

Voter

A look ahead...

LWV public meetings are held in the Sons of Norway Lodge, 722 2nd Ave. N., Fargo, in the meeting room behind the cafeteria. Members and guests who wish to go through the buffet line and eat together (in the lodge meeting room), may do so at 11:30 a.m.

March 1, Noon-1 p.m.

First Friday, Sons of Norway
Election Reform Speaker: Cory Fong
 N.D. Deputy Secretary of State

March 3, 2 p.m.

Lutheran Church of the Cross 1402 16th St. E., West Fargo
Seventh Annual Freedom Lecture: The Separation of Church and State: Was America Founded as a Christian Nation? by Richard Chapman
What Has the Supreme Court Said About Separation of Church and State? by James Leahy

March 14, 6-8 p.m.

Fargo Dome
Focus Fargo: School Facilities Community Dialogue #1
(See article)

March 20, 5:10-6:30 p.m.

LWVRRV Board Meeting
 United Way Office, 219 7th St. S.

April 4, 7:30 p.m.

Fargo Public Library Meeting Room
 LWVRRV Membership Unit Meeting: *Planning for the Future of Fargo's Schools*

April 5, Noon-1 p.m.

First Friday, Sons of Norway
The Model United Nations Conference
 Speaker: Dr. Andrea Conteh, MSU-M Political Scientist

April 17 LWNRRV

Annual Meeting Details will be in a special mailing.

April 25, 6 p.m.

FargoDome
FocusFargo: Community Dialogue #2: Discussion of Facilities Options

MINNESOTA RESIDENTS ONLY

March 12, 7 a.m.-8 p.m.
Moorhead Election Day *Vote on the proposed school construction project.*
 Voting precincts are the same as those used in last fall's city election plus the rural precincts within the school district. Election-day registration is permitted with proper identification including the potential voter's address in the precinct. Another registered voter in the precinct may also vouch for a person's residence. Absentee ballots are available from the Office of the Superintendent, 810 4th Ave. S., or call 284-3330.

March 16, 9-10:30 a.m.

Townsite Centre *District 9 Legislative Report*

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.

From the President

(The following is excerpted from a LWVUS press release):
 On February 14, 2002, The League of Women Voters of the United States proudly celebrated its 82nd Anniversary, relishing its many achievements. The League's rich history of civic participation continues to flourish 82 years later because of the commitment and energy of its grassroots members. "The League and its network of nearly 1,000 state and local Leagues are making democracy work at every level—national, state and local," said Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins, President, the League of Women Voters of the United States. "Every day our members are out in their communities helping in many ways—reforming the local jail and criminal justice systems, cleaning and preserving our nation's precious water supplies, educating new citizens about their democratic rights and responsibilities and partnering with our nation's youth to build an even stronger democracy for future generations," Jefferson-Jenkins stated.

"The League strives to make democracy work for all citizens. We have spent 82 years engaging citizens, calling on them to take part in their government and their communities through civic participation," Jefferson-Jenkins said. "Contrary to popular belief, American citizens are connected to and involved in their communities," Jefferson-Jenkins noted. "The League knows this because we have been right there with citizens making a difference for the past 82 years," emphasized Jefferson-Jenkins. "Our democracy is stronger because the League of Women Voters has helped citizens make it stronger. The League will always be there for our citizens," Jefferson-Jenkins added.

—*Andrea L. Sather, President, LWVRRV*

BOARD BRIEFS

At the Feb. 21 board meeting, President Sather called attention to the LWVUS convention to be held in Miami Beach, June 15-18. We can send four people. LWVRRV will pay airfare, hotel, registration and a banquet; delegates would be responsible for other meals and expenses. Suzanne Dobbins plans to attend. Anyone interested should let her know. Andrea distributed a MN resolution to reduce teen smoking but no action was taken.

The treasurer reported a balance of \$6,605.57 in the operating account. Approximately \$600 was realized from the Silent Auction held in conjunction with the State Convention on December 1. The finance drive has raised about \$4000. Audrey Richmond has been attending meetings of the Fargo Public Schools' steering committee for long-range facilities planning (see article elsewhere). She suggested holding a League unit meeting on the topic. She will organize the meeting.

