

A LOOK AHEAD...

GUESTS are always welcome at League meetings!

First Friday, March 7, 12:00 noon-1:00 PM,
(lunch available beginning at 11:30 AM)

Sons of Norway, 722 2nd Ave N, Fargo

Topic: The ADA Restoration Act and Disability Rights

Speaker: Nate Aalgaard, Executive Director of Freedom Resource Center for Independent Living

Saturday, March 15, 10:00-12:00 noon

Northtown Grill meeting room,

3520 12th Ave N, Fargo

(order brunch from the menu)

League of Women Voters-Red River Valley - Annual Meeting,

The official notification and program for this meeting will be mailed to all LWVRRV members

First Friday, April 4, 12:00 noon-1:00 PM

(lunch available beginning at 11:30 AM)

Sons of Norway, 722 2nd Ave N, Fargo

Topic: Current and proposed regulations on smoking in our communities

Speakers: Randy Thorson, Fargo businessman and Bette Deede, Fargo's Smoke-free Air For Everyone coalition (SAFE)

Monday, April 21, 6:30-8:00 PM

YWCA meeting room, 3000 University Dr. S.

Women's Pay Equality Day Event

Co-sponsored by the AAUW Fargo-Moorhead, the Women's Network of the Red River Valley and the LWVRRV along with other groups.

Thursday, May 1, 6:30-8:30 PM

Fargo City Commission Chamber

200 3rd St N, Fargo

Candidates' Forums: Fargo Races on the June 10th Ballot

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Recycling is a concept I experienced as a child. However, the LWV helped me to understand the political, economic and environmental importance of recycling. My grandparents were North Dakota and Minnesota pioneers and frugality helped them survive. My parents started a business in Fargo in 1932. Throughout the depression years of the 1930's and the war years of the 1940's we held on to and reused whatever we could. It was not until Bernie and I were in New York City in 1970 during a sanitation workers strike that I became aware of how much garbage and trash our life style generates. Some parts of the USA are much better at recycling than we are and our area needs to study how we can become efficient recyclers again.

The LWV has recycled me into many different jobs. When I first was appointed to the local board in the early 1970's, I was a young mother with four children. Our board meetings were noisy and chaotic with young children needing attention between roll-call votes. It was amazing how much we were able to accomplish during those busy years. At our October 2007 LWVRRV board meeting I was appointed secretary pro tem. Every time I assume the job of secretary it increases my admiration for those who do the job of secretary very well. Alberta Dobry will certainly be missed this year. I hope she is using her excellent skills to serve another worthy organization in her new residence. Now I am president pro-tem. Our excellent elected president had to follow our by-laws and resign from office while she seeks an elective position in ND state government. In some ways, the LWVRRV operates like our national government. Our constitutions, bylaws and rules of procedure are strong enough for us to continue operating despite the departure of members and officers.

The annual meeting of LWVRRV is March 15th. At this meeting we will need to elect new officers and board members. We will elect a new president, secretary, directors and nominating committee. We are confident that talented members will agree to be elected to these positions. If you are willing and able to serve in these positions, even if you have been recycled many times or are a new member of LWVRRV, we need to hear from you right now! Please call me, Lois Altenburg at 232-2701 or Alice Hauan at 232-5796.

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OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

Public Informational Meeting by City of Fargo on Southside Flood Project Feb. 8, 2008

This was a public information meeting conducted by the city of Fargo at Discovery Junior High on 5 proposed plans to alleviate flooding south of I-94.

Several hundred Fargo and Cass County residents (the *Forum* reported 500) heard current proposals to alleviate flood south of I-94.

Jeff Volk of Moore Engineering, Inc. presented a review of the 5 proposed plans that had been updated since the last public meeting on this project in December 2006. Each of these plans address the concern of new FEMA standards expected later this year that will result in most of those living south of I-94 to be placed in the 100-year floodplain and subject to federal requirements for flood insurance. The plans use levees, diversions, a floodway channel extensions and storage to meet FEMA standards and lessen the impact of a 100-year flood. As a comparison, Mr. Volk also presented impacts on the 1997 flood, which was not a 100-year flood. The main goal of each of these plans appears to be to alleviate the impact of the Wild Rice River and overland flooding. The costs for each of the plans was presented with ranges from the most basic version of the plan to how much it would cost by adding a floodway channel extension and more supplemental storage.

April Walker of the City Engineering Department presented estimates of the cost of flood insurance if nothing is done. This information used floodsmart.gov to show very high costs for property owners in the 100-year floodplain. Jeff Volk presented preliminary cost projects for the proposed plans in comparison. Even with the rise in property taxes through special assessments, the cost is less than flood insurance. Mark Bittner completed the presentation by discussing other flood projects underway or being projected throughout the city and the current schedule from now until completion for the south side project. This schedule is below and includes more public meetings with neighborhoods, neighboring cities, the county commission and others who ask for a meeting leading up to a city commission selection of a preferred alternative in April.

Southside Flood Protection Preliminary Project Schedule

Public presentation on project alternatives: 2/7/08

Neighborhood & adjacent community meetings:

Feb.- Apr., 2008

City Commission selection of preferred alternative:

4/08

Project design & permitting: May-June, 2008

Public hearing on preferred alternative: May 2008

Right-of-way acquisition: June 2008

Functional completion: April 2010

Final Completion: September 2010

The meeting included numerous questions from the audience on concerns about lack of federal and state assistance for the project, the potential for rising costs to complete the project, how property owners in the SE Cass Water District would vote on the special assessment, and impact on those living north of I-94. Mr. Volk and Mr. Bittner answered each question given current information. For example, Mr. Volk informed the audience that under state law a water district contract cannot go more than 20% over the costs that residents of that water district were informed of when they cast their votes for the special assessment. He also informed the audience that the impact of the project on the river lessens as the river goes north. That is, if a proposal projects a 100-year flood at a particular level at I-94 that level will be less at the Fargo Water Plant on 13th Ave S and continue to lessen as the river goes north. They also informed the audience that efforts for more federal and state funding were underway, but the current projections on the special assessments take a conservative view of the success of those efforts.

