



Red River Voter

Published in Fargo, ND • P.O. Box 295, Fargo, ND 58107-0295
LWV Web Sites: www.lwvnd.org & www.lwvnmn.org • (701) 484-1920

DEC. 2012—FEB. 2013

A look ahead...

GUESTS are always welcome at League meetings!

- First Friday, December 7** **12 noon-1 PM**
 Sons of Norway-Lounge area, 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
- First Friday, January 4** **12 noon-1 PM**
 Sons of Norway, 722 2nd Ave. N., Fargo
 (Buffet lunch available beginning at 11:30 AM)
Where did the billions go in the election?
Presenter: Barb Headrick
- Wednesday, January 16** **12 noon**
 Speakeasy Restaurant, 1001 30th Ave S, Moorhead
Moorhead Area LWVRRV meeting
Topic: To be announced
- First Friday, February 1** **12 noon-1 PM**
 Sons of Norway-Lounge area, 722 2nd Ave. N., Fargo
 (Buffet lunch available beginning at 11:30 AM)
What is next for the Affordable Care Act and how will it apply in MN and ND?
- Saturday, February 9** **9:30-11:30 AM**
 Fargo City Commission Chamber, 200 3rd St. N., Fargo
Legislative Forum featuring Fargo Area Legislators
- Wednesday, February 20** **6:30-9:00 PM**
 Speakeasy Restaurant, 1001 30th Ave. S., Moorhead
Topic: To be announced
- Saturday, February 23** **9:30-11:30 AM**
 Fargo City Commission Chamber, 200 3rd St. N., Fargo
Legislative Forum featuring Fargo Area Legislators

❖ *100 years ago—English Quaker Elizabeth Fry, 33, begins working to improve the conditions of women in Newgate Prison, where inmates are not segregated by sex. Fry will be instrumental in introducing education and employment into British prisons and will open soup kitchens for London’s poor. (The Women’s Chronology, by James Trager)*

President’s letter

■ The votes are in; did voters win?

The League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley congratulates all those whose efforts in Minnesota helped to defeat the Voter ID Amendment. Minnesota is the first state where voters rejected the idea of requiring a government issued photo ID to vote. Minnesota voters now can keep same day registration and do not have to learn the complications that come with provisional ballots. Well done.

Every election brings some winners and some losers. Political parties, advocacy groups and voters tally their score to decide whether to celebrate or commiserate. Once the ads, yard signs and billboards disappear, it is time to remember that every time we are part of a free and fair election process, we win. We win by holding those who are in office accountable for their decisions. We win when new talented, dedicated people enter the arena of public affairs and give us a fresh perspective on the issues of the day. We win when new citizens get their first chance to vote and be heard as equals in this country. We win when new voters, no matter what their age, finally choose to let their voice be heard via the ballot. We win when voters demonstrate their dedication to their rights by spending hours in line to cast their ballots.

The ideal election for the League of Women Voters is one where every citizen who is eligible and able participates. Current estimates for the turnout nationally see fewer voters than four years ago, but the final percentage will not be known until all the ballots are counted. Yes, as of this writing, votes are still being counted and elections are still to be decided. Counting millions of votes accurately takes some time and the use of provisional ballots in many states slows and complicates the process. Ten days after Election Day 2012 sees Arizona with over 100,000 ballots yet to be counted. The Arizona Secretary of State has extended the deadline for counties to report final, official numbers to insure that all votes are counted.

Why bother with all that effort when most elections have clear winners and losers already? Because to be denied your constitutional right to be heard through the ballot is a crime against the democratic values for which many have struggled, fought and died. Each time we come closer to turning Lincoln’s words of a government “*of the people, by the people, and for the people*” into a reality, we are close to achieving the promise of those values.

(Continued, page 2)

Meet two of our LWVRRV Board Members

Why I became a member of the LWV-RRV

- In 2004 when I retired from the active practice of architecture, I decided that I had the time to give to more community activities. I started attending the monthly “First Friday” meetings of the LWV with my wife Patti, who was serving as co-president at that time. I liked the format of discussing and learning about important issues facing the local, state, and national communities and the positions that were put forward by various groups and political parties on all sides in nonpartisan presentations.

I was surprised to be nominated and elected to the board of directors three years ago and have enjoyed serving on the Voter Services committee which plans and presents Candidates' Forums to hear candidates speak to issues before elections. I have served as the moderator for many of the forums and enjoyed having the leadership role. The LWV-RRV is a great place to meet and talk with informed and intelligent citizens about the workings of our democracy.

—Frank Kratky

- I am originally from Valley City, North Dakota and moved to Fargo about 6 years ago. I have been interested in current events and politics since I was young. I started attending the League First Friday events about a year ago after being invited by Patty Kratky, League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley Secretary.

I decided to get more involved in the League of Women Voters efforts because I identify with their mission of increasing civic engagement and helping to create an educated electorate. What especially attracted me to the League of Women Voters was their non-partisan nature. I believe that all political ideologies have value and ideas to share. I appreciate that the League of Women Voters strives to educate the citizenry through that non-partisan lens.

—Ashley Ladbury

Progress made - report on Women in Politics - Election 2012

The Center for American Women in Politics (CAWP) at Rutgers University issued its final report for women in elected positions to the U.S. Congress and statewide offices. After an extended period of little or no gains, the largest number of women ever will serve in the 113th Congress, according to the report. An all-time high total of 20 women (16 Democrats, 4 Republicans) will serve in the U.S. Senate and there will be a record 78 women (58 Democrats, 20 Republicans) in the U.S. House.

