look Ahead

Friday, November 7

12:00 noon

First Friday, Sons of Norway, 722 2nd Ave. N,
Fargo (lunch available beginning at 11:30 A.M.)

What's Keeping Them Up At Night? Top Issues Facing Local Law Enforcement

Panelists: Police Chiefs Arland Rasmussen, Chris Magnus and Grant Weyland

Monday, November 10,

1-3 P.M.

New Americans' Day, Fargo City Hall

Friday, December 5

12:00 noon

First Friday, Sons of Norway, 722 2nd Ave N,
Fargo (lunch available beginning at 11:30 A.M.)

Health Care Legislation

Speaker: Former Congressman and Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland, President,
Communicating for Seniors

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

President's Letter

Dear Members of LWVRRV,

Many activities have taken place since the last Voter was sent out. A special thank you goes to Mary Davies who spearheaded the planning for *New Americans Day* at Fargo City Hall. The event is scheduled to take place Monday, November 10 from 1:00 PM—3:00 P.M.

Candidate Forums for the School Board and City Council seats were held in Moorhead during October. The F-M Chamber of Commerce was a co-sponsor for the two events. Both forums were videotaped and later shown on Channel 2.

The Board of LWVRRV had an Open House for all members and prospective new members at the new restaurant, PD's on First, October 25 from 10:00 A.M– Noon. Carla Hartje gave a presentation about League and what it means to be a member.

Both First Friday meetings this season have been a real success with 30+ people attending each program. The speakers were informative and interesting. I hope to see you at the next First Friday meeting in November.

—Janet VanAmburg, President

League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley

New American's Day

A League committee is working with the People's Diversity Forum and the City of Fargo to put on a New Americans' Day at Fargo City Hall. The event is scheduled for Monday, November 10, 1-3 p.m.

The goal of the day is to help refugee/immigrants and other new Americans learn about the working of city government.

Participants will have a tour of Fargo City Hall, meet elected officials and city staff, learn how the city commission works, and learn how they can be involved.

League members working on this project are Mary Davies, Helen Rudie, Lois Altenburg, Carolyn Bowe, Donna Chalimonczyk and Janet Van Amburg.

Anyone interested in helping on November 10 should call

Mary at 233-2175 or by email marBob@aol.com

Fargo School Facilities plan approved

At our 1999 Annual Meeting, League of Women Voters members reached this consensus:

- School size should be limited to 600 students or less in elementary buildings and 1000 or less per secondary school.
- We support the current Fargo Comprehensive City Plan, which states that "the neighborhood character and community role of existing and future elementary schools should be preserved."

At its meeting of September 30, the Fargo School Board approved the final wording of the Fargo Schools' Long-Range Facility Plan. A copy of the plan complete with time line has been sent to all community dialogue participants. Copies are available on request at the Community Relations and Planning Office, 446-1043, or on line at www.fargo.k12.nd.us.

In terms of the League's positions above, future school size guidelines appear to be within our preferred limits although size for elementary schools is expressed in terms of 3 or 4 sections per grade for grades K-5. If class size is maintained at 22 students, elementary schools should house 600 or less. Middle school enrollment is designated to be between 600 and 800 students and high schools would serve 1000-1200.

Commitment to maintaining neighborhood schools is less than firm. The guidelines state that "neighborhood schools are a preference", and further agree to "promote attendance of neighborhoods in a school, especially at the elementary level" and "move elementary students to middle school with their neighborhood classmates as much as possible."

The board also approved limiting student travel to less than one mile for elementary schools or a maximum of 15-20 minutes by bus and to less than 1 1/2 miles for middle school. This would seem to support the neighborhood school concept.

Also adopted were criteria for responding to enrollment decline in a school. Some highlights are:

- Provision by the district of non-monetary support to neighborhood associations which attempt to initiate revitalization of an area
- Combined attendance areas utilizing two buildings for service of a range of grade levels (a way to establish the required elementary grade sections)
- The leasing of available space to "neighborhood friendly" tenants, for example a public library facility
- Or the use of extra space for educational programs such as child-care etc.

Building "de-commissioning" will take place on the majority decision of the board that the school "is not necessary to provide quality education to students...and students from the de-commissioned school can be afforded the same quality education as other students in the District." In addition, continued operation of the school "would reduce the financial ability of the district to provide for...the needs of the district as a whole."

The time line indicates a time span of under ten years for accomplishing these plans with new construction and boundary changes involved. It appears that Agassiz will eventually be de-commissioned when a new facility is completed.

—Audrey Richmond

An Urgent Message from LWVUS

LWVUS Urgent Lobby Request #108-9, September 29, 2003

Protect Arctic Wilderness

Members of the House of Representatives and Senate are currently meeting in conference committee to come to an agreement on the differences between the Senate and House versions of the energy bill. Despite strong public opposition, the House-Senate conferees will include a provision in the final energy bill to allow oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). Please contact your Senators and Representative today and tell them that you oppose oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Attempting to capitalize on the massive blackout in the Northeast and Midwest in August of this year, Arctic drilling proponents are suggesting that allowing oil drilling in ANWR will address our nation's energy needs. In fact, estimates by the United States Geological Society state that the oil obtained from drilling in ANWR would last less than six months. Drilling in the Arctic will not solve our country's energy problems and will be detrimental to the environment and wildlife.

It is especially important that the voices of citizens be heard in opposition to destructive oil drilling in the Arctic wilderness. Contact your Senators and Representatives today!

Action Needed

Contact your Senators and Representative now, by phone and by e-mail, urging them to oppose oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Phone calls can be made through the Capitol Hill switchboard at 202-225-3121 or 202-224-3121.

Background information about this issue may be found at

<http://www.capwiz.com/lwv/issues/alert/?alertid=3560001>

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact lobbying@lwv.org.

League fundraising

The LWVRRRV Annual Fund Raiser has just been launched. All members should have received a solicitation letter by now. With the economy in a slump, our local business supporters are limited in what they can contribute—a little extra from our membership can help us continue our mission of Voter's Services and educational programs.

If anyone has any questions, they can contact the League's Fund Raising Committee:

Cindy Maritato, phone: 236-0561

Peggy Jensen, phone: 293-1560

Non-citizen voting rights

The following is excerpted from a League of Women Voters-MN publication entitled *Immigration in Minnesota*. It is printed here for our information and discussion as we work on the New Americans' Day and study the implications and impact of the Help America Vote Act:

From the founding of our country until the 1920's, non-citizens were allowed to vote. Currently, they can vote in local elections in some municipalities in Maryland and Massachusetts as well as in school board elections in New York City and Chicago. Nearly another dozen communities have recently considered or are currently moving to establish non-citizen voting rights. Since the League of Women Voters formed for the purpose of extending the franchise to women, the issue of expanding voting rights to non-citizens is of particular interest.