



RRV VOTER

JAN.
FEB.
2006

A look ahead...

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

FIRST FRIDAY, Jan. 6, 12:00 noon-1:00 PM
(lunch available beginning at 11:30 AM)
Sons of Norway, 722 2nd Ave N, Fargo, ND

Topic: Local Sex Offender Legislation

FIRST FRIDAY, Feb. 3, 12:00 noon-1:00 PM
(lunch available beginning at 11:30 AM)
Sons of Norway, 722 2nd Ave N, Fargo

**Topic: Medicare Part D – The Prescription
Drug Benefit**

Board briefs

The Board of the LWVRRV regular meetings are held on the second Saturday of every month at 8:30 AM at the Fryn' Pan restaurant, 302 Main Ave. in Fargo. All League members are invited to join us.

Due to a resignation, there is an opening on the League Board of Directors. If you would like to join the Board, or if you would like to nominate someone for that position, please contact Cheryl Bergian at 793-2002 or at cherylbergian@cableone.net

Be a LVWUS National Convention volunteer, June 9–13, 2006

The LVWUS is looking for volunteers to help at the 2006 convention to be held at the Minneapolis Hilton. Volunteers are needed for many different types of jobs, some behind the scenes and some on the floor of the convention.

For more information please contact: Kathy Tomsich at ktomsich@comcast.net or 651-490-1890.

President's Letter

The LWVRRV Board of Directors has been looking forward to the 47th National Convention of the LWV in Minneapolis, MN June 10 –13, 2006. You'll see an article elsewhere in the newsletter for volunteering for the Convention, if you're inclined to participate that way.

As part of our planning for the national convention, we'll be taking action as the LWV of the Red River Valley to develop consensus positions on issues, programs that will be proposed for the LVWUS and on items that are being proposed for concurrence. One concurrence item that's been proposed already by the LWV of Illinois is that the national League support the abolition of the death penalty.

We'll be asking local League members to study the issues and come to the annual meeting in March prepared to address whether we can come to consensus on any of the issues that will be addressed at the national Convention. If you'd like to be involved in researching and putting materials together for our League as this moves forward, please let me know.

And, for our local efforts we're planning two Voter Service activities in the beginning of 2006. One is a candidates' training for candidates in the ND June primary, MN September primary, June City of Fargo election (City Commission and Mayor), and the November general election. We'll also be holding candidates' forums for the City Commission and Mayor candidates before the June election, as well as for any contested seats in the ND June primary.

Let me know if you're interested in working on any of the activities we're planning. Volunteers are always welcome! I can be reached at 793-2002 or at cherylbergian@cableone.net.

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.

Meet some members of the League Board

In the early 1970's, as a young adult, I attended an informational meeting of the local League of Women Voters. There I met dynamic women who welcomed me saying the League "needed young blood." Today, many of these women still serve as an inspiration to me through the League's continued commitment to non-partisan involvement in public policy. No one does it better than the LWV in its credibility and its commitment to voter education. The League sets the standard in its goal to empower citizens to build better communities through communication and participation. In volunteering my services as a board member, I honor those before me who worked so hard for the rights we enjoy today. I encourage people of all ages to get involved in the League because there is still much work to be done.

—*Mary Tintes*

Originally becoming a member of the League of Women Voters was a way for me to get more involved with in the community as I became politically active. Over the past eight years I have learned a great deal about many issues at First Friday meetings, as a member of the League Observer Corps and from talking to others who have been members for much longer than I.

I have been the editor of this League bulletin, the Voter, since the fall of 2002, with a lot of invaluable help from Donna Chalimonczyk. My hope is that the readers of the Voter are sometimes able to learn something from it, something that helps them benefit their community.

—*Carol Sawicki*

2005-2006 LWVRRV Officers

President:	Cheryl Bergian
First Vice President	Carol Sawicki
Second Vice President	Lois Altenburg
Secretary	Alberta Dobry
Treasurer	Mary Tintes

Board of Directors

Margaret Blue, Lynne Olson, Twylla Conner,
Sherri Seeba and Helen Rudie

Volunteers needed for the Giving + Learning Program

The Giving + Learning Program, which is based at Riverview Place in Fargo, is seeking volunteer mentors to match with New Americans one-on-one in order to work on whatever need exists. The most common areas of need are: English skills, citizenship, driver's training, and the Pre Certified Nursing Assistant program.

Preparing for the Citizenship Interview is a rapidly growing need in our local communities, and one that complements the goals of the League of Women Voters. Many of our New Americans cannot attend scheduled class offerings at the Moorhead Adult Basic Education building due to conflicts with work schedules, transportation and childcare.

