



Red River Voter

JAN.
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2009

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A look ahead...

GUESTS are always welcome at League meetings!

☑ **First Friday, JAN 9 (NOTE DATE) 12 noon-1 pm**

(Lunch available beginning at 11:30 AM)

Sons of Norway, 722 2nd Ave N, Fargo

Topic: Early Childhood Coalition of MN/ND

Speaker: Linda Lembke, Director

Lakes and Prairie Child Care Referral Agency

☑ **Jan. 20 Third Tuesday—Discussion 5:30 pm**

Moorhead Public Library, lower level meeting room

Topic: Youth Who Are Homeless

ALL Leaguers welcome!

☑ **First Friday, Feb. 6 12 noon– 1 pm**

(Lunch available beginning at 11:30 AM)

Sons of Norway, 722 2nd Ave. N., Fargo

Topic: Economic Conundrum

Speaker: Dr. Gregory Stutes, Director

Center for Economic Education, MSUM

◆NOTE:

Group discussions of First Friday topics will follow the speaker and Q&A for those who can participate. A second opportunity for discussion will be on Third Tuesday at the Moorhead Public Library (see above, Jan. 20 item.)

Meeting of interest:

Jan. 20 Doors open at 9 pm

MSUM Celebrates Obama Inauguration

MSUM Ballroom, Comstock Memorial Union

(see article page 3)

President's letter

Twenty some years ago, during a national LWV council meeting in Washington DC, we were encouraged to meet with our representatives in the US Congress and Senate. North Dakota is a state with a smaller population. We knew these people who represented us. We knew their families, their friends and their communities. The issues the LWVUS wanted us to discuss seemed rational and important.

One of our senators asked us more questions then we asked. He presented an hour long tutorial on the intricate process of creating laws in Washington DC. One of our issues was foreign aid. He told us his experience was that US foreign aid tended to pervert democracy and give more power to dictators.

The other senator greeted us warmly but turned our interview over to one of his aides. The aide was friendly and well-informed. He gave us some background on our issues. He assured us the issues presented would receive the full attention of our senator. Our interview was quick, pleasant and efficient.

Our congressional representative's office seemed anxious and harried. Aides were rushing about. They explained that an important vote was coming up and everyone needed to be fully prepared. Our congressman met with us for about five minutes. He wanted to tell us about what was important to him. During the entire interview he smoked a rather large cigar.

The LWV of the RRV needs people to interact with our representatives and the bureaucracies they control. During elections promises are made. Are the promises being kept? If laws are passed, how are they enforced and who enforces them. We are hearing about corruption in government in other states. We are hearing that the only way citizens will be heard is when they are willing to pay bribe money. How do we as citizens protect ourselves from being intimidated by our government? A woman in Fargo was told she had no right to tell street department people how to fix a dangerous pothole unless she was a highway engineer. A man who complained about destruction of park property along the river was told the property was a construction zone and the construction company had absolute power over the site. A woman who wanted the wood from a tree on her property the sanitation department had accidentally uprooted was told the tree belonged to the city.

(Continued, page 3)

2008-2009 LWVRRV Officers

Co-Presidents: Lois Altenburg

Patti Kratky

First Vice President:

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Board of Directors:

Sharon Benzel, Donna Chalimonczyk, Jessica Clark, Phyllis Emmel, Alice Hauan, Barbara Headrick, Amanda Noce.



Just
brewed

MEETINGS:

■ First Friday—JAN. 9

Linda Lembke, Director of the Lakes and Prairie Child Care Referral Agency, was a key speaker at the fall LWVRRV Issue Forum. She has extensive experience in community organization and child care and is involved with the Lakes and Prairie Community Action Agency.

As our speaker, Ms. Lembke will discuss the formation of the MN ND Child Care Coalition for action. (*See Child Care article, page 3.*)

■ Third Tuesday—Jan. 20

The long-awaited opportunity to discuss, in depth, issues that have been presented at First Friday meetings is here at last!

