

## A LOOK AHEAD...

### ***GUESTS are always welcome at League meetings!***

**Friday, January 4** 12:00 noon-1:00 PM

(lunch available beginning at 11:30 AM)

First Friday, Sons of Norway, 722 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave N, Fargo

**Topic:** *What's that on the ballot? A discussion of referendums, initiated measures, etc.*

**Speaker:** Dr. Jim Danielson, MSUM Professor of Political Science Emeritus

**Monday, January 7** 5:30-7:30 PM

Atomic Coffee, 222 N Broadway, Fargo

**LWVRRV - Consensus Meeting on Immigration Policy**

Read more about the LWVUS Immigration Study elsewhere in this Voter, including a link to resources available on the Web.

**Saturday, January 12** 10 AM

Brunch at VIP Room, Block 6 Building, Fargo

**Topic:** *Immigration Issues (sponsored by AAUW-FM)*

**Facilitators:** Noell Reinhiller & Maureen Kelly Jonason, AAUW Fargo-Moorhead

**Reservations by January 9 to Helen Rudie, 232-1794, [hrudie@yahoo.com](mailto:hrudie@yahoo.com)**

**Thursday, January 24** 4 PM

Betsy Vinz' home, 510 5<sup>th</sup> Ave S, Moorhead

**Concurrence on the Judicial Selection LWVMN Current Consensus Position**

All interested persons are invited although only LWVMN members can vote.

**RSVP to Patti Kratky at 233-8382**

For more information see article on page 2 and visit:

<http://www.lwvmn.org/edfund/>

[LWVMNEFJudicialSelectionUpdateReport.pdf](#)

**Friday, February 1** 12:00 noon-1:00 PM

(lunch available beginning at 11:30 AM)

First Friday, Sons of Norway, 722 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave N, Fargo

**Topic:** *Sustainable Development in the Red River Valley*

**Speaker:** Linda Kingery-Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, U of M Crookston

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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

### **What's happening in 2008?**

As 2007 draws to a close, it's time to look forward to 2008. The League will have a busy year in 2008 since one of our roles is helping provide information to voters in elections.

In 2008, we will have the June primary in North Dakota, in which there will likely be contested Fargo and West Fargo City Commission races, park board, school board races, and Cass County Commission races. There will also likely be ballot initiatives in both cities. And, then there will be the general election coming in November, at which we'll have local legislative races in North Dakota and Minnesota as well as ballot initiatives in North Dakota.

Voter service is a core part of the League's mission: *encourage informed and active participation in government and work to increase understanding of major public policy issues.* As a nonpartisan political organization, we'll be organizing candidate forums to provide access to voters to ask questions that will help them make their decisions on Election Day. And, we'll be providing objective information on the ballot initiatives so that voters will understand what the result of a "yes" or "no" vote will mean after Election Day.

And, one more part of the League mission statement is: *influence public policy through education and advocacy.* League members will be meeting in January to come to consensus on what the national league position should be for changes in immigration policy by Congress and our federal administration.

Would you like to be a part of this discussion and decision? Become a league member today – information on the consensus meeting and league membership is elsewhere in the newsletter. We welcome all as members who are interested in furthering the mission of the League.

—Cheryl Bergian, President  
LWVRRV

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## JUDICIAL SELECTION IN MINNESOTA-LWVMN

In 1997 the League of Women Voters of Minnesota undertook a two-year study of the process by which Minnesotans, as well as residents of other states, choose judges. Ultimately, members decided that overall the system in Minnesota worked well.

Since the league conducted its study, there have been some significant changes on the judicial landscape. Judicial elections in other states have become more political and have become significantly more expensive, raising concerns about the independence of the judiciary. Most importantly, two federal court decisions have fundamentally changed the ground rules for Minnesota's judicial elections. Those court decisions now allow politics to enter the judicial elections in new ways. For example, judicial candidates may now announce political positions and may seek and use political party endorsement. There is real concern that these changes threaten the quality and independence of Minnesota's judiciary.

In light of the changes to the ground rules and subsequent developments, LWVMN members decided to revisit the issue of judicial selection. A state study committee was convened. The committee invited experts on Minnesota's system of judicial election and advocates for differing systems, and considered the evidence and arguments.

The following is the Consensus Proposal which local LWVMN members will discuss on January 24. To see the entire report go to: <http://www.lwvmn.org/edfund/LWVMNEFJudicialSelectionUpdateReport.pdf>

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## LEAGUE BOARD SECRETARY SOUGHT

Alberta Dobry has resigned her position as secretary on the LWVRRV Board, due to her move out of the F-M area. We will all miss her wonderful dry sense of humor and her expert skills.

And now we need a new secretary. If you, or someone you know, would be interested in this position, please contact Cheryl at (701) 793-2002 or [cherylbergian@cableone.net](mailto:cherylbergian@cableone.net).

The board generally meets on the third Saturday of each month, from 9-11 AM.

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## REDISTRICTING AND THE LEAGUE IN THE U.S. AND NORTH DAKOTA

Redistricting reform is an issue that goes to the heart of our democratic system of government. Representative democracy depends on the voters freely choosing their elected officials. When, instead, officials choose their voters, our system cannot work for long.

The problems with unfair and partisan gerrymandering are as old as the Republic. But today, with the advent of modern computers and intensifying partisanship, it is possible to create legislative districts where the results of an election will be known before any votes are cast or tabulated. This is just what is happening across the nation. And it threatens our democracy.

