

Red River Valley
Voter

A Look Ahead...

LWV public meetings are held in:

The Sons of Norway Lodge
722 2nd Avenue North
Fargo, ND 58102

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 5, 2001 Noon- 1:00 p.m.
First Friday at Sons of Norway

The Future of a Human Rights Commission for North Dakota
Speaker: Cheryl Bergian, Chair, N. D. Human Rights Commission

Saturday, January 13, 2001 10:00 a.m.
Scandia Hotel, 717 4th St N.

Unit meeting: League Voters Service
Member orientation followed by discussion of issues led by Andrea Sather. LWVRRV Voters Service Co-Chair

Wed, January 17, 2001 5:10- 6:30 p.m.
United Way Office, Fargo

LWVRRV Board Meeting

February 2, 2001 Noon- 1:00 p.m.
First Friday at Sons of Norway

Agricultural Economy in the Red River Valley
Speaker: Brad Schmidt, Cass Co. Electric Cooperative

Other Events

Informational Meetings with Fargo School Officials to discuss closing one or more schools to balance the budget:
Jan. 18- Horace Mann Elementary gym, 7:00 p.m.
Jan. 29- Centennial Elementary multipurpose room, 7:00 p.m.
Feb. 6- Hawthorne Elementary gym, 7:00 p.m.
Feb. 19- Ben Franklin Jr. High theater, 7:00 p.m.
Public Comment Hearings:
Feb 27- Ben Franklin theater, 7:00 p.m.
March 6- Ben Franklin theater, 7:00 p.m.

Legislative Forums

North Dakota Districts
February 3, 17 10:00 a.m. March 3, 17 10:00 a.m.
Fargo City Commission chambers

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2001

President's Message

What a wonderful fall for the League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley! Here are a few of accomplishments in its first year as a League reaching across the Red River:

- Candidate forums were held in Fargo, West Fargo, and Moorhead.
- Student groups are starting at area colleges. The Concordia College group was active this fall in distributing election information, registering voters and handing out over 500 Minnesota Voters Guides.
- The League adopted a precinct for KIDS VOTING
- Moorhead members held legislative interviews with Senator Langseth and Representative Gindoff.
- Five very interesting Friday public meetings were held.
- Our web site www.lwvnd.org was launched.
- Once a month Saturday unit meetings were started in November.

Just imagine what else we could accomplish with more active members. The more active our League is the easier it is to recruit members and the more effective our reach can be. Think about friends and co-workers who would be great League members if only they knew about us! Invite and bring a guest to a First Friday meeting. Ask Membership Chair Suzanne Dobbins to send membership materials to a prospective member. Bring a neighbor to one of the legislative meetings this winter. We all need to sell League.

We want League membership to reflect our community. As our communities change we need to find ways to increase racial and ethnic diversity, gender diversity, the number of lower income members, the number of members in the work force and members with disabilities. A diverse membership will make for a stronger, more effective presence in the Red River Valley. Personal invitations to join League are the most effective. Many people don't know that they can join League. Help with dues payment is available.

Make it your New Year's resolution to introduce someone to League this year.

*Mary Davies
Co-President*

2000-2001 LWVRR Board of Directors

Co-Presidents:	Mary Davies and Julia Jones
Secretary:	Suzanne Dobbins
Treasurer:	Andrea Johnson
Directors:	Sherbanoo Aziz, Marlene Batterberry, Barbara Headrick, Colleen Hermann, Kathie Kvalvog, Susan Petry, Audrey Richmond, Janel Carol Sawicki, Janet Van Amberg, Betsy Vinz
Advisor:	Lois Ivers Altenburg

Observer Corps

FARGO CITY COMMISSION

November 13, 2000 meeting:

There was a discussion, unreported by The Forum, relating to housing inspection fees. This ordinance was originally on the Consent Agenda (items that are deemed to be so uncontroverial that they need not be discussed). However, Jens Tennesfos pointed out some confusing areas in the ordinance and it was tabled so that it could be clarified and voted on later. Mr. Tennesfos felt that the ordinance, as it now stood, would allow the city to raise inspection fees in the future without having to go through public hearings.

A presentation of a preliminary Downtown Plan, as conceived by city planners along with an architectural firm, followed the regular Commission meeting. One feature in the plan that seems to have already been accepted is the construction of a permanent dike under 2nd St. N. where it runs next to the present Civic Center parking lot. The planners discussed the fact that private developers would have to be major players in any large downtown Fargo redevelopment.

