



Red River Voter

Published in Fargo, ND • P.O. Box 295, Fargo, ND 58107-0295
LWV Web Sites: www.lwvnd.org & www.lwvmn.org

SEPT-NOV. 2012

A look ahead...

GUESTS are always welcome at League meetings!

First Friday, September 7 12 noon-1 PM
Sons of Norway-Lounge area, 722 2nd Ave. N., Fargo
(Buffet lunch available beginning at 11:30 AM)

Open Meeting Laws and how citizens can contribute to government transparency.

Presented by the founders of The People's Press Project, Cindy & Duke Gomez-Schemp

Tuesday, September 11 6:30-8:30 PM
Fargo City Commission Chambers - 200 3rd St. N., Fargo
*Fargo Area Candidate Forums:
District 44 & Cass Co. Commission District 1*

Monday, September 17 6:30-8:30 PM
Casselton Auditorium - 702 1st St. N., Casselton
*Candidate Forums - Rural Cass County, ND
District 22 & Cass Co. Commission District 5*

Tuesday, September 18 6:30-8:45 PM
Fargo City Commission Chambers - 200 3rd St. N., Fargo
*Fargo Area Candidate Forums:
District 16 & District 46*

Wednesday, September 19 12 noon
Speakeasy Restaurant, 1001 30th Ave S, Moorhead
*Moorhead Area LWVRRV meeting
Minnesota Voter Photo ID Constitutional Amendment*

Friday, September 21
Absentee ballots available in Clay Co, MN
Contact: Clay County Auditor
lori.johnson@co.clay.mn.us or (218) 299-5006

Tuesday, September 25 6:30-9:00 PM
Hjemkomst Center, 202 1st Ave. N., Moorhead
*Moorhead Area Candidate Forums:
Minnesota House 4A & Moorhead School Board*

Wednesday, September 26 6:30-9:00 PM
Dilworth Depot, 3 4th St. NE, Dilworth
*Clay County Area Candidate Forums
Minnesota Senate 4 & Minnesota House 4B*

Thursday, September 27
Absentee ballots available in Cass Co., ND
Contact: Cass County Auditor:
www.casscountynnd.gov or (701) 241-5600

Tuesday, October 2 6:30-9:00 PM
Hjemkomst Center, 202 1st Av. N., Moorhead
*Moorhead Area Candidate Forums:
Clay Co. Commissioners & Soil and Water Supervisors*

First Friday, October 5, 12 - 1:00 PM
Sons of Norway, 722 2nd Ave. N., Fargo
(Buffet lunch available beginning at 11:30 AM)
What is it like to be an immigrant or new citizen in the Red River Valley? - a panel discussion

Wednesday, October 17 12:00 noon
Speakeasy Restaurant, 1001 30th Ave. S., Moorhead
*Moorhead Area LWVRRV meeting
Recap of our findings on low income housing in Moorhead*

Wednesday, October 17 2 :00 PM
Hjemkomst Center, 202 1st Ave. N., Moorhead
Voter ID Public Forum
Keynote speaker: Amy McDonough, AARP MN
Sponsored by LWVRRV, AARP MN, Moorhead Votes

Monday, October 29 - Friday, November 2, 10 AM-7 PM
EARLY VOTING in Cass County, ND
• Doublewood Inn, 3333 13th Ave. S., Fargo
• Hilton Garden Inn, 4351 17th Ave. S., Fargo
• Day's Inn, Casselton
(Wednesday, October 31-Friday, November 2 only)

First Friday, November 2 12 noon- 1:00 PM
Sons of Norway, 722 2nd Ave. N., Fargo
(Buffet lunch available beginning at 11:30 AM)
Understanding election polls before Election Day and exit polling on Election Day
Presented by Dr. Phil Baumann, Professor of Political Science MSU Moorhead and Dr. Jim Danielson, Professor Emeritus MSU Moorhead. These professors also run the MSUM's Public Affairs Institute which has conducted political polling for candidates and news media

Tuesday, November 6 7:00 AM-8:00 PM
ELECTION DAY

Wednesday, November 21 12 noon
Speakeasy Restaurant, 1001 30th Ave. S., Moorhead
Moorhead Area LWVRRV meeting
Topic - To Be Announced

President's letter

■ Why study government transparency?

