



The North Dakota Voter

The League of Women Voters of North Dakota
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Issue 1

July 2010

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

LWV-ND to Sponsor a Redistricting Reform Initiative

The board of the League of Women Voters of North Dakota convened at 6 p.m. on May 25, 2010. We voted to sponsor a constitutional amendment initiated measure that, if passed, would create an independent legislative redistricting commission for North Dakota.

As an organization that is dedicated to the principles of nonpartisanship, representative government and citizen involvement in public policy, the League of Women Voters is the ideal group to promote such an initiative for redistricting reform.

As long as new legislative district boundaries are set by the Legislature, gerrymandering is apt to occur. An independent commission would be more likely to draw district lines

based on communities of interest and geographic features and would be less biased by the political affiliation of the voters. Elections would be more competitive, and the voters would be more engaged in the process.

To get this measure on the November 2010 ballot, petitions must be circulated. Nearly 26,000 signatures must be collected on these petitions by August 4. Although this may seem like a difficult goal to reach in such a short span of time, we believe that it can be accomplished with good publicity and the work of dedicated volunteers.

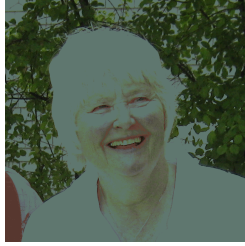
Several League members have already committed to carrying petitions at events such as the Red River Valley Fair & the ND State Fair in Minot. But of course having more volunteers would help a great deal. The State Fair is from July 23-August 1. Please join the effort if you can.

If you would like to receive copies of the petition and collect signatures among your friends and in your community, contact the LWVND office at (701) 297-6815, or lwvnd@q.com and we will send them to you.



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From the president...

This is an exciting election year for North Dakota and the League of Women Voters. We have sponsored our first round of candidate's meetings. During the Fargo City Commission candidate's meeting, only half of the invited people arrived. The two candidates present each answered seventeen written questions from the audience. At the West Fargo School Board candidates meeting each person was able to answer only two questions because of the large number of candidates present. Fortunately, the LWV has the experience to be able to adapt.

In July, the LWVND will be sponsoring information booths at both the Red River Valley Fair and the ND State Fair at Minot. For the first time ever the LWVND will be presenting a proposed constitutional initiative. The initiative relates to the establishment of an independent redistricting commission. We have had good news coverage for the petition drive with the opportunity to stress the need for an independent legislative redistricting commission. The concept is difficult for many of us to understand at first. Our difficulty occurs, in part, because redistricting only happens every ten years in the year following the completion of the national census. If we are unable to collect the needed 25,688 signatures needed to place the initiative on the November 2010 ballot, we will continue to collect the needed signatures and place it on the 2012 ballot.

Changes in government do take place. Sometimes change comes rapidly, other times it is painfully slow. We are in a unique position as a state with resources and involved citizens. We can truly create a better, more effective environment for our children and grandchildren.

Lois

Candidate forums hosted

The ND League hosted numerous forums for local, county and primary elections that were held on June 8th across North Dakota.

Bismarck/Mandan forums

Renee Stromme

Because of our strong partnership with Dakota Media Access, the League of Women Voters – Bismarck/Mandan chapter once again had a successful round of candidate forums for the June 2010 local elections. The forums featured the Bismarck Mayor, City Commission, School Board and Park Board races. In Mandan, only the Mandan City Commission race was conducted due to lack of candidate availability on the other races.

For each forum held, every candidate attended. We are heartened by the seriousness with which all the candidates prepare for the League forums. Additionally, many interested individuals ask when they will occur and clearly look to the forums to help inform their vote.

Each forum is shown live on Government Access channel of Dakota Media Access. Additionally, they are streamed live on their website, available on demand on the website and continually rebroadcast on Dakota Media Access channels. The forums were shown 55 times prior to the election. The audience is an engaged one and broader than can be seen through the 55 showings. We know the reach of the forums continues to expand.

