



## A look ahead...

**GUESTS are always welcome at League meetings!**

- First Friday, March 4** **12noon--1 PM**  
 Sons of Norway, Lounge area, 722 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. N., Fargo  
 (Lunch available beginning at 11:30 AM)  
**Topic: Human Rights Legislative Issues in the FM Area**  
**Speakers:** DelRae Williams, LWVRRV Director  
 Cindy Gomez, High Plains Reader,  
 Michael Carbone, ND Homeless project
- Saturday, March 12** **9:30 AM-Noon**  
 Radisson Hotel, Fargo  
**LWVRRV Annual Meeting—Information, page 3**
- Monday, March 14** **9 AM—3 PM**  
 North Dakota State Capitol Building, Bismarck  
**WE Rise, Women's Lobby Day—Information, page 3**
- First Friday, April 1** **12 noon--1PM**  
 Sons of Norway, 722 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. N., Fargo  
 (lunch available beginning at 11:30 AM)  
**Topic: Open Meeting Laws, in Principle and in Practice**  
**Speaker:** Matt Von Pinnon, Editor, *The Forum*
- Tuesday, April 19** **Noon**  
 Speak Easy Restaurant, 1001 30th Ave. S., Moorhead  
**Third Tuesday, LWVRRV Discussion meeting**
- First Friday, May 6** **12 noon—1 PM**  
 Sons of Norway, 722 2nd Ave. N., Fargo  
 (Lunch available beginning at 11:30 AM)  
**Topic: North Dakota Redistricting Reform Update**
- Tuesday, May 17** **Noon**  
 Speak Easy Restaurant, 1001 30th Ave. S., Moorhead  
**LWVRRV Members' Discussion Meeting**
- Thursday, August 18** **Time—TBA**  
**A showing of *Iron Jawed Angels*, a Golden Globe Award-winning film about the American women's suffrage movement in the 1910s.**

## President's letter

We are postponing the *Iron Jawed Angels* showing. It will held be on Women's Equality Day (August 18, 2011) at the Fargo Howard Johnson. This will give us time to plan a community event; invite the public and many guests. It should be a great way to start another League season.

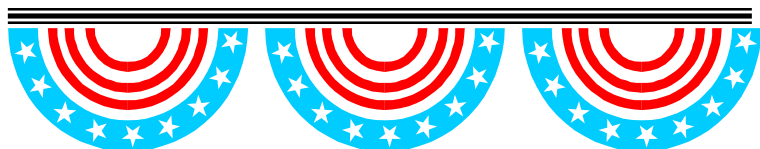
We are looking forward to the 2011 Annual meeting at the Radisson. The Radisson is not able to extend a parking ramp benefit. So plan on paying \$1.50 per hour for the event in parking in the ramp or walking from the free US Bank lot on Broadway. The Breakfast Brunch will be excellent and the stimulating speaker, Ron Hagemann. Ron was associated with LWV-Iowa before he moved to Minnesota. He has taught government at high school and adult levels. He will speak on "Lack of Respect in American Public Discourse." It will be a good finish to a very busy election year.

We plan to interview with our Minnesota legislators about LWV-MN's three Guiding Principles for the 2011 session. They can be found on the Internet at LWV-MN.org. You can also pick up a copy at the Third Tuesday meeting February 15. The guidelines stress voting as a constitutional right, redistricting as a transparent process that allows citizen participation and promotion of a sound economy which protects the public interest. These sound like guidelines to any level of government in America.

By the way, in Minnesota, there was a voting fraud conviction rate of .0002% in 2010. That's less than ten thousands of a percent of fraud. The Voter ID Bill has passed out of committee in the MN House. This bill requires a state issued ID for all voters. If you don't drive and have to pay for that ID this constitutes a poll tax, and this definitely requires strong LWVMMN opposition.

You all, men, women, young adults, seniors, can be members of the League of the Red River Valley. Join us at the Radisson for our Annual Meeting and bring your \$50 dues or \$15 for students. Looking forward to seeing you at one of our get-togethers this spring.