Leaguers are invited to attend the first meeting of its kind—to be held in the small meeting room, lower level, at the Moorhead Public Library, at 5:30 p.m. Refreshments and tea/coffee will be served.

Discussion questions such as how many shelter beds are available in the Cass-Clay area; what percentage are occupied by families with children under 18; what is the rate of occupancy; the causes of homelessness; governments' role; what agencies place personnel in housing facilities; and are there lobbying efforts our league should consider?

♦ **The League's Social Policy states:**

The League believes that all people have a right to housing. The public and private sectors should work together to ensure that everyone has access to adequate, decent, affordable housing.

■ First Friday—February 6

Dr. Gregory Stutes, Director of the Center for Economic Education, MSUM. Stutes, has been asked to address LWV issues that include international trade, USA relations with developing countries, and meeting basic human needs with income assistance, support services and housing supply.

With a new administration poised to address all these issues, it is important for us to understand how the national and international debate will evolve. With new cabinet appointments and presidential direction, there will be many, many areas leaguers should find highly interesting and waiting for debate.

■ MSUM Celebrates Obama Inauguration Tues, Jan. 20

MSUM will celebrate *A New Birth of Freedom* by offering the campus and community the opportunity to share the experience of the inauguration of the 44th President of the United States, Barack Obama.

The event will take place on Tuesday, January 20, 2009, in the Ballroom of the Comstock Memorial Union. Doors will open at 9 a.m. with the program beginning at 9:30 a.m., followed by a viewing of the inauguration events from Washington, DC. Obama will take the oath of office promptly at 11 a.m.

A lunch and other activities, including non-partisan political discussion, will follow in the afternoon related to the event. An evening dance is also planned.

If you or your organization would like to participate in the afternoon's events, please contact Rinita Dalan at dalanri@mnstate.edu. The web site will have up-to-date information: www.mnstate.edu/cah/obama.cfm

■ LWVMN schedules legislative interviews

Leagues throughout Minnesota are setting up appointments with local

legislators and Congressional members to interview them on issues of interest to district area leagues.

If you would like to be involved in this exciting and educational activity, contact: Patti Kratky, LWVRRV co-president, Patty4St04@aol.com or 218-233-8382

■ LWVMN begins program selection process

League members, living in Minnesota, are being asked to select up to three of the following choices in order of preferences (1 being highest priority). Responses will be compiled and submitted to the LWVMN:

Statewide bargaining for school districts, early childhood education. election laws, revenue sources for the state, reapportionment, economic viability and environmental health of family farms and farmers, evaluation of DNR, shoreland standards, effects of ethanol plants on water resources, plight of homeless, and alternative transportation were listed. Other subjects are also encouraged.

Send your preferences to Patti Kratky, LWVRRV co-president, Patty4St04@aol.com or 218-233-8382

■ 2009 LWVRRV Annual Meeting March 14

An exciting program is being planned to begin the 2009 League year. Deb White, Professor of Sociology & the Criminal Justice Department Chair, will be our featured speaker. Many of you may remember the exciting and lively discussion she led at a First Friday meeting a few years ago.

Audrey Richmond and Barb Headrick have reserved the VIP room in downtown Fargo.

Invitations will be mailed to LWVRRV members in February.

2008 ND early voting project

Mike Montplaisir, Cass County Auditor and DeAnn Buckhouse, Cass County elections auditor, reviewed the history, implementation, and results of the early voting project. There were some very pronounced positives and some lessons to be learned such as: more polling places are needed that are light, accessible, spacious, and have adequate parking. The e-poll books (electronic poll books) were very useful and quick and more will be ordered. The county hires poll workers since the law was changed (political parties chose workers in the past). Workers are paid for their service. Ms. Buckhouse is working toward certification as the county election administrator.

Nanci Krenelka, Clay County Auditor's office, reviewed the recount process and answered many questions from the audience. She told of one precinct that needed rechecking and explained how that process worked. Other precincts experienced few problems.

