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## ***A look ahead...***

GUESTS are always welcome at League meetings!

### **First Friday, November 4, noon-1:30 pm.**

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

(lunch available beginning at 11:30 AM)

Topic: Women's Role in Global Democracy

Panelists: Members of the NDSU International Students' Association

### **Tuesday, November 8, 7AM-8PM**

Election Day

Moorhead Mayor

Moorhead Council (four seats)

Moorhead School Board (three seats)

### **First Friday, December 2, noon-1:30 pm**

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

(lunch available beginning at 11:30 AM)

Topic: Youth Alcohol Abuse

*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 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.*

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## ***Interested in local government? Join the LWVRRV Observer Corps!***

If you have a special interest in any local governing body, you can be involved by being a League Observer. There are many agencies that make decisions that concern all of us, our schools, parks, city planning and in many other areas. Since many of the meetings are televised on a local cable channel, observing can often be done by watching the meeting in your home at a time that is convenient to you.

By attending public meetings of various local governmental agencies, the Observer Corps keeps our elected officials aware of the League's interest in local government. By reporting on these meetings in the Newsletter, the Corps helps all League members be informed citizens.

Each observer regularly attends the public meetings of a city council, school board or other elected body which makes decisions affecting our daily lives. An observer is a listener, not a participant, and interprets and summarizes the debates and decisions. The observer also identifies problems, proposals and actions that bear upon League program items or that might be significant in future program development and alerts the League's Board. If so instructed by the President or a Vice President, an observer may present a prepared, official statement on behalf of the League before the elected body.

If you would like to know more about the Corps or to become an observer or an alternate, please contact Carol Sawicki at [csawicki@corpcomm.net](mailto:csawicki@corpcomm.net)

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## **Board Briefs**

### **Meet Some Members of the League Board**

I came to the League through a long-time League member, Bonnie Askew (so, invite a friend to League, all!). A lawyer by training, I developed an interest in affecting the policies that govern our lives in my work with legal services, especially working with migrant farm workers. I came to see how the policies of government that govern our lives need all of us to give feedback, opinions and participation (including running for office or being appointed to office), in order to get a democratic government that's fair for all. Perhaps that's a goal, but a journey begins with one step....

*Cheryl Bergian*

Years ago I became interested in the LWV when I received a Voter Guide developed by the League that presented both sides of a confusing issue which required marking "yes" on the ballot to vote against the proposal. Now, after years of merely paying dues, I feel like I finally have time to participate in League operations. I accepted the office of secretary because I felt up to the challenge and heard it's often difficult to fill this position

*Alberta Dobry*

My interest in community issues and politics can be traced back to one source, my mother. She was a well informed individual who never missed voting in an election. I moved to Fargo in October 2000 and realized I knew nothing about local politics. I joined the LWV-RRV to change that situation.

I might not have always agreed with my mom's party line voting, but I do agree with exercising my right.

*Sherri Seeba*

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## **First Call to**

### **LWVUS Convention 2006**

*From LWVUS President Kay J. Maxwell*

**WHAT:** The LWVUS 47th National Convention: "Meeting in the Middle"

**WHEN:** June 10-13, 2006

Friday, June 9 Pre-Convention Training 2-5 pm.

Saturday, June 10 Briefings 10am-Noon

Saturday, June 10 Call to Order 1pm.

Tuesday, June 13 Adjourn Noon

**WHERE:** Hilton Minneapolis, Minneapolis, MN

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## **President's Letter**

As we move into the League year, you might be wondering where the President is – I haven't been at the First Friday meetings, yet. I'm teaching at the Law School in Grand Forks this semester, and haven't been able to be in Fargo for a First Friday meeting (although I hope to one of these months!).

Speaking of First Friday meetings, we're always looking for ideas for programs. We look for anything that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, increases our understanding of major policy issues, or provides education for influencing public policy – which means that many topics and presenters would fit. So, if you have a suggestion, please send me an e-mail or give me a call, [cherylbergian@cablone.net](mailto:cherylbergian@cablone.net) or 793-2002, or let Sherri Seeba know at a First Friday meeting.

*Cheryl Bergian, LWVRRV President*

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## **Recent Business Donors**

### **LWVRRV Donors**

Moorhead Drug Co., Moorhead  
Boulger Funeral Home, Fargo

### **LWV Education Fund Donors**

Korsmo Funeral Home, Moorhead.  
Dakota Monument Co., Fargo

*The League of Women Voters Education Fund is a 501(c)(3) organization whose purpose is to promote political responsibility and participation of citizens in government through education projects. Donations to the LWV Ed Fund are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.*

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## ***Women in Politics, Past & Present***

Women's Equality Day, Friday, August 26, 2005 was the 85th Anniversary of the passage the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that gave women the right to vote.

On July 19-20, 1848, in Seneca Falls NY, over 200 women and 40 men met to hold a women's rights convention. From that event came a document entitled the Declaration of Sentiment. It contained the familiar sounding, but no less revolutionary statement:

*"We hold these truths to be self evident that all men and women are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain I inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"*

These activists were publicly ridiculed and their ideas widely rejected at the time. Most Americans could not imagine a country in which *all* men *and* women would be treated as equals. That certainly had not been the intent of our founding fathers when they drafted the Declaration of Independence and later the Constitution that established the foundation of law in our newly formed country.