—Patti Kratky  
Co-president, LWV-RRV



# The Death of Senate Filibuster Reform

On January 28, 2011, senators leading an effort to reform the Senate rules on the filibuster declared that they had failed to gain the votes necessary. Instead Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell announced a “gentleman’s agreement” in which McConnell and the Republicans promised to practice “restraint” in their use of the filibuster while Reid and the Democrats promised to practice “restraint” in his powers on amendments so that Republicans may have a chance to offer more floor amendments. Any one care to take bets on how long these promises will hold?

In January 2010 Elisabeth MacNamara, the President League of Women Voters of the United States, sent a letter to the Senate calling for reform of the filibuster. In it she stated,

“...it is simply unacceptable in a democracy to continue the Senate’s recent practices, which allow a small minority of absent Senators to block any consideration of a bill or nomination and to obstruct and delay action after cloture is invoked.

Over the years, Senators of both major political parties have taken different positions on cloture and filibuster procedures, often reflecting their partisan stands on the underlying issues. The League of Women Voters urges Senators now to recognize that they will some times be in the majority and some times in the minority. The Senate rules should ensure fair procedures for both.”

The League’s stance on the filibuster is the result of seeing the increasing use of what I call the “silent filibuster.” In the 1970’s the Senate changed its rules so that a filibuster could continue on one bill or nomination while the Senate continued work on other bills and nominations on the Senate floor. This “two-track” system ended the ability of a filibuster to stop all business in the Senate. It also opened the door to an increased use of this tool that enables a minority to prevent the majority from passing a bill or confirming a nominee. For ten years the number of filibusters stayed around forty during a two-year congressional session. In 1987 when the Democrats returned to the majority after six years of Republican rule, the use of filibuster began to rise. When the Republicans returned to the majority in 1995, filibuster routinely numbered around 70. The next big jump came when the Democrats returned to the majority in 2007. Over the next two years, filibusters rose to close to 140. The phrase that “it takes 60 votes” to pass a bill in the Senate became common. Super-majority replaced majority rule and it happened with very few people realizing how or why it happened. It happened in silence.

One of the proposals by the senators who had sought reform had been to end the silent filibuster by requiring a senator to talk to keep the filibuster alive. Under current rules, a senator filibustering a bill or a nomination can continuing the filibuster while at a committee hearing, a meeting with constituents or a fundraising event. Unless the majority can garner the 60 votes necessary to invoke cloture and end a filibuster, the

senator’s filibuster continues.

With two political parties who are ideologically polarized representing voters who are also polarized, the filibuster appeals to the supporters of each party whenever they are in the minority in the Senate, especially if the opposing party holds the presidency. The Senate last year failed to even bring a bill to address climate change to the floor because the Democrats could not come up with a bill that would gain the 60 votes necessary to end a threatened filibuster. If a vote on the climate change bill passed by the House had been held it is likely there would have been enough Democratic votes to get the 50 votes needed to pass it. The threat of filibuster alone killed the bill. A bill to encourage lending to small business and including a tax cut was filibustered for months until a retiring Republican provided the needed 60th vote. That’s right, the Republicans even filibustered a tax cut in order to thwart Democrats two months before an election.

Without reform, it is unlikely that the Senate will change. One of the reasons reform failed this year was because Democratic senators wanted to hold on to the ability to use the filibuster whenever they returned to the minority. This attitude and each party’s belief that obstruction is more politically valuable than governing will continue to prevent any filibuster reform beyond promises of “restraint.” The Senate will also continue to be where bills go to die.

-by Barb Headrick,  
Vice President, LWV RRV

## TIME TO JOIN THE LEAGUE!



### Membership Dues:

Individual: \$50, students: \$15

Send your check to:

LWV RRV, PO Box 295,

Fargo, ND 58107-0295

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

### 2010-2011 LWVRRV Officers

Co-Presidents: Lois Altenburg, Patti Kratky

Vice President: Barbara Headrick

Secretary: Amy Jacobson

Treasurer: Carol Sawicki

### 2010-2011 Board of Directors:

Portia Danielson, Jocie Iszler, Janice Jackson,  
Frank Kratky, DelRae Williams

## Legislature and You

### ■ Opposing Photo ID requirements for voters

—From LWVMN

Things are not always what they seem, and that is the case with calls to require photo ID from voters, including those already registered. Efforts to require photo ID in elections play on people's fears about voting fraud without the evidence to back up the claims. Proponents often rely on misinformation and flawed data about voter fraud and election administration, as well as exaggerated claims about the security a photo ID requirement can provide. In the mean time, approximately 10% of eligible voters do not have photo IDs and would have significant barriers to getting one in order to vote.