Clay County Recount—democracy working

Three LWVRRV members observed the recount of the Minnesota Senate race. They were: Bea Arett, Sharon Benzel and Patti Kratky. The recount lasted two days for twelve hours. LWV was part of a coalition of organizations interested in election integrity: The Common Cause MN, Citizens Interested in Election Integrity Minnesota and LWVMN.

The recount took 12 hours over two days. The Citizens Interested in Election Integrity sent a check list of the current letter and intent of the law. We filled out the 5-page form and returned it to them. We found the auditor of Clay County to be diligent



Voting speakers DeAnn Buckhouse & Mike Montplaisir, Cass County Auditor's office.

in following the letter and intent of current law and the process went smoothly and quickly recounting nearly 30,000 votes.

Machines do make errors but so do the people who designed the machines. The county is repaid for their efforts by the state at a rate of \$.03 per ballot. It was an intense practice in Democracy and satisfying to watch the event. The results of the original tally were not significantly changed.

—Patti Kratky, Recount Observer

2009 LWV members

The LWVRRV has 52 members with the addition of two new members. *A hearty welcome to:*

- ◆ DelRae Williams, Moorhead
- ◆ Frank Kratky, Moorhead

President's letter (continued)..

Citizens need access to regulations and regulators and the time and money to get involved.

Our Observer Corps does an excellent job of watching government in action and encouraging citizen involvement on important issues. Last year the observer corps encouraged a public forum on changing election polling sites. The forum produced needed information for citizens and useful suggestions for our election officials.

Every member of the LWVRRV is encouraged to be an LWV observer and to make reports at our meetings. We need observers at every level of government from park board to the National Park Service, from school board meetings to state educational policy meetings. We can make a difference if we can follow the play and know the players.

—Lois Altenburg, Co-President

Join the League!

Individual — \$50.00

Student— \$15.00

◆ **Send your check to:**

*League of Women Voters of the
Red River Valley*

PO Box 295, Fargo, ND 58107

Child Care Coalition

League representatives Amy Jacobson and Sue Altenburg participated in the founding sessions of the Child Care Coalition community group being formed to address issues in the region. This group is being formed to address the need for available quality child care and early childhood education. Leaders in early childhood education, daycare providers, local business leaders, legislators and parents are working to find solutions to childcare issues recently highlighted by the closing of multiple local childcare centers. Although it is early in the organization of this group, solutions to these problems appear promising as attention of decision makers is focused on finding answers.

- ◆ **League members interested in participating in the formation of positions for the LWVRRV on childcare should contact Amy or Sue at 701-297-6815. We will hold a meeting to clarify issues of interest and to determine how we can best participate in this process in the coming weeks.**

— Sue Altenburg

League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley
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LWV US Voter on-line

◆For those who would like to receive their National Voter on-line—or, to be *politically correct*, a "green copy":

In order to enroll for all future issues of the digital National Voter, you will have to register and login at the LWVUS web site, www.lwv.org (see below for step-by-step instructions).

The enrollment deadline for the next available issue is January 5, 2009, at 5 pm ET.

When the latest digital edition of The National Voter is ready, you will receive an e-mail notification and you will be able to access the issue with just a click (and your e-mail address and LWVUS login password).

After you have registered at www.lwv.org:

- ◆Login following the instructions.

- ◆When you get to your “My League/Welcome” page, click on “(Update your information)” at the bottom of the page.
- ◆Next, scroll to the bottom of the “Your Profile” page, click on the box “I wish to receive The National Voter electronically.”
- ◆Finally, click on “Submit Changes.”

Please note that if you currently receive the paper copy in the mail, you will no longer receive it when you subscribe to the digital edition. At any time, you may unsubscribe to the digital edition. Simply click on the same box and remove the checkmark.

- ◆**LWVRRV's Voter has been on-line for many years and can be accessed at www.lwvnd.org**

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.