We feel the forums do have an impact on the election. Voters use the information to help them determine how they will vote. Local elections are one of the most difficult arenas to gain information. It is the forums that fill that gap. The League of Women Voters-Bismarck/Mandan is proud to provide that beneficial information.

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Fargo candidate forums

Amy Jacobson

In Fargo the LWV-RRV hosted two evenings of candidate forums to give the public the opportunity to ask questions and learn more about the candidates. The first evening consisted of the Fargo City Commission and the Fargo Park Board candidates. Fargo City Commission incumbents Mahoney and Wimmer failed to appear at the forum. The two challengers, Sobolik and Bosma, engaged in a lively debate on the issues. In fact, they each answered 18 questions from audience members. All five of the Fargo Park Board candidates attended and were appreciative of the opportunity to hear from the community. The LWV-RRV is the only organization which hosts a forum for the Park Board candidates.

The second evening of Candidate Forums hosted the candidates for both the Fargo Mayoral position and the Fargo School Board. Unfortunately only one of the four candidates for Mayor attended the event. Tweeten was allowed to present his open and closing statements as well as field questions from community members. There was a good turnout for the hotly contested Fargo School Board race.

League members Jan Jackson, Patti Kratky, Amy Jacobson, Lois Altenburg, and Mary Tintes assisted with timing and screening. Members Barb Headrick and Cheryl Bergian moderated the events.

The events were televised live on Fargo Public Access Television and re-aired periodically before the elections were held.

West Fargo candidate forums

Patty Kratky

The League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley hosted three candidates' forums for West Fargo's open positions; the Mayoral campaign, the Commission campaign and the

School Board campaign. They were held on May 20 from 6:30-9:30 PM in the West Fargo High School Auditorium.

The candidate forums were filmed and rebroadcast multiple times on the two community access channels for West Fargo. The Fargo Forum published several articles relating to the forums and a brief announcement of the event. It was moderated by Frank Kratky and Carol Sawicki (both LWV members). Because there were 13 candidates for the West Fargo School Board which had four openings, time for every campaign was adjusted to fit into the allotted time.☀



Photo from Forum Broadcast Company

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Nominating Committee for 2009-2011:

Mary Tintes

Carol Reed

The Naturalization Ceremony: A Serious and Joyful Occasion

The last step in the long process of becoming a U.S. citizen is often marked with a Naturalization Ceremony. On Friday, April 16, 2010, thirty-three people from around the globe (along with their families and friends) gathered for a Naturalization Ceremony at the Ronald N. Davies U.S. Courthouse in Grand Forks.

The Naturalization Ceremony began with the Introduction of Applicants by Herminia Ewalt, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Officer. The Introduction was followed by the Presentation of Report and Examination and Eligibility for Citizenship; the Petitions for Name Change; and the Consideration of Motions.

The Honorable Ralph R. Erickson, Chief Judge, United States District Court, District of North Dakota, provided thoughtful and helpful comments on citizenship and administered the Oath of Citizenship. Wayne K. Stenehjem, North Dakota Attorney General, then welcomed the new citizens.

The Pledge of Allegiance was followed by a musical selection from Grand Forks Central High School students Shannon Burgard and Erin Cox.

Presentations of U.S. flags, flag pins, and informational brochures, as well as brief comments of welcome to the new citizens, were made by the following groups and their representatives:

Unit 6, American Legion Auxiliary of Grand Forks

VFW Post No. 1874 of Grand Forks

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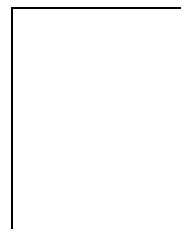
Prairie Grass Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution

Unit #2 of the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary of Grand Forks

North Dakota League of Women Voters

The Naturalization Ceremony concluded with a video message from U.S. President Barack Obama welcoming the new United States citizens.☀

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