Carol Sawicki, Observer

FARGO SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION SEEKS INPUT

During the months of January and February, the Fargo Public School District Administration will provide information about the budget shortfall and the possible money-saving option of closing one or more schools. These meetings will take place at the sites listed in the Look Ahead calendar. League members are urged to review the League's consensus results reached in 1999:

1. School size should be limited to 600 students per elementary school and 1,000 per secondary school.
2. Support the current Fargo Comprehensive Plan, which states that the neighborhood character and community role of existing and future elementary schools should be preserved.
3. In both decisions, we hold the welfare of children as a top priority.

Horace Mann (258 students) and Hawthorne (185 students) Elementary Schools and Woodrow Wilson Alternative High School (129 students) seem to be the most seriously considered candidates for closing due to their locations and low enrollments. On the surface it appears that students at the Alternative High School could be more easily relocated, however, there are probably other means of saving money as well. Once again our school board is faced with difficult decisions and is asking for help. Attend one of the meetings yourself to hear our administrators out and urge others to do the same. Be prepared to express your concerns.

Audrey Richmond, School Issues Committee

ELECTORAL COLLEGE VOTE INEQUITIES

An article in the December 2000 Senior News, a Minnesota Senior Federation newspaper, compared the electoral power of votes in several states. I thought you might be interested in contemplating these differences.

The table shows that it takes 1.28 North Dakota votes, and 3.28 Minnesota votes to equal 1 Wyoming vote. Or, you could say that a Minnesota vote was worth 1/3rd as much as a vote from Wyoming. This, of course, is the heart of the discussion on the electoral college and popular vote as a mechanism for deciding the President and Vice President of the United States.

-Donna Chalimonczyk

State	Popular votes equal to one electoral vote	Popular votes equal to one WY electoral vote
FL	232,659	3.36
MI	227,650	3.29
MN	227,575	3.28
WI	224,948	3.25
OH	209,305	3.02
MO	209,122	3.02
IL	208,120	3.00
NM	96,773	1.40
RI	96,264	1.39
ND	88,883	1.28
HI	85,749	1.24
VT	79,725	1.15
WY	69,291	1.00

MANY THANKS TO OUR FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS

Mayoral (up to \$49) Marlene Batterberry, Frank Knox, Judith Strong, Joan C. Miller, Betsy Vinz, Mary Jenkins, Kathy Kvalvog, Gini Duval, Janet VanAmburg, Patty Corwin, Helen Shirey, Boulder Funeral Home

Gubernatorial (\$50-\$99) Korsmo Funeral Home, Dakota Monument, Douglas Sillers, Judy Lee, Carolyn Bowe, Moorhead Drug, Wold-Johnson-PC, Barbara Headrick, Warner & Co., Sue Petry, Mary Davies, James & Beth Postema, Maintenance Engineering

Presidential (\$100 and up) Service Oil, Suzanne Dobbins, State Bank of Fargo, Creative Kitchen, Gate City Federal Savings Bank, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of ND, DC Publishing (*Matching Grant*)

MEET NEW MEMBER: KATHIE KVALVOG

Kathie currently serves as our committed Finance Drive Chairperson on the board of directors. She first came to the League of Women Voters as a friend of Suzanne Dobbins. Like Suzanne, she majored in political science in college and was interested in joining an organization that dealt with the political field. As a member of League she sees her goal as assisting the residents of the Red River Valley Community to become aware and understand political issues in a non-partisan manner.

As is true of most young people today, Kathie is a busy woman. She is currently a stay-at-home mom with a young son and expects a new baby in February. She enjoys gardening, reading, politics, and keeping up on current events. She is also to be found in the classroom for three-year-olds on Sundays at her church, and is a garden club member.

We are so fortunate that, in addition to all these things, she has organized our successful fund drive and has pledged to continue making calls to potential contributors in an effort to reach her substantial goal.

OBSERVERS NEEDED FOR 2001

Carol Sawicki and Betsy Vinz, Observer Corps Chairs, are desperately seeking more observers. They want to develop a guide for what should be the focus of observations and improve reporting but right now the Corps has really dwindled. Observing can be such a meaningful experience and a stepping stone to real community action.

Responsibilities for observing a governing body can be shared by partners.

Call or talk to Carol 232-5676 or Betsy 236-5226 soon

LWVND BOARD REORGANIZES

A meeting of the League of Women Voters of North Dakota was called by President Lois Altenburg on December 2, 2000.

In the executive report, Susan Helgeland was called upon to explain the work of the North Dakotans Advisory Committee which has completed a study of the need for a Human Rights Commission in North Dakota. The committee recommended that a commission be established to enforce current legislation. The board unanimously approved a motion to support a coalition for a ND Human Rights Commission (NDHRC). The Board will ask that a League representative serve on the NDHRC committee.

In further business, it was decided that the state League would adopt the following program: "Study and Update on N.D. Election Law and Procedures." Money from the League Education Fund will be used for the study.

