

RRV VOTER

March-April 2004

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A Look Ahead

Friday, March 5

12:00 noon

(lunch available beginning at 11:30 AM)

First Friday, Sons of Norway,
722 2nd Ave N, Fargo

Potential and Challenges for Wind Energy in North Dakota

Speaker: Scot Kelsh from ND SEED

Sunday, March 7

7:00 PM

Heritage Hjemkomst Center, Moorhead, MN

*Fargo Moorhead Communiversitry-Freedom
Lecture: The US Patriot Act and other post 9/11
issues*

Presented by Professor C. Peter Erlinder of the William Mitchell College of Law

Saturday, March 27

10:00 AM (Registration begins at 9:30 AM)

PD's on First, 612 1St Ave N, Fargo

LWVRRV Annual Meeting

Friday, April 2

12:00 noon

(lunch available beginning at 11:30 AM)

First Friday, Sons of Norway, 722 2nd Ave N, Fargo

*Downtown Revitalization -Insights from some
Movers & Shakers*

Speakers:

Margie Bailey/Fargo Theatre

Bruce Frantz/NDSU - Downtown Campus

Karen Burgum/Hotel Donaldson

Saturday, April 3

9:00-10:30 AM

Moorhead City Hall Council Chambers

*Legislative Forum featuring Minnesota State
Legislators from the Clay County area.*

The League of Women Voters values diversity in its members. In principle and in practice, the League knows no barriers on the basis of age, creed, disability, gender, national origin, race or sexual orientation, and encourages full participation in and contribution to the organization by all its members.

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.

Saturday, April 3

10:00 AM

Fargo Theatre

Women Making a Difference

Featuring Mavis Leno

Friday, April 16 - Saturday, April 17

North Dakota State College of Science,
800 6th St N, Wahpeton

*AAUW-ND State Convention, partnering with the
LWV-ND*

Women at Work – in North Dakota Communities

Thursday, May 6 – Saturday, May 8

Holiday Inn, Fargo

*3rd Annual Building Racially Inclusive
Communities Conference*

Hosted by the Upper Midwest Regional Network of Race Relations and Racial Justice Organizations
For more information contact Mary Davies
(marbob7@aol.com).

Minnesota Legislative Forums

The League, along with the Chamber of Commerce and Moorhead Community Education, is planning to hold the second of two legislative meetings for the 2004 Minnesota Legislative session on Saturday, April 3. This forum will be held from 9-10:30 a.m. in the Moorhead City Hall Council Chambers.

This is an opportunity for constituents to find out what is happening in St. Paul. State Senator Keith Langseth and Representatives Morrie Lanning and Paul Marquart will report on what they see as the key actions of the Legislature and will then respond to audience questions.

Women at Work -- in North Dakota Communities

The AAUW-ND (American Association of University Women) and the LWVRRV will be partnering at the AAUW-ND State Convention on April 16-17, 2004 at the North Dakota State College of Science in Wahpeton, ND.

The events will begin with registration and other activities from 2-5 PM on April 16. The banquet at 7 PM will feature Mary Ellen Smyth, AAUW Leader on Loan as a keynote speaker. Her topic will be "Women at Work - AAUW National Research Findings."

On Saturday, April 17 there will be several presentations and break-out sessions. Julie Larson from ND Job Service will speak on "The Balancing Act: Challenges for Today's Working Women." The LWV will host a break-out session on HAVA, the Help America Vote Act. Other sessions will include Women's Personal/Health Issues, Youth in Action – Student Leadership Conference, and a panel discussion on "No Child Left Behind – Unfinished Business."

If you would like to attend this convention, please contact Susan Rae Helgeland at: 701-237-5871 or mharrv@juno.com

Board Briefs

At the February 2004 meeting of the League Board, final preparations were made for the 2004 Annual meeting. It will be held on Saturday, March 27, at 10:00 AM, at PD's on First restaurant. A mailing will be sent out shortly containing all relevant information.