More information on the plan is available at <http://www.cityoffargo.com/CityInfo/Departments/Engineering/FloodControlProjectsandProtection/SouthSideFloodControlProject/>

WOMEN'S PAY EQUALITY DAY EVENT

Women still earn 77 cents on the dollar as compared to their male counterparts. To match men's earnings for 2008, women will have to work from January, 2008 to April 22, 2008 – an extra four months.

The Fargo Moorhead branch of the American Association of University Women and the Women's Network of the Red River Valley is having a public educational event around this issue on Monday evening, April 21 – the eve of Pay Equality Day – from 6:30 to 8:00 PM. This event will be held in the meeting room at the YWCA, 3000 University Drive S. in Fargo. LWVRRV will also be a co-sponsor of the event. Light refreshments will be served, there will be table discussions on gender-based pay inequalities, and a panel of women will talk of the pay inequalities and discrimination they have faced.

CONSENSUS MEETING ON JUDICIAL SELECTION IN MINNESOTA

On January 24, 2008, a consensus meeting was held by the Minnesota members of the LWVRRV in Moorhead, MN. Eight people attended the meeting; one was ineligible to vote. We voted seven to zero to concur with the Judicial Selection Position. We included the following additional comments with our concurrence report:

The members present strongly encouraged that the Selection Commissions be non-partisan, and geographically representative of the districts involved.

We further stress that the performance reports be public information and widely distributed to the public.

On February 22, 2008 the League of Women Votes of Minnesota published the following press release:

ST. PAUL, Minn- Minnesota should adopt a system of merit selection and retention elections for Minnesota's judges. This is the position announced today by the League of Women Voters Minnesota (LWVMN) following a study begun last May and consensus expressed by an overwhelming majority of its members statewide.

Helen Palmer, co-chair of the League's 15-member Committee on Judicial Selection, said the LWVMN studied the issue and interviewed experts from the Minnesota Supreme Court, the Minnesota Court of Appeals, the Republican and DFL parties, the Minnesota State Bar Association, the United States District Court, the legislature and members of Minnesota's Commission on Judicial Selection.

"Ultimately, 34 LWVMN chapters across the state met, reviewed the committee report, and voted 99% in favor of merit selection and retention elections for Minnesota's judges," she said.

LWVMN's official position on judicial selection supports initial appointment to the judiciary by the Governor from a list a candidates provided by an impartial nominating commission. A judge's performance is evaluated at the end of his or her term by a broadly based and nonpartisan evaluation commission, whose results are made available to the public. Based upon the information provided, voters choose to retain or not retain a sitting judge.

"The League of Women Voters of Minnesota believes this system is the best at keeping politics and money out of elections," said Palmer. "It assures that new judges will be highly qualified; it provides for performance evaluation for all judges; and it offers unbiased information to voters who have the final word as to whether a judge should or should not be kept in office." LWVMN rejected the federal appointment model which involves legislative confirmation because of the high potential for partisan battles. Similarly, LWVMN rejected a pure appointment model because it removes voters from the process.

In Minnesota it was long considered unethical for judicial candidates to seek campaign endorsements from political parties and special interest groups or to proclaim their personal positions on controversial issues in order to win their elections. However, in 2005 the U.S. Supreme Court concluded in the White decision that Minnesota's system of competitive judicial elections cannot limit campaign speech. As a result, Minnesota's judicial candidates may now announce their views on issues, seek, accept and use political party endorsements, and directly ask for campaign contributions.

"LWVMN believes that the White decision threatens the independence of Minnesota's judiciary and leaves the judicial election process open to the worst kind of political manipulation and subject to the corrupting influence of money," said Palmer.

She cited Justice Sandra Day O'Connor who said, "Judicial independence does not happen all by itself. It is tremendously hard to create, and easier than most people imagine to destroy." The League will testify before the House Government Operations Committee February 26 and will follow the issue closely in this legislative session.

LWVMN's full position along with the full text of the rationale is available at www.lwvmn.org or at the LWVMN State Office, 550 Rice Street, St. Paul, MN 55103 or by calling (651) 224-5445.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER *(CONTINUED FROM PG. 1)*

New members are always welcome in LWVRRV.

Please invite someone to join you at our annual meeting. That person may become very inspired by one of our many activities and programs. Someone you invite may be next year's leader in the LWVRRV. At our annual meeting we will circulate a book by the LWVUS titled "Impact on Issues 2006-2008, A Guide to Public Policy Positions." This book details the position of the LWV in many areas of public policy. Each position was developed through consensus with local and state leagues.

This summer at our national league convention in Portland we will use consensus to craft our public policy on Immigration. After we have created our public policy position we can use it to lobby for the creation of state, local, federal and international legislation. A clear understanding of LWVUS positions, how they interrelate and how they can complement and reinforce other positions, will strengthen our impact on issues at all levels of government.

—Lois Altenburg, *President*

League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley

P.O. Box 295

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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.

Join the League!

Individual — \$45.00; Household— \$67.50

Student— \$15.00

Send your check to:

*League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley
PO Box 295, Fargo, ND 58107*

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

2007-2008 LWVRRV Officers

President:	Lois Altenburg
First Vice President	Carol Sawicki
Second Vice President	Mary Tintes
Secretary	Open
Treasurer	Sherri Seeba

Board of Directors

Jessica Clark, Alice Huan, Barbara Headrick,
Amy Jacobson, Patti Kratky and Carol
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