In addition, the issue of voters guide publication will be revisited closer to the 2002 election.

The league president will request the LWV files at Chester Fritz Library, Grand Forks, be made available for research.

A nominating committee presented a partial slate of officers for 2001-02 and the following were elected: Suzanne Dobbins, president; Andrea Sather, treasurer. The positions of secretary and vice president shall be appointed by the president and treasurer. The new officers will begin their terms on January 1, 2001. Dobbins and Sather will represent LWVND at the national council in June 2001.

Many thanks to Lois Altenburg for staying at the helm of the North Dakota State League of Women Voters through some trying times.

PEOPLE NOTES

Diane Meyer
We express our appreciation and good wishes to Clay County Commissioner Diane Meyer who retired from her seat on December 31. In fact, in an interview with The Forum in December, she said her twenty-some years in public office are "all because someone talked her into taking in a League of Women Voters meeting in the early seventies."

She attended Moorhead School Board meetings for three years for the League and then successfully ran for the board in 1976. She served for seven years.

Not long after ending her service to the schools she elected to run for the Clay County Board of Commissioners and has now ended sixteen years of service in that body. Fortunately, Diane is still a member of the LWVRRV

Andrea Sather
Some readers may be puzzled as to the identity of Andrea Sather, who is mentioned prominently in this newsletter. It is none other than Andrea Johnson who has resumed using her maiden name.

SATURDAY UNIT MEETINGS: MEMBER ORIENTATION & DISCUSSION

As a means of re-establishing the unit meeting as a vital part of League activity, Suzanne Dobbins, membership chair, has conducted two Saturday morning sessions of orientation to various aspects of the League's work for both new members and those who enjoy discussion among the longer term members.

The first part of each meeting is a presentation of some area and it is followed by discussion of a timely topic. For instance, the November meeting featured a discussion of the League's position on the presidential electoral process (see article elsewhere).

The next meeting on January 13 at 10:00 a.m. will feature a presentation of the Voters Service/Education arm of the League's program by Voters Service co-chair Andrea Sather. Voters Service is probably the most important function of the League and we should all know the philosophy behind it as well as how it works.

LOCAL PROGRAM PLANNING: TIME FOR MEMBER IDEAS

Local program for LWVRRV must be adopted at the annual meeting in March. One of the greatest assets of the League is its credibility and much of that goes back to our reputation for thorough study of issues before action.

Study of local issues begins with member ideas. Recommendations for local study must be sent to the board of directors two months prior to the annual meeting. The board then considers these recommendations and sends the proposed program to all members one month prior to the annual meeting. At the annual meeting the local program is adopted by a majority of the members present and voting. Program recommendations submitted by members, but not recommended by the board, may be considered if a majority of those at the meeting vote for it and can be adopted by a two-thirds vote.

Now is your chance to have some input. Some time at the January unit meeting will be spent discussing local issues and program possibilities. The board will make their choices at the Feb. -21 board meeting.

The current program, adopted in March 1999, is: "Continuing Consideration of School Issues and Regional Planning for further study and an eye to action and that human rights issues be considered for some of our First Friday program."

In considering program for the next two years, think about current issues that are relevant to the newly enlarged area served by the LWVRRV.

- Questions to ask in considering new proposals for local league study:
 - Can the problem be solved by government action?
 - Local Government/Citizen Involvement: What are the appointed boards and commissions? How are citizens appointed? What is the role of the public in decision making? Are members satisfied with their participation?
 - Water Resources: Availability, quality?
 - Solid Waste: Are there some issues that should be addressed on a regional basis?
 - Visions in Project Tomorrow Report: Look at some of the action plans particularly in Shared/Collective Governance.
 - Economic Development & Growth
 - Public Transportation: Is the system meeting resident needs?
 - Immigration: What is the impact of recent immigrants on the economy, society and education system? How accessible are services for this population? Is English language learning available and accessible to all ages? Health care?

(Some of these issues may be state or federal.)

You may think of many others as you start brainstorming.

Come to the January 13th unit meeting to share your thoughts with others. You can also send your topic suggestion (along with an explanation of the scope of the study) to:

Mary Davies
1001 10th St. S
Moorhead, MN, 56560

or e-mail to Mary at: marBob7@aol.com

PROMOTING DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA

League's Positions on Election of the U. S. President

Historically, a League study of the presidential process resulted in a 1970 position supporting the direct election of the President by popular vote as essential to representative government.

The League then testified and lobbied for legislation to amend the Constitution to replace the electoral college with direct election of the President, including provisions for a national run-off election in the event no candidates (President or Vice President) received 40 percent of the vote. The measure, which passed the House and nearly passed the Senate in 1971, has been received in each Congress since without success.