Last March we chose transparency in government as our topic for study for the next year. This short piece is to explain why and to encourage all those reading to join in our efforts.

As materials on the national League of Women Voters website state, "The organization's principles include the requisite that "government bodies protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible." Over the years, the League has supported various federal legislative initiatives to expand open government requirements, and has fought against proposals aimed at limiting access to public information."

Open government needs to be pursued at all levels. The LWV of the Red River

Valley has, when Observer Corps volunteers are available, provided reports on a variety of local government committees and advisory boards. Recently, LWVRRV members were part of an effort to videotape a meeting of the Moorhead School Board to enable more citizens to see their elected officials at work.

This is an election year. Our votes are how we grade those in office. In order to be knowledgeable on their performance, we need adequate and obtainable information on government activities. Local media is not equipped to cover every meeting and decision. City, county, state and national government websites do not always provide easily obtained and understood information on activities and decisions by government organizations. There are other organizations, such as the Sunlight Foundation, that join the League in pushing and prodding governments to be more open and accessible. The easier

it is for voters to assess the actions of their governments, the more informed those voters will be.

To start our efforts, our September First Friday program (noon on September 7 at the Sons of Norway) will feature Duke and Cindy Gomez-Schempp, the founders of The People's Press Project. They will be discussing open meeting laws in Minnesota and North Dakota and how citizens can contribute to the push for open government. They will be sharing their expertise and experience and helping all of us to be a part of the effort to keep our governments accountable.

If you have ideas for the study on transparency; have information to share; or want to volunteer for our Observer Corps efforts, contact us at lwvrrv@gmail.com or directly to me at redbarbh@hotmail.com.

—*Barb Headrick, President*
LWV of the Red River Valley

■ US Senate Refuses to Debate DISCLOSE

Twice, the U.S. Senate refused to allow full debate on the DISCLOSE Act, which would require complete disclosure of spending on big-money advertising in candidate elections. Huge sums of secret money are flooding into our elections and without full disclosure the voters won't know who is trying to buy influence.

YOU can still make your voice heard. Tell your senators you won't give up the fight to restore our democracy.

Secret money has no place in elections but we all know it is there, drowning out the voices of everyday Americans. Our elected leaders in Washington, the men and women who had the power and opportunity to help, failed to take up the DISCLOSE Act. They decided that they didn't even want to debate this important issue. Rather than talk about how they could help voters understand where all of this secret money is coming from, they decided to kill the bill without any debate.

The U.S. Senate could have put us on

the right path if they had taken their duty as elected leaders seriously and debated the DISCLOSE Act on its merits. Tell your senators you will continue the fight to restore transparency to our government and electoral system.

The League will continue to push for passage of DISCLOSE because secret campaign money has no place in America's democracy. It undermines the role of the voter and corrupts the election process.

Voters have a right to know -- whether it is a corporation, union, trade association, or non-profit advocacy group making unlimited campaign expenditures and influencing elections.

—*From: LWV US*

■ Would you like to help with League work? (But don't have much free time?)

As an organization that is dedicated to civic engagement, the LWVRRV carries out a number of different activities. These include, among others, our Fargo First Friday meetings, Moorhead Third

Wednesday meetings, publication of this Voter newsletter, candidate and legislative forums, and participation in naturalization ceremonies.

2012 will be a busy election year. The League will be hosting candidates' forums on six different days and volunteers will be needed at all of these events.

Or would you like to help with any other of these activities? For example, by being a greeter at a First Friday meeting? Or by helping maintain the Voter mailing list database?

We know that all of you are busy and would likely find it difficult to make a substantial time commitment. But there are many ways to contribute to the League in smaller ways, partnering with one of our board members and helping to keep the LWVRRV as a vibrant contributor to our communities.

If you are interested or would like to learn more, please contact us at lwvrrv@q.com

Voter ID Amendment on the Minnesota ballot - November 6

My name is Amy Baker, a local homeless advocate, and proud board member of the League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley. I would like to inform the members of the LWVRRV about the most concerning legislation that will impact people I work with, which is the upcoming proposed Voter ID Constitutional Amendment in Minnesota. If passed on November 6th, all voters will be required to "present valid government issued photographic identification before receiving a ballot" for future elections. Voter ID may not seem like a big problem for most voters, but for those who have lost their IDs, have no permanent housing, and have limited incomes, Voter ID could deprive citizens of their basic right to vote.