Membership Chair Dobbins mentioned the need for monthly membership meetings and suggested these be held on the same night as board meetings. The best nights would be Tuesday or Thursday starting in April. The membership meetings could continue through the summer months. She is also seeking names of potential members for a membership drive.

Another Women in Action conference will take place in November, 2002, with Jennifer Koehler of NDSU as coordinator. Four NDSU students and 2 faculty attended a recent LOTT convention.

A successful MN District 9 Legislative Report session took place on Feb. 16. About 40 people attended and two television stations were there. Another forum will be held on March 16. It was suggested that we do some voter education for new citizens prior to the June elections.

(Excerpted from minutes by Mary Davies, Secretary

SEVENTH ANNUAL FREEDOM LECTURE

Once again the League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley, the North Dakota State League, the Cass County Bar Association, the Alex Stern Foundation and the Freedom Lectureship Fund are sponsoring the Annual Freedom Lecture in conjunction with the F/M Communitarianism. The theme for this year is "*Congress shall make no laws respecting the establishment of religion*." The lecture will take place at the Lutheran Church of the Cross, 1402 16th St. E., West Fargo on Sunday, March 3, at 2:00 p.m.

In a two-part program, the first topic will be, *Has America Founded as a Christian Nation?*, to be addressed by Richard Chapman, Asst. Professor of Religion at Concordia College. James Leahy, retired law professor at the Western School of Law, San Diego, will then present, *"What Has the Supreme Court Said About Separation of Church and State?"* Leahy is the founder of the Freedom Lecture series. Although the United States has followed the concept of separation of church and state, it is not always clear as to what this means. There should be a lively discussion.

ALL ABOUT...

Carla Hartje is a Financial Consultant for Wells Fargo Investments. She has been with Wells Fargo for 11 years and has worked in the investment area for 6 years. She specializes in long term individual and family retirement, college and personal wealth management.

Since she and her husband (Chuck of 26 years) are almost empty nesters (Peter 25 and Jacob 18) and no longer participating in the school volunteer staff, Carla began looking for a community organization to fill this void. She was raised as a "volunteer" kid. Carla's mom, a volunteer coordinator for the Grafton State School, had a simple "100 hours a year rule." Carla was looking for a group that would stretch across the river, and would be a learning and enriching experience. She also wanted the chance to get to know more area women and learn about our city government.

Carla really didn't know what the League was all about. She had read an article in a business publication and became curious about the local group. Carla said that "what I've learned is the very issues I find important (election reform, rising education expenses and increasing voter interest) were the League's key areas of focus—and the League seemed like a natural fit." As her work is very demanding, she must organize her "free time" carefully (or end up without any). The League has become her number-one focus, but she also enjoys her role as a member of the Wells Fargo local diversity council. She is a devotee to working with the Cultural Diversity Center in Moorhead in planning their fall event at the Hjemkomst and feels it's important to be a role model to others in bringing diversity of cultures into our work and day to day lives.

Carla has been very impressed with the meetings she's attended and those members of the board she has met and looks forward to meeting more members at the annual meeting in April.

Observer Corps

FARGO CITY COMMISSION

One of the duties of the Fargo City Commission is to approve the appointments and reappointments of citizens to serve on many boards and commissions. These people are recommended by the Mayor from a list of candidates who have applied or been recommended to him. Looking back over the meeting minutes for the last six months of 2001, the Commission approved the appointments of a total of 21 persons to sit on one or the other of ten different city boards. These 21 persons are helping to mold city policy for the future.

—*Carol Sawicki, Observer*

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Stay Tuned for Act II

At the January 4th First Friday meeting, the committee studying appointed boards and commissions in Fargo, Moorhead and West Fargo reported their findings. The committee mailed surveys to just over 200 members of city-appointed volunteer boards and commissions. Ninety-four surveys were completed and returned. Here are some of the findings from survey results and interviews:

There is little diversity.
 There are few racial or ethnic minorities represented and females are under-represented. Nearly all people serving were born before 1968.

