

# 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.

**January 4, 2002**

**First Friday at Sons of Norway Noon-1:00 p.m.**  
*League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley*

*Study of Local Boards and Commissions*

**Speakers:** Suzanne Dobbins and Barbara Headrick

**January 16 , 2002, 5:10-6:30 p.m.**

**LWVRR Board Meeting**

United Way Office, 219 7th St. S., Fargo

**February 1, 2002, Noon-1:00 p.m.**

**First Friday at Sons of Norway**

*Keeping our Community Safe from Public Health Threats*

**Speaker:** Maxine Adams, American Cancer Society

**March 1, 2002, Noon-1:00 p.m.**

*Election Reform*

**Speaker:** Cory Fong, Deputy Secretary of State for North Dakota

**Events of Possible Interest**

**January 21, 2002, 7:00 p.m.**

**Fargo Theatre**

**Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Celebration**

Program, speakers, film

*(more info below.)*

**Saturday, February 16, 2002**

*Woodlands and High Plains Native American Powwow* on the Concordia campus. The event is sponsored by the three local colleges and is open to the public.

*(more info below.)*

**7th Annual Freedom Lecture**

**March 3, 2002, 2:00 p.m.**

Lutheran Church of the Cross, 1402 16th St. E. West Fargo

*Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?*

**Speakers:** Dr. Richard Chapman and Attorney James Leahy

The LWVND and RRV help sponsor this event. It is open to the public at no charge. Refreshments will be served.

*(FWM Communitarity brochure has further details.)*

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.

The ABC's of PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS

**What are TIFs and PILOTS?**

TIF (Tax Increment Financing) districts have been in the local news several times lately, most recently as part of a disagreement between the West Fargo School District and the City of Fargo. However, many people do not understand exactly what a TIF district is, and why they may be controversial. The next few paragraphs are an attempt at explaining TIFs, along with other forms of property tax exemptions that the city of Fargo has used over the years to encourage business investment, growth and economic development.

There are several different types of exemptions, some for residential property and some for commercial property. The largest residential exemptions are available for up to two years for certain new construction. There are also several smaller programs available to homeowners in certain areas of the city for remodeling and for others in special circumstances.

The exemptions that are available to commercial property owners involve larger amounts of money, and are sometimes more controversial.

The two main varieties are known as PILOTS (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) and TIFs (Tax Increment Financing). Both types allow commercial developers to have a reduced property tax burden for a period of time. The city grants this benefit in the hope that after the exemption period has ended, the property and business will have increased in value, bringing in increased tax revenue as well as new jobs and income for the local population.

PILOTS are available for new or expanding industries that meet certain criteria. The property owner generally continues to pay taxes on land, but is exempted from paying property taxes on buildings constructed on the land for some amount of time (generally five years).

In other cases a longer period of tax reduction is granted. The property owner and the city negotiate a payment schedule.

TIF districts are created to encourage development in parts of the city that have not kept up with the progress shown in other areas.

These districts have generally been set up to last from 15 to 20 years. During this time period, the city only receives tax income on the original value of the property, even if the property has been developed and increased in value. The difference (the Tax Increment) is used to pay for such things as water mains and street improvements, that would otherwise have been paid for by special assessments.

Since, in our area, approximately two-thirds of property tax income goes to school districts, they are strongly impacted by property tax exemptions. In the short term, these exemptions reduce the amount of income increase that the school districts could receive from growth and development. The Fargo City Commission makes the final decision on all property tax exemptions. This means that the Commission can affect the revenue that the schools receive in both the Fargo and West Fargo school districts since the latter gets the portion of the property tax directed to schools from Fargo land in the West Acres area.

—Carol Sawicki, Fargo Commission Observer

**FROM THE PRESIDENT**

**HAPPY NEW YEAR FELLOW LEAGUERS!** I hope this latest issue of the *Red River Valley Voter* finds you all healthy and happy and looking forward to the challenges and opportunities that 2002 holds.

