

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.

Friday May 2, 2003 12:00 noon (lunch available beginning at 11:30 AM)
 First Friday, Sons of Norway, 722 2nd Ave N, Fargo
 Ask the city planners

Speakers: Jeff Schaumann, Moorhead City Planning Office
 Cindy Gray, Fargo City Planning Office
 Larry Weil, West Fargo City Planning Office

Tuesday June 10, 2003 7 AM-8 PM
 Fargo School Board Election

No meetings until September 2003.

FIRST FRIDAYS

March First Friday

Lance Yohe, Executive Director of the International Red River Basin Commission, spoke on the many challenges that the Commission faces in its mission to create a unified strategy to deal with the Red River of the North in future years.

There are over 300 government entities that have jurisdiction over separate facets of the Red River basin. There are 41 people on the Commission board. The fact that the river flows through two countries, and that two states and a Canadian province are involved, makes the job of the Commission even more complicated. Difficulties arise from differences in laws and philosophies that apply along different parts of the river. For instance, North Dakota operates under western water law which treats water as a scarce resource, and Minnesota operates under eastern water law, which has the opposite view. The Boundary Waters Treaty Act, which is the law that applies to the problem of the Devils Lake outlet and whether that water will adversely affect the water that flows into Canada through the Red River, was enacted in 1909, between the US and Great Britain, and has not been modified since then.

One goal to be reached in the next 18 months is to have created a model of the entire basin that will be available on the Commission website. Up till now there were many different maps of separate parts of the basin, and it often was difficult to move from one to another due to variances in scale, etc.

April First Friday

An increase in the number of working people without health insurance has exacerbated the health care crisis in our community as well as across the nation.

The uninsured is one of the populations that the Family Health Care Center strives to serve in Fargo-Moorhead. Sheryl Dahl, Executive Director, spoke April 4th at the Leagues open luncheon forum about the Center. She told us that the Center is a primary care clinic specializing in providing family-centered health care to diverse populations. In addition to the uninsured, the Centers patients include refugees and other immigrants, homeless persons, as well as Medicare and Medicaid recipients. Of the 10,000 patients served last year at FHCC, 35% were uninsured and 22% had private insurance, with Medicaid covering an additional 39% and Medicare 4%.

The basic philosophy of FHCC is to identify the services required based on need and then to seek out the resources to meet the need. The Center has a five million dollar budget, of which 60% is patient revenue, 26% comes from federal grants, and the balance is derived from other grants and revenues including 5% from state funds. The center has a sliding fee schedule for health services.

Of the 200 full and part-time providers that comprise the staff, five are interpreters for the variety of immigrants that come to the Center for health care. Immunizations and dental care for children are among the important services provided, as well as pre-natal care. A partnership with NDSU's College of Pharmacy which operates the full service pharmacy at the Fargo location, allows for another valuable resource.

Mission Statement
 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.

Diversity Statement
 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 USA PATRIOT ACT AND YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY

On April 7th a panel discussion was held at the Fargo Public Library regarding a part of the Patriot Act and its effects on the privacy of patrons at libraries. This discussion was one of many reactions to this Act at libraries around the country.

The law was approved by Congress shortly after September 11th, and gives federal investigators greater authority to examine all book and computer records at any library. The law requires that investigators obtain a search warrant before seizing these records, but those proceedings are secret and not subject to appeal.

Federal officials say that this part of the new law is essential because prior statutes imposed too many limits on fast-moving investigations. They point out that several of the September 11th hijackers used library computers to communicate with each other. But many libraries are wondering if the law may be restricting constitutional rights to free speech and privacy.

Some libraries are going as far as posting warnings on their public computers, stating that anything a patron reads may be subject to secret scrutiny by federal agents. Others are regularly destroying records that they kept of what their patrons read, as well as sign-up logs of computer use.

Federal officials say that the law is only meant to target foreign spies and terrorists, and will not be used to search for average Americans, including those who may be doing research or reading on controversial subjects. A survey conducted by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign found that over the past year, 550 libraries across the country had received requests from federal and local investigators for the records of patrons.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING BUDGET BILL IN SENATE COMMITTEE!

Urgent Action Alert--Action Required before April 24th!