In 1997, the LWVUS again called for abolition of the electoral college and for direct election of the President and Vice President in testimony before the Subcommittee on the Constitution.

The League believed that reform of the electoral college should only be considered as a last resort. Should the electoral college be retained the League feels reform should abolish the office of elector or amend the Constitution to bind electors in each state to vote as directed by the electorate or that electoral votes should be allocated proportionately to the popular vote in each state eliminating electors.

The League has supported national voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections to ensure equity for voters from all states and to facilitate the electoral process.

Following is the position statement on Election of the President, announced in January, 1970 and revised in March 1982:

"The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the direct popular vote for President and Vice President is essential to representative government. The League of Women Voters believes, therefore, that the electoral college should be abolished. The League also supports uniform voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections."

- Suzanne Dobbins

AREA SUPERINTENDENTS ADDRESS FIRST FRIDAY AUDIENCE

Superintendents David Flowers of Fargo, Chuck Cheney of West Fargo, and Larry Nybladh of Moorhead spoke about their respective school districts at December's First Friday public meeting.

Dr. Flowers stated that although Fargo is the largest district in the state, it is facing declining enrollment. The number of students has dropped by 300 since his arrival a year ago. The decline would be worse without the 650 refugees currently being served. Specific challenges are the inadequate funds allotted by the state for special education services \$312 per student is not enough; the utilization of under-used buildings; replacement of retiring teachers and perhaps the greatest problem, how to finance the schools when there is a need for an increase of 1.8 mills in revenue to avoid budget cuts. Fargo already has the highest mill levy of any city in the state.

Dr. Cheney stated that West Fargo's enrollment stands at 5100 students and has been increasing by 2% a year. There is only one classroom available in the district which includes Horace and Harwood in addition to West Fargo. The district's focus is on early literacy with a goal that 90% of students read and compute at grade level by the end of grade three. The Reading Recovery program is being used to reach this goal. Class size averages 20 students. Some issues in West Fargo are: 1) the management of growth and survival in an impact on declining population; 2) how to increase teacher salaries; and 3) finding a way to have an impact on student use of drugs and alcohol.

Dr. Nybladh feels that declining enrollment is the chief problem in the Moorhead Schools because student count drives state funding. There are 5700 students now but he expects an annual drop of 150 students. The goal he sees is the maintenance of quality education in the face of declining state payments. The state of Minnesota has come through with additional money in the past and may do so again.

A question was asked about effective means of lobbying the legislature. Answers indicated that personal, one-on-one contact with legislators, coalitions of educational groups, and hosting of legislators for the purpose of lobbying, are effective. Testifying before the legislature does not often produce results.

In regard to educational standards, Dr. Nybladh said that the Department of Children, Families and Learning creates the standards in Minnesota. The coordination of standards into the curriculum has been good. Dr. Flowers mentioned that assessment is important but "the devil is in the assessment tool."

Question was inevitably raised about Fargo and West Fargo School districts and West Acres property taxes. It was pointed out that the boundaries of the two cities and their school districts are not the same. A business advisory committee was established to provide information and understanding of school finance. The committee is encouraged to give advice. The issue might be different if North Dakota funded education like Minnesota.

The audience and guests agreed that the three administrations seem to have a cooperative relationship.

-Audrey Richmond

THANKS TO KIDS VOTING VOLUNTEERS

The LWVRRV adopted the precinct at Carl Ben Eielson for KIDS VOTING on election day, Nov. 7.

Members who helped were Marge Corner, Jean Sanner, Pat Johnson, Mary Jenkins, Helen Rudie, Janet Van Amberg, Audrey Richmond, and Carol Zielinski. Sue Petry filled in at Clara Barton.

Mary Davies and Andrea Sather, League Voters Service Chairs were overall coordinators of the KIDS VOTING project which reached students in Fargo, West Fargo, and Moorhead. About 7,500 ballots were cast.

- Mary Davies

NOMINATING COMMITTEE NEEDS YOUR HELP

The LWVRRV nominating committee solicits suggestions for officers for 2001-2002. The committee will be recommending a slate of officers to the annual meeting on March 31.

Officers to be elected in 2001 include president, 1st vice president, and secretary. In addition, three directors are elected each year. Other officers and directors will serve another year and their seats will be open in 2002.

If you are ready to serve on the board, please, let one of the nominating committee members or current board members know.

Serving on the local board is a wonderful experience. Board meetings are run efficiently and assignments are geared to your interests.

Please consider offering your talents and time. The members of the nominating committee are: Bea Arett, Barbara Sipson, Jackie Brodshaug, Julia Jones and Audrey Richmond.