Reflection upon LWVRRV activities during 2001 reveals great successes, including sponsoring the first annual Women in Action Forum held at Concordia College this past fall (kudos to LWVRRV member and collegiate chapter President, Colleen Herman for all her hard work in organizing this amazing event!). We also joined forces with LWVMN and LWVND to host a Leadership Workshop in October, sponsored numerous candidates forums and took part in naturalization ceremonies.

Looking forward, the study group examining local boards and commissions will be releasing their findings. We will be teaming up with LWVND to study election administration reform in North Dakota and sponsor a comprehensive election reform symposia to be held in Spring, 2002.

As an election year, 2002 holds great opportunity for LWVRRV to once again take a leadership role in the local political scene. This year is our chance to build on the success of our past leadership to widen the influence and impact of LWVRRV.

The League cannot accomplish its goals without YOU! Please volunteer in any way you can. Never before has LWVRR enjoyed such a collection of time, energy, talent and money at its disposal. Feel free to contact any board member to learn about volunteer opportunities.

Here's to a fabulous 2002!

*Andrea Sather, President*

League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley

**DISPELLING THE MYTHS ABOUT ISLAM**

The November First Friday meeting attracted a full house at the Sons of Norway as Concordia psychology professor, Dr. Mona Ibrahim attempted to help the audience understand her religious faith, Islam. Born in Egypt, Dr. Ibrahim recently became a U. S. citizen here in Fargo.

At the outset, she explained that Islam means submission to the one God's will peacefully. Allah, the one God, originated with Abraham known also to Jews and Christians. Islamic believers or Muslims follow the teachings of Muhammed. They believe he was a prophet who, over a period of 23 years, received revelations from Allah about how to live a good life. These revelations were compiled in the Qur'an. The religion is based on five tenets known as "pillars" basic to Islam.

First is belief in one God. Muhammed as God's prophet, the holy books, and an after life. Second is prayer practiced five times a day at dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset and night. Third is the giving of alms to the less fortunate. Fourth is the observance of fasting and self denial during the Ramadan holy days. The final requirement is a pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia called the Hajj.

During her remarks and challenges during the question period, Dr. Ibrahim repeated that the Islamic faith is peaceful and that the term "jihad," frequently used in the media as referring to holy war, actually means a struggle within the believer to obey Allah's will.

She stated that there is "no concept of holy war in Islam." She also mentioned that some Muslims retain cultural practices which are not Islamic and may contribute to violent behavior.

**PEOPLE NOTES**

Board member Diane Meyer has completed her radiation treatments. Reports are that she looks great, enjoyed a family Christmas and has been getting out and about.

*Happy new year to all our members and readers!*

**REVISED HISTORY OF FARGO AVAILABLE**

The book *History and Growth of Fargo*, prepared by Tim Holtzamm and Dean Dormanen for the Fargo Historical Preservation Commission in 1993; revised and edited in 2001 by David B. Danbom, Dept. of History, NDSU, is available at area book stores including Zanbroz in downtown Fargo.

**AROUND LEAGUE'S WORLD...**

**Special thanks**

Appreciation is due to those who helped with the mailing of 230 local league study surveys sent to members of city-appointed boards and commissions in November. **Thank you to Mary Davies, Marian Stine, Jackie Cox, Marlene Batterberry and Audrey Richmond**

Members helping with the candidates' forums in Moorhead were: *Janet Van Amberg, Sharon Benzel, Bea Arett, Mary Davies, Andrea Sather, Donna Chalimonczyk, Diane Meyer, Betsy Vinz and Helen Rudie.* In addition, help was received from non-members *Rose Anderson, Bob Davies, Eric Chalimonczyk, Roger Stipson and Susan Bekkeris.*

**Thanks to all.**

Over 100 people attended the Moorhead city election candidates forum on October 25 featuring sixteen candidates. A busy night! A special thanks to *David Martin* of the F-M Chamber of Commerce, *Julie Marxon* and *Holly Heitkamp* from Senior Connections/Heimkomst Center.