There is no formal, well-publicized, application process in any of the cities.
 Most people appointed were asked to serve by the mayor, council member or city official.

At least half of survey respondents did not remember receiving training on ethics or conflict of interest.
 Suggestions made at the January 4th meeting included:

- Governing bodies need to be made aware of the importance of citizen input.
- Term limits could open up the system to more diversity.
- Cities need to market and make people aware of the opportunity to serve.
 You will want to be part of the process as we move to consensus and then to action.

Come to the annual meeting on Saturday, April 17!
Come to the annual meeting and be an actor in this drama. (or will it be a melodrama?). You can help write the drama.

BE A PART OF THE LEAGUE OBSERVER CORPS!

Are you interested in government and how it works? If you are a member of the League of Women Voters, then the answer to this question is almost certainly yes. Would you like to learn more and become more involved in local government? If the answer to this question is yes, then maybe you should consider joining the Observer Corps of the League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley.

Would you like a chance to help other local Leaguers be better informed citizens? This year the League is studying local board and commissions. There are a large number of these that operate in Fargo, Moorhead, West Fargo and Cass and Clay Counties. Most local citizens are not aware of the duties and importance of these bodies. A LWV observer can report back to our members via the Voter newsletter and help them learn more.

An observer, in most cases, spends only one or two hours per month attending the regular meetings of a local board or commission. All observers wear a badge identifying them as a league member. They do not participate in the meeting, except to ask a question for clarification if necessary.

Many regular Observers have discovered that attending local board meetings is an interesting and highly educational experience. The LWVRRV is a respected organization, and the people who make up these local decision-making groups come to know and respect individuals who come to observe them.

Observing is a good way for anyone who is considering political office to become known to the community. It can also help them decide where they can best use their own interests and talents to serve their community.

If you are interested or would like to learn more about the LWV Observer Corps, please contact Carol Sawicki at 232-5676.

FOCUS: FARGO

Facilities Planning Meetings
 The administration and board of education of Fargo Public Schools are seeking the public's ideas and priorities in order to develop a long-range educational facilities plan. To help with this process, the board has engaged consultants—DeJong and Associates, Inc. of Ohio. In addition, a steering committee was enlisted from various community organizations including school PTAs; the schools' faculty, board and staff; neighborhood associations; seniors; governmental bodies and other civic entities (including the League of Women Voters). These groups chose their own representatives. The committee has been meeting with the consultants in order to plan public meetings called Community Dialogues. There will be two meetings—the first on March 14 and the second on April 25. The content of the two meetings will not be the same. The goal is a sizable turnout for each, hence the site is the FargoDome.

DeJong has prepared a Background Information Report on Fargo's demographics, current school facilities and enrollment along with relevant financial data. A copy of this report will be available to each person attending the dialogue. The focus of the first meeting will be a questionnaire prepared by the committee. Each person will fill out an individual form with questions such as, "What do you feel is the ideal grade configuration?" The participants will then break into small groups to compare their answers and attempt to reach consensus. A committee member will facilitate each group and record final opinions. DeJong will objectively compile these results, a copy of which will be sent to each person who registers. The second meeting will focus on discussion of possible solutions to facilities issues in light of what seem to be the community's priorities. The goal of the process is to reach consensus and present a long-range facilities plan to the board of education.

Most League members know that our program this year has included a continuing study of area schools with a focus on planning. One of the problems has been accessing educational research. The DeJong Background Information Booklet is a good source. In addition, research materials have been made available on the inter net at: <http://www.fargo.k12.nd.us/er/LRFP/research/htm> (your computer must have Acrobat reader to access the program). The league's school study group is organizing a league unit membership meeting at the Fargo Public Library on April 4 at 7:30 for the purpose of presentation and discussion of these materials. Meanwhile, read our President's letter again and vow that you will attend the Community Dialogues and carry on the true spirit of league! Ask others to go with you.

Audrey Richmond

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