

# 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.

**March 7, 2003, 12:00 noon**  
 Lunch available beginning at 11:30 a.m.)  
 First Friday, Sons of Norway, 722 2nd Ave. N., Fargo  
 Water Quality and Quantity in the Red River Basin  
 Speaker: Lance Toth, executive director of the International Watershed Stewardship in the Red River Basin

**March 29, 2003**  
 LWVRRV Annual Meeting, VIP Room, 624 Main Ave., Fargo  
 11:15 a.m. -Registration  
 11:30 a.m.-Meeting & Branch  
 (Reservation required. More information will be sent to members in a separate mailing.)

**April 4, 2003, 2:00 noon**  
 Lunch available beginning at 11:30 a.m.  
 First Friday, Sons of Norway, 722 2nd Ave. N., Fargo  
 The Mission of the Family HealthCare Center  
 Speaker: Sherlyn Dahl, Executive Director of the Family HealthCare Center

**March 1, 15 & 29, 9-10:30 a.m.**  
 Fargo City Commission Room  
 Fargo Area Legislative Forums

**March 8 & April 5, 9-10:30 a.m.**  
 Council Chambers, Moorhead City Hall  
 (note - this is a different site than previously announced)

## NORTH DAKOTA & MINNESOTA LEGISLATIVE FORUMS

The League, in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce, has scheduled several forums to follow the action during the 2003 North Dakota & Minnesota legislative sessions.

Several of these forums have already been held during the month of February.

**Fargo**  
 Nine legislators have appeared in 2 legislative forums so far in Fargo. We filled the Fargo City Commission Chamber for each of the 90-minute meetings. Among the issues audience members questioned legislators about were: the proposal for a N.D. Human Rights Commission, teachers' pay and education funding, economic development proposals and accountability for current programs, hunting issues, and of course, concerns about budget priorities and proposals to change the N.D. tax system. More questions were received than could be asked and we are hoping that even more questions will be asked at the next 3 forums, which will be on Saturday, from 9-10:30 a.m., March 1, 15, and 29 in the City Commission room at Fargo City Hall, 200 3rd St. N.

Scheduled to attend on March 1st are Senators Tim Mathern and John Syverson, Representatives Byron Clark, Steve Zaiser and Al Carlson. On March 15th, Senator Tom Fischer and Representatives Ron Iverson, Kathy Hawken, and Sally Sandvig are scheduled. On March 29th, Sen. Carolyn Nelson and Representatives Blair Thoreson and Randy Boehning are scheduled to attend.

**Moorhead**  
 On January 2nd, five League members attended a legislative interview with Rep. Morrie Lanning during which he responded to questions that were submitted by the Minnesota State League.

The Minnesota legislative forum on February 8th was attended by more than 100 people. This was more than the Townsite Centre Board Room could comfortably hold, so the next two forums will be held in the Council Chambers, at Moorhead City Hall, 500 Center Ave. These meetings will be on Saturday, from 9-10:30 a.m., March 8th and April 5th.

These forums will also be sponsored by Moorhead Community Education. It is expected that Senator Keith Langseth and Representatives Paul Marquart and Morrie Lanning will attend.

Voter service extends its thanks to the City of Fargo, the media representatives who attended, David Martin and all those at the Chamber of Commerce of Fargo Moorhead, and all League volunteers who give their time and effort to bring success to these forums.

If you are interested in helping the League at any of these meetings, please contact Barb Hendrick (redbarb@cablone.net) for Fargo Forums. For Moorhead forums contact Mary Davies (marbob7@aol.com) or leave a message at the League office (232-6696).

## FIRST FRIDAYS

At both the January and February First Friday meetings, the focus was on the Afghanistan and Pakistan region. Both meetings were very well attended by League members and as well as several guests.

At the January meeting, League Co-President Julia Jones spoke about her trip to New York City to attend the UN Briefing on the Progress on Women's Rights Around the World.

One of the speakers at this briefing, Jane Connors, Chief of Women's Rights in the United Nations, explained the inner workings of the CEDAW Convention for the Committee for Discrimination Against Women. She stated that in some countries around the world, legislation discriminates against women especially in areas of citizenship and family issues. CEDAW provides a constructive way forward and it is imperative that the U.S. ratifies this legislation.