The only woman nominated for governor by a major party (Maggie Hassan, D-NH) won her contest. New Hampshire became the first state ever to have an all-female Congressional delegation (2 U.S. Senators, 2 U.S. House Reps.) as well as a woman serving as the state's chief executive. The total number of women governors as of 2013 will be 5 (1 Democrat, 4 Republicans - NH, AZ, NM, OK, SC), a decline from the current 6 women governors.

North Dakota is one of four states to have elected women to the U.S. Senate for the first time in 2012, with Senator-elect Heidi Heitkamp joining newly elected women senators from Hawaii, Massachusetts and Wisconsin. North Dakota was previously represented in the U.S. Senate by Jocelyn Burdick, who was appointed to complete the term of Quentin N. Burdick, her late husband, in 1992.

— Mary C. Tintes

President's Letter *(continued from page 1)*

Elections are noisy and, too often, dirty affairs. Too much money from only a few people is used to influence the votes of many. Distorted information and blatant lies are used to turn voters away from one candidate and toward another. All of this is true in 2012 as it was in 1912 and 1812.

It is not true that it is getting worse.

It is true that “the people” still have work to do. The work is not as difficult as in Lincoln’s time or even as difficult as it was a hundred years later when the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was enacted and finally brought millions of African Americans the chance to exercise their right to vote. The struggle today is as much against apathy and those who would encourage apathy as it is against legal barriers like government-issued photo ID laws.

The pledge of the League of Women Voters will always be to fight for more voters, not less. We will fight for easier access so that all eligible citizens exercise their constitutional rights without the need to battle legal barriers or 8-hour waits in line at a polling place. We will fight to bring more open and objective sources of information to voters on the candidates and issues.

We will fight as long as necessary until it is clear that every election means that the voters win.

— Barb Headrick

■ Supreme Court set to review Voting Rights Act

Statement by Elisabeth MacNamara, National President of the League of Women Voters - November 9, 2012

Washington, D.C. – Today, the Supreme Court decided to review the constitutionality of the Voting Rights Act. In a week when American democracy was on display for all the world, this action by the Court is a huge step in the wrong direction.

The Voting Rights Act is an essential part of American democracy. The thought that the Supreme Court might overrule Congress and take away voting rights should send a chill down the spine of every American.

The Voting Rights Act ensures that every American has an equal right to vote. With the problems in our election system exposed once again this week, the Supreme Court should be enforcing voting rights, not taking them away.

■ League sends letter to U.S. Congress on the "Fiscal Cliff," taxes and the budget

November 15, 2012

To: Members of the U.S. Congress

From: Elisabeth MacNamara, President

Re: The "Fiscal Cliff," Taxes and the Budget

Congress now has an historic opportunity to set federal fiscal policy on a fair and stable path. While avoiding the spending and tax changes scheduled for January 1 is important, it is much more important to provide a long-term solution by substantially increasing revenue, protecting the social safety net, reducing defense spending and carefully managing the deficit. The League of Women Voters strongly urges you not to miss this opportunity.

Congress must restore a fair and progressive tax system in order to provide needed revenue and ensure social equity. We urge you to allow tax cuts that benefit only the richest two

percent to expire on schedule, which would provide nearly \$1 trillion.

The League also supports an effective estate tax, ending special treatment of capital gains and dividends, and increasing the maximum for Social Security tax withholding. Securing substantial new revenue from those with the greatest ability to contribute will allow our nation to meet reasonable deficit reduction goals, invest in education and infrastructure and protect the programs that meet basic human needs.

Long-term deficit reduction is an important goal, but it is also vital to recognize that deficit spending is appropriate and effective for stimulating the economy during recession, meeting social needs in times of high unemployment, and meeting defense needs in times of national security crises. Over the last several years, and still today, our nation faces these problems. Early deficit reduction must not overtake the need for establishing economic growth and meeting vital needs. The Bowles-Simpson proposal, for example, cuts the deficit well beyond what is needed to stabilize the deficit over the long term.

Any budget agreement must protect basic social spending. Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security and essential services for low-income people must be maintained. Millions of seniors, children, people with disabilities and others depend on these programs and they should not be cut.

Today, more than 20 million people are in need of full-time work, and unemployment continues to hover around 8 percent. With the current state of the economy, our nation must have a truly balanced approach to spending and taxes.

The League of Women Voters urges you to support a new direction for federal fiscal policy, one that recognizes the importance of a fair tax system, one that provides for social needs, and one that will carefully manage the deficit and the economy.

Upcoming league activities

LWV after Dark—LWV-RRV is trying to create a new opportunity for some of us to get together at a time of day that is more convenient for them than the First Friday noon meetings.

LWV After Dark has already met two times, and brought in several new people who are interested in our mission of increasing informed participation in government and public policy.

Future LWV After Dark meetings will be announced on our Facebook page. The League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley Facebook page is an active site, full of interesting information and links.

Legislative forums—Now that the 2012 election is over it is time to focus on the legislative sessions in North Dakota and Minnesota.

LWV-RRV will again be hosting Legislative Forums at Fargo City Hall, featuring members of the ND Legislature from Cass County. These forums are open to the public and questions from the audience will be asked of all of the legislators who are on that day's panel. The first two of these will be on February 9th and 23rd, from 9:30-11:30 AM, with more to follow in the upcoming months.

MN Legislative interviews—Minnesota LWV-RRV members will be conducting interviews with MN state legislators from the Moorhead area. At these interviews, which will probably be held during the month of January, these legislators will be asked about their views and actions on LWVMN positions.

Interested persons will be invited to these interviews by email, and a summary of the information gathered will be printed in the next issue of the *Voter*.

League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley
P.O. Box 295
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Fargo, ND 58107-0295 (701)484-1920

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

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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.