The Senate Environment, Agriculture and Economic Development Budget Division committee will be voting on the economic development and affordable housing budget as soon as Thursday, April 24th. The Governor's proposed budget for affordable housing includes an overall 33% reduction in funding to Minnesota Housing Finance Agency as well as a 50% reduction in funding for homeless shelter and transitional housing services.

Message: Minimize the Governors proposed cuts to housing programs! I support raising revenue to help pay for housing programs that are vital to our state! (If you can, tell a personal story about how these proposed budget cuts will affect you and your community.)

Action: Call and E-mail

1. If your Senator is not on the committee, ask him/her to urge Chairman Sams and members of the Environment, Agriculture and Economic Development Budget Division committee to minimize cuts to housing programs. If you dont know your Senators contact information, you can obtain it by calling 651-296-0504 or visiting the Minnesota Senate website at <http://www.senate.leg.state.mn.us>.

2. If your Senator is a member of the Environment, Agriculture and Economic Development Budget Division committee listed below, contact them by phone and email with the above message. (Be sure to tell them you are a constituent.) Then get the commitment of one other person in your district to do the same.

Senator Committee Members

Chair: Dallas Sams sen.dallas.sams@senate.mn 651-297-8063

Vice Chair: D. Scott Dibble sen.scott.dibble@senate.mn 651-296-4191

Ranking Minority member: Steve Dille sen.steve.dille@senate.mn 651-296-4131

Dennis Frederickson sen.dennis.frederickson@senate.mn 651-296-8138

Ellen R. Anderson ellena@senate.mn 651-296-5537

Michele Bachmann M. sen.michele.bachmann@senate.mn 651-296-4351

Thomas Bakke sen.tom.bakke@senate.mn 651-296-8881

Richard Cohen sen.richard.cohen@senate.mn 651-296-5931

Gary Kubby sen.gary.kubby@senate.mn 651-296-5094

Steve Murphy sen.steve.murphy@senate.mn 651-296-4264

Pat Pariseau sen.pat.pariseau@senate.mn 651-296-5252

Julie Rosen sen.julie.rosen@senate.mn 651-296-5713

For further information on the direct and indirect impacts the Governors budget will have on affordable housing programs, see the Budget Brief on our website. For further information about affordable housing or this action alert, please visit www.housingmn.org or contact Rachel Callanan, Housing/Minnesota policy director at rcallanan@hpnlinea.org or 651-649-1710 x107.

--Mackenzie Sullivan
 Legislative Coordinator League of Women Voters MN
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LWVRRV ANNUAL MEETING

The 2003 League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley Annual Meeting and brunch was held on March 29, 2003 at the VIP Room in Fargo.

The following 2003-2004 local programs were adopted:

1. To continue to monitor appointments to local boards and commissions and to promote our position with an emphasis on increasing League Observer Corps, and

2. To continue to support the Fargo school position that school size should be limited to 1000 students or less in elementary buildings and 1000 or less per secondary school and to support the current Fargo Comprehensive City Plan which states that the neighborhood character and community role of existing and future elementary schools be preserved.

Outgoing President Julia Jones recognized and thanked the outgoing Board members Helen Rudie, Audrey Richmond, Carolyn Bove and Barbara Headrick. She also thanked Kathy Kvalvog for her work on raising funds.

The speaker for at this meeting was Moorhead School Board member, Sonia Hohmadel, who spoke on Diversity in Our Community- Challenges and Opportunities. Her presentation included an overview of how she had reached the point of running for and being elected to the School Board. She especially emphasized the influence and importance of mentors, many of them women, who encouraged and taught her through the years.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE RED RIVER VALLEY OFFICERS 2003-2004

President: Janet VanAmburg
First Vice: President Julia Jones
Second Vice / President: Carla Hartje (one year)
Secretary: Erin Prochnow

Board of Directors:
 Nicole Bergeron, Peggy Jensen, Cindy Maritato, Carol Sawicki

Nominating Committee:
 Carol Zielinski, Betsy Vinz, Donna Chalimonczyk

HAVE YOU PAID YOUR DUES?