Another speaker, Susan Safi Rafiq, the founder of the International Federation of Afghan Women, gave an emotional description of conditions in Afghanistan, both in the past and present. She stated that prior to 1964, the Afghan Constitution gave many rights to women, and that returning to this Constitution may offer the best chance for permanent improvement in their lives. Julia Jones passed around a list that Susan Safi Rafiq had created, of items that Afghan women need to start to rebuild the society. This list was diverse, including seeds, magazines, textbooks and professional clothing.

At the February meeting, Nancy Friesen spoke on "Life Behind the Veil: a Visitor's View of Islamic Life." Ms. Friesen has lived and worked in rural Pakistan, near the Afghan border. She and her husband and three young children spent several years in a small city in Pakistan, while her husband was helping to construct small power generating projects. She explained that visitors need to be sensitive to the culture of foreign lands, especially in isolated areas, before they will have any chance of being listened to. She showed us examples of the types of clothing that she wore as a woman in a traditional Islamic culture, including a burqa.

Ms. Friesen explained that after the residents of the area felt comfortable with her acceptance of their culture, the women would come to meetings in her house. Many of the women had not known their neighbors before this as they had not felt able to visit anyone except their relatives. At these meetings, the Pakistani women would practice their English and, at the same time, be exposed to Western thoughts on education and hygiene.

--Carol Sawicki

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.

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.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Our country is faced with many challenges today. I believe the work our local league does, in cooperation with the LWVUS, is instrumental in helping our citizens to be politically aware and informed in this fast moving, media driven world. Our work is important. The League has stood the test of time and it is with the commitment of concerned citizens that we continue to closely monitor government at the local, state and national levels.

As the LWVRRV Annual Meeting draws closer, our board has been busy planning next year's budget, slate of officers and local program. We continue to grow in membership and visibility, though there is much more work to be done! Your involvement on all levels is encouraged and welcomed.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to have served as your Co-President this year. I have worked with many wonderful people and find my time with the League is an enriching part of my life.

Happy Spring to all of you and we'll see you on Saturday, March 29th at the V.I.P. Room.

-- Julia Jones, Co-president

## THE LWVRRV ADVOCATES

### Local boards and commissions

The following letter has been submitted to the editors of local newspapers:

**To the Editor:**  
 The League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley recently completed a study of advisory boards appointed by the city governments in Fargo, Moorhead and West Fargo. We presented our recommendations to the cities last fall. Beyond giving lip service to our findings, recent events demonstrate that little is being done to change.

In our study we found that the present makeup of most appointed boards and commissions does not reflect the growing diversity of our communities. We urged local governing bodies to take steps to make sure that all segments of our population have representation. However, all appointments to Fargo's Liquor License Advisory Group to date have been men. Overall membership on Moorhead committees remains 70% male.

The League of Women Voters recommended term limits for local appointments in order to increase the opportunities for citizens to serve. In Moorhead, names were recently put forth for re-appointment to the Public Service Commission and Planning Commission even though they had served well past Moorhead's term limit. By continuing to re-appoint the same people, we are missing out on the new ideas and energy brought by younger residents and by citizens from diverse backgrounds. We find it particularly ironic that the possibility of re-appointing the same men came up at the very meeting where the Moorhead City Council received recommendations from the Human Rights Commission, one of which was to increase diversity on city boards and commissions.

The League also recommended an open appointment process whereby residents are aware of openings and have a way to apply if they are interested. Some of our local units of government do put ads in the paper or use a website. We commend this practice and encourage all local units of government to do this. However, they also need to consider more aggressive ways of reaching out to groups of citizens not currently involved in local government.

The League of Women Voters believes that citizen involvement is key to a strong democracy. Let us start at home by involving as many citizens as possible in local government. We will all be stronger for it.

--Julia Jones, Co-President League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley

## LWV OF NORTH DAKOTA TAKES A STAND ON CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

In North Dakota, Senate Bill 2403 was recently introduced as an attempt to clarify and to expand our current laws regarding campaign contribution statements and our campaign finance laws. North Dakota has a been a leader in preventing corporations and special interest groups from having too much sway through our campaign finance laws. Currently, corporations may not make direct contributions to aid any political party, political committee or organization. A portion of this bill, introduced by the leadership of both parties, would eliminate our high standards by allowing corporations to make donations to state political parties for the use in purchasing, maintaining or renovating a building or purchasing fixtures, furnishings or equipment for the building.