In some states, incumbents of both parties get together to protect themselves from real elections. In other states, one party or another draws the districts so they will have many more seats that they would be entitled to if fair lines were drawn. In either case, the people are locked out. Decisions are not made by the electorate, but by politicians manipulating the electorate.

The LWV-US office has played a leading role in recent conferences and reports dealing with these complex issues. In addition, many Leagues have worked vigorously to secure representative redistricting plans in their states

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The LWV-US office has played a leading role in recent conferences and reports dealing with these complex issues. In addition, many Leagues have worked vigorously to secure representative redistricting plans in their states after each census and are seeking reforms to assure that the redistricting process is nonpartisan, equitable and open. The League plans to continue its focus on this important issue.

At our 2007 convention, the LWV-ND chose redistricting in North Dakota as a 3 year study topic. Our goal is to adopt a position for action at the 2011 legislative session, when redistricting will next occur.

We will begin by studying the history and evolution of the current legislative district boundaries in North Dakota. We will then identify any difficulties and irregularities that appear to result from the current configuration. Finally, we will try to reach consensus on new redistricting procedures that might address some of these problems. As an accepted non-partisan organization, we would then submit these proposals to the Legislature.

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## IMMIGRATION STUDY

At a meeting on Monday, January 7, at Atomic Coffee in Fargo, local League members will work to reach consensus on a number of questions and submit our results to the national League of Women Voters. The LWVUS will then formulate a position on this issue as a basis for action.

Here are three of the questions that we will be considering for consensus on January 7.

**Question 4a:** In order to deal more effectively with unauthorized immigrants, Federal immigration law should include:

Social Security Card, or other national identification card, with secure identifiers for all persons residing in the U.S.

**Question 5:** Federal immigration law should address and balance the long-term federal financial benefit from immigrants with the financial costs borne by states and local governments with large immigrant populations.

**Question 6:** Federal immigration law should be coordinated with U.S. foreign policy to pro-actively help improve economies, education and job opportunities, and living conditions of nations with large emigrating populations.

LWVUS has published a number of Background Papers & Study Briefs on their website, [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org), discussing a variety of aspects of the Immigration Study. The complete list of consensus questions is also available there.

NOTE: Consensus meeting will be *Monday, January 7, at 5:30-7:30 PM at Atomic Coffee, 222 N. Broadway, Fargo.*

## Consensus Proposal

LWVMN affirms that the judiciary is a co-equal branch of government under the Constitution that must operate in accordance with the principles of independence, impartiality and fairness. A judge's first duty is to the rule of law.

LWVMN supports a process of judicial selection and retention that produces judges who:

are independent and not beholden to any special interest, moneyed interest, or partisan interest.

are accountable to the Constitution and to the rule of law.

are competent and possess integrity.

afford fair treatment to all participants.

LWVMN supports a system of judicial selection and retention that:

provides for a role for the public.

is as free from political influence as possible.

LWVMN supports a system of selection and retention of district court and appellate courts judges that includes:

**I. initial appointment** to judgeship by the governor, who is required to choose from a list of candidates forwarded by a nominating commission;

**II. end-of-term evaluation** of the judge's performance by an evaluation commission, results to be made available to the public; and

**III retention election:** voters choose to retain or not retain the judge.

The nominating and evaluation commissions should be broadly based and nonpartisan.

In addition, the committee recommends that as long as the current system prevails, we retain our 1999 consensus position statement: "*LWVMN strongly favors retaining the incumbency designation on judicial ballots.*"

NOTE: Concurrence discussion will take place Thursday, January 24, 4 PM at Betsy Vinz' home, 510 5<sup>th</sup> Ave S, Moorhead

All interested persons are invited although only LWVMN members can vote.

RSVP to Patti Kratky at 233-8382.

## LWRRV CONTRIBUTES TO DISCUSSION OF CHANGES IN POLLING PLACES

The right of every citizen to vote has been a basic League principle since its origin. This principle includes the right to voting that is as accessible as possible and a process that is free from confusion.

To help ensure that the citizens of the Fargo area have these rights in the June and November 2008 elections, the local League called for greater public input and dialogue before proposed polling place changes could be approved by the Cass County Commission.

These changes had been discussed with the chairs of both major political parties in the area, but the general public had heard little about this before the authorizing votes were scheduled.

After LWRRV Observer Corps members raised the issue, a public meeting was arranged. There were newspaper articles, letters and editorials discussing various aspects of the matter.

Now that the polling place changes have been approved, the political parties and city and county government officials must continue to work on informing the voters about them before the primary election in June. We feel that the work of the LWRRV to begin this information process was a valuable contribution. The less that citizens are confused, the more likely they are to exercise their right to vote.

*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*

*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.*

***League Vision, Beliefs and Intentions:***

*The goal of the League of Women Voters is to empower citizens to shape better communities worldwide.*

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political membership organization which:

*Acts after study and member agreement to achieve solutions in the public interest on key community issues at all government levels.*

*Builds citizen participation in the democratic process  
Engages communities in promoting positive solutions to public policy issues through education and advocacy.*

## Join the League!

Individual — \$45.00; Household— \$67.50

Student— \$15.00

**Send your check to:**

*League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley  
PO Box 295, Fargo, ND 58107*

**Include your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address.**

### **2007-2008 LWVRRV Officers**

President:	Cheryl Bergian
First Vice President	Carol Sawicki
Second Vice President	Mary Tintes
Secretary	<b>Open</b>
Treasurer	Sherri Seeba

### **Board of Directors**

Lois Altenburg, Margaret Blue, Jessica Clark,  
Alice Hauan, Barbara Headrick, Amy Jacobson,  
Patti Kratky and Carol Zielinski.