John (not his real name) a current client of mine, and Moorhead resident, is a perfect example of how Voter ID will impact local citizens. Before I met John, he had been homeless for over 25 years and had never voted because he didn't think his voice mattered. John has traveled across the country and has carried with him a state issued ID from Idaho, a worn out birth certificate, and his social security card. After connecting with my agency, John decided that he wanted to

make Moorhead his home and with the help of support services, has been thriving for over a year in housing. John has stated that he is now ready to vote for the first time in his 50 years!

John can vote in this year's election, but if Voter ID passes, John may have difficulties in 2013. To understand this, we need to review the wording on the ballot "valid government issued photographic identification." John's ID from Idaho is not valid because it is not his current address and it is set to expire in 2013. We have attempted several times to access a valid Minnesota ID but his worn out birth certificate (a requirement to get a MN ID) has not been accepted by the Department of Motor Vehicles. This is because some of the wording is ineligible after being carried in his pocket for years on the road.

We have attempted three times to get an original birth certificate from his home state of New York. John was raised in several orphanages as a child, but officials are unsure where his birth certificate is and have stated that his records may have been lost. Each attempt to receive a birth certificate has cost John, who is on a fixed income, \$26. Even if Minnesota offers free subsidized IDs, John would

still have to pay \$26 to get his birth certificate to vote.

John's story is just an example of thousands of formerly homeless and currently homeless Minnesota residents who are in danger of losing their right to vote. Many people that I encounter every day have lost their ID, have to pay out-of-pocket for personal documentation, and if this amendment passes will no longer have a homeless advocate vouch for their residency in order to vote. Protecting homeless person's right to vote is crucial, because it gives a person like John, who thought his voice didn't matter, a chance to be heard. If Voter ID passes, Minnesota would only reaffirm John's biggest fear that his voice will be silenced. To learn more about Voter ID and what you can do to help oppose the amendment, please visit these sites:

- ♦ <http://www.mnhomelesscoalition.org/campaigns/voter-id/>
- ♦ <http://www.ourvoteourfuture.org/>
- ♦ <http://www.lwvmn.org/>
- ♦ <http://www.facebook.com/moorhead.votes>

Get Out the Vote in Moorhead

The Red River Valley League of Women Voters NEEDS YOU to help the **Get Out the Vote Effort** in Moorhead. According to US Census Data, in 2008 nearly 6 million Americans didn't vote because they missed a registration deadline or didn't know how to register. In 2012, we face even more confusion with registration, as many Moorhead polling locations have changed and redistricting has occurred.

To help Moorhead residents prepare for November 6th, Lakes and Prairies Community Action Partnership and the League of Women Voters-RRV will be participating in National Registration Day on September 25th at several locations around Moorhead, including the Family Service Center.

We are currently looking for people to volunteer on September 24th and 25th. The times will be in two-hour blocks anywhere from 8 AM – 6 PM.

If you are interested in volunteering, please call Amy Baker at 218-299-7014 or email: amyb@lakesandprairies.net to sign up for a shift.

Lakes & Prairies CAP and the LWVRRV will be participating in several voter educational activities and registration drives in September and October, so if the days and times listed do not work for your schedule, please call anyway and Amy will help get you connected.



Every vote counts!

League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley
P.O. Box 295
Fargo, ND 58107-0295

Return Service Requested

Non-Profit Org
U.S.Postage
PAID
Fargo, ND
Permit Number #234

TIME TO JOIN THE LEAGUE!

Membership Dues:

Individual: \$50, students: \$15

Send your check to:

LWV RRV, PO Box 295,

Fargo, ND 58107-0295

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

2012-2013 LWVRRV Officers

President: *Barbara Headrick*

Vice President: *DelRae Williams*

Secretary: *Patty Kratky*

Treasurer: *Carol Sawicki*

2012-2013 Board of Directors:

*Amy Baker, Jolene Gray, Frank Kratky, Beverly Lake,
Portia Smith, Mary Tintes*

◆ This issue of the Voter, along with archived issues dating back to 2000, is available online on the lwvnd.org/rrv.html website

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages an 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.