LWVRRV Participation in the Naturalization of New Citizens

Twice a year, in the spring and in the fall, the United States District Court of North Dakota holds ceremonies to naturalize immigrants who are living in North Dakota. These ceremonies occur in Fargo, Bismarck and Minot.

In Fargo, the League and seven other associations have been chosen by the clerk of the court to present welcoming addresses to the new citizens. The District Court Judge conducts the formal swearing-in. Included in the ceremony are special musical numbers presented by guest artists, a brief address by an invited speaker (once it was Governor Hoeven), as well as the associations' presentations.

Anne Kuzas, the assistant clerk of the court is very firm that we should limit our remarks to 3 minutes each. The Veterans of Foreign Wars presents each new citizen with a very practical bag – soft sided luggage. The seven other groups then place their gifts in the VFW bag. This is done before the ceremony begins, so that the League representative needs to go to court the day before, or an hour before the ceremony. These gifts usually have a governmental or patriotic emphasis, for example the League gives the new citizens a brochure about State government and a flag pin. However, the North Dakota Farm Bureau includes macaroni made from North Dakota Wheat, and crayons from North Dakota soybeans.

The program for the ceremony always lists the names of the League participants, and we sit with the other association representatives, at the front of the courtroom. Since the ceremony is well attended with friends and relatives of the new citizens and many school children, this reserved seat is a valued perquisite.

Following the ceremony many of the new citizens are photographed with the Judge or the guest speaker and with members of their families. The final event is a reception served by the Daughters of the American Revolution.

The League is privileged to have a part in these solemn and impressive proceedings. If you would like to be a League representative at one of the upcoming naturalization ceremonies, please contact Margaret Blue at 235-5164, or any other LWVRRV Board member.

League Educates and Trains Malawians for Upcoming Elections

The League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) today announced a new international program that will conduct workshops on civic engagement and election monitoring in Malawi. With an emphasis on get-out-the-vote and election monitoring, the train-the-trainer sessions will lead up to their national election, scheduled for May 18, 2004.

"We are pleased that the League's expertise on voting and elections can help make democracy work in countries such as Malawi," said Kay J. Maxwell, president, LWVUS. "It is critical that citizens around the world understand the significance of voting and the value of a fair election process," Maxwell added.

To conduct the trainings, LWVUS has secured a subcontract from Management Systems International and has partnered with the National Council of Women of Kenya (NCWK). NCWK is led by Isabella Karanja, a 2002 participant in the League's Woman Power Politics: Building Grassroots Democracy in Africa.

Malawi is located in southern Africa and became an independent nation in 1964. After three decades of one-party rule, the country held multiparty elections in 1994 under a provisional constitution, which took full effect the following year. National multiparty elections were held again in 1999.

News from the League of Women Voters of the United States

Internet Plays a Key Role in Shaping Voters' Decisions

With the 2004 election underway, the Internet is already playing a key role in shaping voters' decisions in national and state campaigns. A large part of the information voters are using is coming from one source Capwiz Election – a tool created by Capitol Advantage with key content from the League of Women Voters and Meetup.com.

With this tool, voters have access to a one-stop-shop on the Internet for nonpartisan information not only for national campaigns but state races and ballot initiatives as well. The tool educates voters and provides election information on some of the nation's largest media portals and corporate Web sites, including MSN, America Online, Yahoo!, USA Today, The New York Times, Fox News, C-SPAN and more than 1,000 other organizations.

"Through Capwiz™ Election, campaign information is easily available and user friendly and therefore, has the potential to encourage more people to participate in the electoral process. The key to the success of this tool is our partners, who provide more content than ever before and unparalleled access to the voting public," said Bob Hansan, president and founder of Capitol Advantage.

DemocracyNet (DNet), a project of the League of Women Voters, is an integral part of the Capwiz™ Election tool. Launched nationally in 2000, DNet has several distinctive features. First, it contains the policy positions of candidates running for federal or state office, in their own words. Secondly, it displays that information in a grid format, which allows viewers to easily see and compare the positions of candidates for any given race. This feature is interactive, and allows candidates, from the presidential race to the state legislature, to respond to comments made by other candidates and to have a "virtual debate."