Now is the time to renew your membership with the League. Whether you pay your dues at the local, state, or national level, you are automatically a member of all three! There is, however, an advantage to paying dues directly to LWVRRV: its cheaper. A single person membership through LWVRRV is only \$45, while a single person membership through LWVUS is \$50. You can send your dues to

Join the League

Annual dues:

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

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

Observer Corps

FARGO SCHOOL BOARD

At its March 25 meeting, the Fargo School Board agreed to vote on whether to accept school facilities Configuration Model D. The following information was published in the administrations community newsletter distributed with the Fargo Forum in March.

Configuration Model A--K-6, 7-9, 10-12

At least one new elementary school would be needed on the South side in order for sixth grade students to return to elementary buildings. Changes in the handling of kindergarten may require more new space. A new middle school would be needed for grades 7-9 as older parts of Agassiz would be torn down and the newer parts repurposed. Discovery

would serve grades 7-9 as well.

Configuration Model D--K-5, 6-8, 9-12

Although a new south side elementary school would still be needed, there might be less need for other new schools. Old Agassiz would be torn down and parts repurposed necessitating a new middle school to join with Discovery and Ben Franklin in serving grades 6-8. At least one north side elementary would be sold/repurposed, though

all-day kindergartens might use some of the space. A third high school would be built to accommodate grades 9-12.

The March 25 Board Briefs state that whatever plan is agreed upon, the probable time line will be ten or more years. The philosophy behind the decision to act on choosing a plan is the establishment of a vision on which interim decisions can be based.

At its April 15 meeting, implementation features for Model D were presented to the board. A preferred one calls for a new middle school to replace Agassiz, remodeling of Discovery into a third high school, a new elementary in southwest Fargo and a new middle school in south Fargo to replace Discovery. More facts and figures will be presented at the April 22 meeting, a working session.

--Audrey Richmond, Observer

FARGO CITY COMMISSION

March 31 & April 14, 2003

In light of problems that have recently occurred when a house was moved through the city, the Commission discussed updating the house-moving ordinance, which had not been significantly changed since the 1950s. The Commission then noted that it would probably be a good idea to look over all city ordinances that had been enacted many years ago, to see if any others should be updated.

Two new members were appointed to the Fargo Dome Authority. This board is unique among city boards and commissions, in that it is required to have members that are recommended by agencies other than the Fargo City Commission. The Park Board, School Board, County Commission and NDSU must all recommend people to be on the Dome Authority, although the Mayor and Commission have the final say on choosing the members from those who are recommended.

--Carol Sawicki, Observer

BE A PART OF THE LEAGUE OBSERVER CORPS!

Are you interested in government and how it works? If you are a member of the League of Women Voters, then the answer to this question is almost certainly yes. Would you like to learn more and become more involved in local government? If the answer to this question is yes, then maybe you should consider joining the Observer Corps of the League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley.

Would you like a chance to help other local Leaguers be better informed citizens? This year the League is studying local board and commissions. There are a large number of these that operate in Fargo, Moorhead, West Fargo and ND, Cass and Clay Counties. Most local citizens are not aware of the duties and importance of these bodies. A LWV observer can report back to our members via the Voter newsletter and help them learn more.

An observer, in most cases, spends only one or two hours per month attending the regular meetings of a local board or commission. All observers wear a badge identifying them as a league member. They do not participate in the meeting, except to ask a question for clarification if necessary.

Many regular Observers have discovered that attending local board meetings is an interesting and highly educational experience. The LWVRRV is a respected organization, and the people who make up these local decision-making groups come to know and respect individuals who come to observe them. Observing is a good way for anyone who is considering political office to become known to the community. It can also help them decide where they can best use their own interests and talents to serve the community.

If you are interested or would like to learn more about the LWV Observer Corps, please contact Carol Sawicki at 232-5676.

FARGO SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION

Tuesday, June 10th, 2003
 7 am-8 pm.
Be sure to vote.

You're A BUSY MACHINE

During the course of one day, you inhale 438 cubic feet of air, drink two quarts of liquids, speak 4,800 words, move 75 muscles and eat 3 pounds of food.

Have a good summer!

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

Table of Contents

- [A Look Ahead](#)
- [First Fridays](#)
- [Mission & Diversity Statement](#)
- [Patriot Act-Local Library](#)
- [MN Housing Bill](#)
- [LWVRRV Annual Meeting](#)
- [League Officers 2003-2004](#)
- [Observer Corps](#)
- [Join Observers Corps](#)