### ■ Where have the Legislative Forums gone?

You may have noticed that the League of Women Voters is not sponsoring Saturday legislative forums for Cass County legislators during this year's North Dakota Legislative Session.

We have heard from a number of people, wondering about this. They tell us that they enjoyed these informative forums in past years and often attended or watched them on public access television.

The primary reason that the LWVRRV is not sponsoring these events this year is that setting them up and running them requires a great deal of time and effort. Those are both precious commodities in short supply right now.

If you miss the forums, and want them to reappear in 2013, LWVRRV needs your help. Join the League, volunteer to help with forums, or other League activities.

You can contact us at [lwvrrv@q.com](mailto:lwvrrv@q.com) or 701-297-6815



## WE Rise: Women Empowered, a Women's Lobby Day at the State Capital

As a rural state challenges of physical distance and inclement weather lead to an environment of detachment and a lack of participation in the legislative process. This is particularly true for women who often have to balance career, family, friends, and school. In an effort to demystify the legislative process and connect women from Around the state, women's advocacy groups will host **WE Rise: Women Empowered**, a day of women's activism and participation at the North Dakota state Capital.

**WE Rise: Women Empowered** provides women of this great state the opportunity to connect with legislators and educate them about women's issues. As primary sponsor of the event the North Dakota Women's Network (NDWN) wants you to help advocate for strong public policy in the areas of:

*\*Education \*Freedom from violence  
\*Economic security \*Reproductive health*

*-Amy Jacobson,  
Secretary, LWVRRV*

For more information:  
[ajacobson@ppmns.org](mailto:ajacobson@ppmns.org) or 701-526-0726

### LWV RRV DUES & BRUNCH

Mail this form and payment to:  
LWV RRV, PO Box 295, Fargo, ND 58107

- Annual Meeting—Brunch Reservation • \$20  
CHECK ENCLOSED
- 2011 LWV Annual Dues (national, State, and local) CHECK ENCLOSED • \$50
- 2011 LWV Student dues • \$15  
CHECK ENCLOSED

LWV RRV dues year is from April 1—March 31

*Reservations by  
March 7*

*More info:  
701-297-6815*

### League of Women Voters -Red River Valley

#### 2011 Annual Meeting

March 12, 2011 • 9:30—11:30 am

Radisson Hotel • 201 5th St. N., Fargo, ND

#### RESERVATIONS REQUIRED

*Enjoy an excellent brunch, short business meeting,  
and a stimulating program.*

*The Lack of Respect in American Public Discourse*

**Ron Hagemann, speaker**

League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley  
P.O. Box 295  
Fargo, ND 58107-0295

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## Keep Our Air Clean

—LWVUS

The U.S. House of Representatives is expected to consider legislation that would block urgently needed new pollution controls under the Clean Air Act or defund programs that control life-threatening pollution. For decades, the EPA has protected the health of children, seniors and all the rest of us from dangerous pollutants through the Clean Air Act. In just the last twenty years carbon monoxide, which negatively affects those with heart and lung diseases, has been cut by seventy percent.

*Take action now to tell your Representative to oppose any legislation that would block or prevent action to clean up our air and protect the most vulnerable Americans*

Our health and environment are under attack by big polluters and their congressional supporters. We can't let them stop EPA's efforts to clean up life-threatening pollution like mercury, carbon dioxide, ozone and soot which will save thousands of lives and improve the quality of life for millions more.

### ◆ TAKE ACTION

- 1. Contact your representative now. You can call your representative at 202-225-3121.**
- 2. Alert other concerned citizens -- your grassroots network, your friends and coworkers. Encourage them to contact their elected leaders.**

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◆ **This issue of the Voter, along with archived issues dating back to 2000, is available online on the [lwvnd.org/rrv.html](http://lwvnd.org/rrv.html)**

*The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages an 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.*