"Voters have more candidate information at their fingertips than in any election in the past," said Nancy Tate, executive director of the League of Women Voters.

"The partnership with Capitol Advantage and Meetup.com helps to expand our mission and remove the barriers voters have historically faced when searching for nonpartisan, comparative election information. Through DNet, candidates are able to "speak" directly to voters and voters are able to get candidate positions straight from the candidates themselves."

Women Making a Difference

COMING SOON...MAVIS LENO

Mark your calendars now! The Fargo-Moorhead Area Foundation Women's Fund is hosting Mavis Nicholson Leno at the Fargo Theatre, 10 AM, on Saturday, April 3. Mavis Leno is currently the chair of the Feminist Majority Foundation's Campaign to Help Afghan Women and Girls and has been the United States' most outspoken critic of the Taliban's horrific treatment of women. The activist wife of TV personality Jan Leno, Mavis is a proven leader in women's rights and philanthropy. Tickets go on sale March 8th at the Fargo Theatre.

The mission of the Women's Fund is to improve the quality of life for all people by enriching the lives of women and girls in the Fargo-Moorhead area. This mission will be advanced and supported through a long-term commitment to raising awareness of and addressing issues impacting women and girls.

Fargo School Board Update

In December the Board voted formally to move forward with building a new middle school to replace Agassiz on the site of Chaney Field and what is now Carl Ben Eielson Elementary School, which will be torn down. At its January 27th meeting, members asked the administration to arrange for the sale of \$12,965,000 in bonds this year and \$15,000,000 in 2005. The resulting funds will be used for construction of the new middle school and a new elementary school south of I-29. On February 10, an authorization resolution was unanimously adopted. Projections are that middle school construction will begin in September, 2004, with the potential for a 2006 opening.

Decisions must be made on program for the new grade configuration of K-5, 6-8 and 9-12 before designs can be completed for the new schools. A Transition Task Force has been appointed to study the issues involved.

It is made up of teachers, administrators, professional consultants and parents with Ben Franklin Principal John Nelson as chair. They are working on instructional design as well as a plan for the transition of children currently attending Clara Barton and Carl Ben Eielson. The new school will be named Carl Ben Eielson Middle School.

Director of Planning Lowell Wolff has reported that enrollment projections show a possible gain of 30-50 students per year in Fargo over the next decade.

Audrey Richmond

February First Friday

On February 6, Professor Andrew Conteh of the MSUM Political Science Dept. spoke on the role of the United Nations today. He began by pointing out that the UN represents nation states not people. The United Nations was a barometer of the "cold war" and was a hostage between the United States and the former Soviet Union. Now its important function is to provide the international community with a system of human rights. In addition, it provides organizations which support environmental protection, eradication of illiteracy, and improvement of health to name a few. There must be cooperation among the member nations in order for the UN to have impact.

The United States does not have a history of cooperation. Our country refused to join the League of Nations-- the forerunner of the UN --in the early 20th century. Even though the country is a UN member, it has practiced "exceptionalism", examples being the refusal to sign the Convention on the Rights of Children (one of two member countries--the other being Somalia) or to participate in the International Criminal Court. Conteh stated that the United Nations is "indispensable in an era of globalization" and the US should assume responsibility to global needs. Our former enemies in World War II, Japan and Germany, are contributing funds about equal to the US and are therefore interested in becoming members of the Security Council.

Although the United States forged ahead with the "preemptive strike" on Iraq, Conteh feels that the United Nations is not unfriendly to this country.

In the audience was LWV member Betsy Vinz whose daughter is currently working for the United Nations in Nairobi, Kenya working on monitoring of elections and environmental protection.

Audrey Richmond

Join the League

Send your check to the League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley, PO Box 295, Fargo, ND 58107
Current annual dues:

\$45.00 /individual
\$67.50 /household
\$15.00 /student

Be sure to include your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address.