**MINNESOTA NEWS**

**Legislative interviews**

Prior to each legislative session LWVMN asks local leagues to do interviews with their local legislators. Interviews serve to help us know our legislators and for them to know the League and the issues LWVMN is following. Questions for the 2002 legislative interview focus on agriculture campaign finance, firearms, housing and long term care. The interviews are an opportunity to get to know our legislators' positions, not a time for us to lobby. The state league keeps the interviews on file to refer to during the session.

We are to do the interviews prior to January 15. We will try to schedule lunch or coffee with the three District 9 legislators in separate meetings. If anyone is interested in attending any of them please call Mary Davies, 233-2175 or email her at [marBob7@aol.com](mailto:marBob7@aol.com). It's nice to have several people attend each meeting.

**LWVMN Community Immigration Profile**

The LWVMN has a current study on the impact of immigration in Minnesota. As part of the study, leagues across the state are being asked to help gather information on the statewide picture. In order to be included in a state publication this information is due in the state office by March 1. If anyone is interested in helping gather this information, contact Mary Davies, 233-2175.

**MOORHEAD TO HOST POWWOW**

The Woodlands and High Plains Native American Powwow to be held at Concordia College on February 16, 2002, will be the first traditional powwow to be held in Moorhead in three years. In the past, the spring powwow was one of the best-attended cultural events in the F-M area. Emphasizing celebration rather than competition, organizers expect dancers, drum groups and spectators from throughout the Midwest.

Bernice Grandbois, Concordia's Director of American Indians Programs, said, "The powwow is an opportunity for people from different cultures to come together for mutual understanding and friendship...the powwow is a social gathering where we teach our youth respect and traditional ways."

Three local students have been named head dancers for the 2002 powwow. They are Concordia student Nate Herman and twin sisters Amber and April Ray of Minnesota State University Moorhead.

Students, staff, faculty, and F-M community members are invited to join the planning committee for this important event. You need not be of American Indian descent to join the committee.

For more information or to join the committee, contact: Bernice Grandbois, Concordia College, 299-4171, Gus Claymore or Jody Steile, MSUM, 236-3572, or Paul Boswell, NDSU, 231-7514.

**Observer Corps**

**MOORHEAD PARKS AND RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD**

At the December 18, 2001 meeting, Director Riazi Aziz announced the Polar Party to be held on February 2, 2002. This will include a snowshoe race, ice fishing demonstration and horse-drawn rides with the Red River Harness Club. Activities will take place at M.B. Johnson Park. Assess introduced the need for the parks department to do long-range planning. State budget woes will present a challenge to city funding and parks/recreation funding is especially vulnerable. Aggressive planning is needed to assess future parks/recreation priorities. There is a need for a comprehensive plan for capital improvements. A plan needs to look at bike trails, improvements at the Village Green Golf Course, the costs of after-school and summer programming, efficiencies that would come in consolidating activities such as skating rinks in fewer locations, and the costs of park improvements in new property developments. It wasn't clear whether staff or the advisory Board would be developing the long-range plan or what the timetable is. A new \$40,000 grant for Romkey Park has been received. The police and Community Development Departments have prepared a proposal which will provide two years of enhanced programming for youth at that site.

—Mary Davies, Observer

**MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY CELEBRATION**

The birthday of the Martin Luther King Jr. will be marked with a program at the Fargo Theater on January 21, 2002, at 7:00 p.m.

The Moorhead Human Rights Commission and the Fargo Human Relations Commission along with other interested groups are planning the event.

There will be musical selections by several groups including a Trollwood Multicultural Children's Choir. Also featured will be a video of King's "I Have a Dream Speech," several speakers and the presentation of human rights awards.

**JOIN THE LEAGUE!**

Support the good work of the League by becoming a member or reinvigour your membership. Send your check to: The League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley, P.O. Box 295, Fargo, ND 58107. Current dues are: Student: \$ 12.50, Individual: \$ 40.00 Household \$ 60.00.

Be sure to include your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address.

[back to top](#) [back to homepage](#)