Not only does this change the scope of this law, it expands it without monetary limits. This means that the availability of funds to cover the political party's overhead will free up more hard money for candidates to spend directly on their campaigns. In addition, the wording of the bill provides that said donations do not have to be disclosed to the public until January 31st of each year after an election.

The League of Women Voters of North Dakota supports campaign finance reform that would improve the methods of financing political campaigns in order to ensure the public's right to know, and to combat corruption and undue influence. This legislation would appear to take North Dakota backward in our quest for fair elections.

The League of Women Voters of North Dakota has submitted testimony to the North Dakota Legislature urging that this portion of SB 2403 not be enacted into law.

--Suzanne M. Dobbins, President League of Women Voters of North Dakota

## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE RED RIVER VALLEY OFFICERS 2003

**Co-Presidents:** Julia Jones\* and Janet Van Amburg\*  
**Vice President:** Barbara Hendrick\*  
**Secretary:** Mary Davies\*  
**Treasurer:** Suzanne Dobbins

**Directors:**  
 Marlene Batterberg, Carla Hartel, Margaret Blawie,\*  
 Carolyn Batten,\* Helen Rudie,\* Carol Sawicki \*

**Nominating Committee:**  
 Bea Arett, Judy Lee, Lois Ivers Allenburg, Mary Davies and Margaret Blue

\* denotes terms expiring in 2003

## Observer Corps

### FARGO SCHOOL BOARD

At a special meeting on Saturday, February 15, 2003, the Fargo School Board met to discuss issues relating to the Long Range Plan for Facilities. One issue was that of a single grade configuration, on which a decision must be made before remodeling and construction needs, as well as school size and location, can be determined. Four models that were submitted by the Facilities Steering Committee in 2002 were considered. They were as follows:

- A) K-6, 7-9, 10-12 (current no. of site configuration)
- B) K-6, 7-9, 10-12 with 9th grade academics (school-within-a-school) at Ben Franklin on the north side, and at South or Discovery on the south side.
- C) K-5, 6-7, 8-9, 10-12 (current south side configuration)
- D) K-5, 6-8, 9-12

The analysis process considered how each model aligned with three dimensions: Community (the guiding principles developed by the Facilities Steering Committee based on public input), pedagogical considerations, and fiscal implications. Following group discussion, each member rated the models separately on these three dimensions. Model D was given the highest average score with Model A deemed the second highest by consensus. The administration was asked to supply more in-depth information on each of these two configurations. It was clarified that any change in configuration would not occur immediately but rather be phased in over time. It was also affirmed that what occurs within the classrooms between teachers and students is more significant to learning and achievement than building configuration.

Consideration was given to a first draft of a rubric for prioritizing major facility renovations and ongoing maintenance concerns. Instructional, safety and operational needs would be weighed and ranked in terms of their urgency. Timelines and cost estimates would then be prepared and incorporated within the long range facilities plan for projects planned during the ensuing five year period.

(Drawn from Board Briefs for February 15, 2003; edited by Audrey Richmond)

### FARGO CITY COMMISSION

Since the North Dakota Legislature has been in session, the Fargo City Commission has held legislative updates as part of their regular meetings. There is a list of over 70 bills being considered by the legislature which would have an impact on the city if enacted, so city staff and commissioners follow them closely. The bills that are of the most concern are those that would take away local control from city government. The recent annexation matter with West Fargo, and special assessment issues have also led to the introduction several bills of concern to the mayor and commission.

--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 Cass and Clay Counties. Most local citizens are not aware of the duties and importance of these bodies. A LWV member 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 their community.

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

### BOARD BRIEFS

At the January meeting the LWVRRV Board decided the need to raise local dues, due to an increase in the PMP (per member payment) that our chapter is required to send the national league organization. The Board agreed to raise the annual dues to \$45/individual, \$67.50/household and \$15/student. This increase will go into effect for the membership year that begins in April 2003.

Since the attendance at monthly general membership meetings has not been very good, it was decided to have these meetings quarterly instead in the upcoming year.

A flyer announcing the 59th annual Minnesota State League Convention was distributed. This convention will be in Duluth, MN on May 30-31. Anyone who would like more information about attending this convention should contact Mary Davies (marbob7@aol.com) or Janet VanAmburg (jvk1943@juno.com).

## Table of Contents

- A Look Ahead
- ND & MN Legislative Forums
- First Fridays
- From The President
- The LWVRRV Advocates
- Campaign Finance Reform
- League Officers 2003
- Observer Corps
- Join Observers Corps
- Board Briefs