Most of the students have available time on weekdays between the hours of 10:00 AM-2:00 PM. Study materials are provided, and a commitment of one or two hours a week is all that is needed.

If you are interested in being a volunteer in this program, please contact Charlie Hovde, VISTA Volunteer Coordinator at

CharlieHovde@catholichealth.net

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.**

News From the LWVUS

November 18, 2005

New Project Focuses on Improving U.S. Election Workforce Performance

Washington – IFES, the Pollworker Institute, and the League of Women Voters (LWV) are launching a year-long research project aimed at improving pollworker recruitment and training in the United States. The \$378,000 project is part of the country's multi-billion dollar effort to address shortcomings in election administration that emerged in recent elections.

Project staff will conduct focus groups and a web-based survey of election officials in more than 100 key counties across the nation. They will then produce a manual that recommends best practices for training and recruiting pollworkers. The manual will be made available to election officials countrywide. The project is the latest U.S. program managed by IFES, an international nonprofit organization that supports the building of democratic societies.

“IFES is excited to offer this invaluable service to election officials who carry an unsung and heavy burden to ensure our democracy,” said Scott Lansell, who leads IFES' U.S. Elections Services Unit.

Jennifer Collins-Foley, president of the newly-created Pollworker Institute said the new program will develop better recruitment and training methods to improve the Election Day experience for voters and election officials.

“Poor training is the hidden vulnerability in our election system, compromising everything from access to the polls to a reliable vote count,” she said.

The project will research and compile existing state requirements for pollworkers for the first time. The decentralization of the U.S. election system –which includes more than 3,000 counties– makes the systematic compilation of pollworker standards and regulations a huge undertaking.

“Uniform standards are needed for the election workforce, and this project will help highlight what is and what isn't working, and promote ways to improve our election system,” said LWV President Kay J. Maxwell.

Project consultant Elizabeth Berman, a political science professor at California State Polytechnic University said, “The project researches the challenges facing election officials in diverse jurisdictions as they attempt to recruit and train this army of volunteers.”

The project is funded by the United States Election Assistance Commission, an independent bipartisan agency created by the Help America Vote Act of 2002.

IFES is an international, nonprofit organization that supports the building of democratic societies. The Pollworker Institute is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the recruitment and training of pollworkers.

November 21, 2005

League Unveils Public Education Program to Safeguard U.S Democracy

Washington, D.C. – The League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF) today launched “*Safeguarding the U.S. Democracy: Promoting an Independent Judiciary by Defending the U.S. Constitution,*” a three-year public education program to increase understanding of our Constitutional system of checks and balances and the separation of powers.

“The time has come for a broader national understanding about how important it is to the integrity of American democracy that we preserve the independence of the courts and judges,” said LWV EF Chair Kay J. Maxwell. “This effort builds on the League's role in promoting an open governmental system that is representative, accountable and responsive. We are thrilled to begin work on *Safeguarding the U.S. Democracy.*”

The LWV's national network of nearly 900 state and local Leagues will be given the opportunity to undertake a wide range of short- and long-term projects in their communities. Among the issues that could be addressed are: the role judges play in interpreting the law, citizens' rights that are jeopardized by a weakened judiciary, and the threat of "budget kidnapping" by the legislative branch in response to judicial decisions. Conducting a major educational campaign on an issue of vital importance to our democracy is among the League's core competencies. The League recently undertook a similar effort with *Local Voices: Citizen Conversations on Civil Liberties and Secure Communities*, an initiative that fostered public dialogue about the balance between liberty and homeland security. In late 2004, the League's 5 *Things You Need to Know on Election Day* public awareness campaign familiarized voters with new election procedures and ways they could take action to ensure that their votes counted. *Safeguarding the U.S. Democracy* also continues the League's traditional leadership in the fight for the Constitutional protections found in our system of checks and balances and the separation of powers. Since January 2001, the LWVEF and more than 400 state and local Leagues have worked together on the "Judicial Independence" project to educate citizens about the importance of protecting the third branch of government. These highly successful efforts have included court watching, public television programming on judicial selection, participation in judicial conduct committees or commissions, advocating for judicial campaign finance reform, and many other activities.

"Over the course of *Safeguarding U.S. Democracy*, we hope to build an informed citizenry that is prepared to defend the merits of the system of separation of powers, the need for checks and balances and the importance of a strong third branch of government," concluded Maxwell.

This project is made possible by a generous grant from the Constitutional and Legal Policy Program of the Open Society Institute.

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.