These activists fought, not only for women's right to vote, but also their right to attend college and to own property. They fought against domestic violence, and some also fought against slavery and for the passage of the 15<sup>th</sup> amendment, granting Black men the right to vote. And their struggle wasn't easy. When Alice Paul and other members of the National Women's Party picketed the White House during WWI, the first people ever to do so, spectators assaulted them verbally and physically. The police stood by and did nothing to defend them. Later, hundreds of women were arrested and 33 were convicted. They were jailed, beaten, deprived of sleep, fed worm-infested food, and when they began a hunger strike, they were violently force-fed.

We should never take for granted the rights that these women were fighting for. It is because of them that we celebrate Women's Equality Day. But the equality that they were fighting for extended beyond the voting booth, and in many cases has yet to be achieved. Nationally, American women are paid 76 cents for every dollar men earn. And women are still vastly underrepresented in elective office. In 2005, women hold 15% of the 535 seats in Congress. Since 1917, when the first woman, Jeannette Rankin from Montana, was elected to Congress, women have gained an average of 1.7 seats every Congressional session (every 2 years.) At this rate, women will not reach 50% until 2172.

In Minnesota, women hold 29.8% of state legislative seats, ranking 12<sup>th</sup> in the nation for highest percentage of women state legislators. North Dakota, where only 16.3% of legislators are women, is currently ranked 37<sup>th</sup> in the nation. North Dakota also lost women in recent elections and are down from a high of 26 women in 2000 to 23 now. In fact, there is the same number of women in the North Dakota legislature now as there were in 1994 and only three more than there were in 1979.

Women's position in elective offices in the U.S. is also low compared to many other countries. The United States has one of the lowest percentages of women in a national legislature of any advanced industrialized country. It ranked below 72 other countries around the world, including Cuba, which had more than twice as large a percentage of women national legislators in 2004 (36% compared to 14.3% in the U.S.), Vietnam (27.3%), and Pakistan (21.6%).

Greater efforts need to be made to identify and support women candidates for elective office. In 2004, a record 141 women gained major party nominations for U.S. House seats. But that is still only 16% of all major party candidates for House seats. Even if all of these women candidates had won, they would still hold under a third of all House seats. In 2004, 2,220 women sought state legislative seats. This was actually a slight decrease from 2000, when 2,228 women ran for state legislatures. The largest number of women candidates for legislatures was in 1992 (The Year of the Woman), when 2,375 women ran.

There are myriad reasons why fewer women than men run, including family responsibilities and the ever increasing financial burden of running a campaign. Many young women also report that they lack women mentors and role models that might help them to enter politics. A study by the White House Project found that 49% of young women respondents reported that having a mentor would make it much easier for them to run and 33% said it would make them much more interested in running. Young women of color are particularly likely to report lacking women mentors and role models. And they are more likely than young white women to report that having a mentor would make it much easier for them to run for office. We need to reach out to these young women if we are going to make serious strides in accessing high-level elective offices. A study by the Eagleton Institute of Politics found that half of today's top elected officials, from mayors of large cities to the President, held their first elective office when they were thirty-five or younger. In contrast, women candidates usually run for their first office after they are in their forties.

There are numerous organizations successfully working to identify and support women candidates but we, as individuals, can also make a difference. Encourage your local political party to recruit more women to run, host a house party to introduce your friends and colleagues to a local woman candidate, mentor young women and encourage them to aspire to be the next generation of leaders, and of course, inviting women to run for office or consider doing so yourself. When we celebrate Women's Equality Day we need to also acknowledge the work that still needs to be done, and continue to work for the gender equality that those early women's rights activists believed in.

*Deborah White, PhD, Associate Professor of Sociology  
Minnesota State University Moorhead*

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## **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.

The League of Women Voters Education Fund is a nonpartisan public policy educational organization which:

- Builds citizen participation in the democratic process.
- Studies key community issues at all governmental levels in an unbiased manner.
- Enables people to seek positive solutions to public policy issues through education and conflict management.

We believe in:

- Respect for individuals.
- The value of diversity.
- The empowerment of the grassroots, both within the League and in communities.

We will:

- Act with trust, integrity and professionalism.
- Operate in an open and effective manner to meet the needs of those we serve, both members and the public.
- Take the initiative in seeking diversity in membership.
- Acknowledge our heritage as we seek our path to the future.

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## **LWVRRV 2005-2006**

### **Officers & Board of Directors**

<b>President</b>	Cheryl Bergian
<b>First Vice President</b>	Carol Sawicki
<b>Second Vice President</b>	Lois Altenburg
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Margaret Blue,	Lynne Olson,
Sharon Benzel,	Twylla Conner,
Sherri Seeba	Helen Rudie.

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### **Join the League!**

Individual	\$45.00
Household	\$67.50
Student	\$15.00

#### **Send your check to the**

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