

February 2009

Birthday Bash: Women and Politics General Meeting in February

Mark the League's 89th birthday at a dinner discussion, February 18, with the 2008 Democracy In Action awardees. Join **Judith Brachman**, **Lou Briggs**, and **Peg Rosenfield** as they discuss women and politics, government and elections, democracy and advocacy, and civic engagement in a forum moderated by **Joan Lawrence**. The evening will be a candid and no doubt humorous look at politics, along with some birthday surprises.

RSVP to the League office (614-837-1089, vote@lwvcolls.org) by February 11 and then pay at the door. The event will be held at the Clintonville Woman's Club (3951 N. High Street, Columbus 43214) and begins at 6:30 pm, or join us at 7:00 pm for the program only (no charge).



All Invited to Advocacy-Membership Discussion

New members and those not familiar with the League's consensus process are specially invited to a special meeting aimed at new members - but open to seasoned veterans as well - that will offer another opportunity to participate in consensus on the National Popular Vote Compact. Join us at Wesley Glen (5155 N. High Street, Columbus 43214) on February 28 at 9:00 am.

Units in late February and early March will give members a voice in the national discussion on the alternative to the Electoral College process. If you cannot attend a Unit meeting, or don't usually participate in Units, the February 28 meeting is for you too.

Light refreshments will be offered along with a primer on consensus, an introduction to Units, and background on the National Popular Vote Compact (see www.lwvcolls.org for the background paper, supporting and opposing arguments, and other materials). Consensus results from this and the Unit meetings will be considered by the Metro League trustees when they report back to LWVUS.

To RSVP for the meeting, contact **Amy Pulles** at 614-837-1089 or vote@lwvcolls.org.



Units Meet in February, March

Spirited discussion, networking, and consensus decisions are on the agenda for the winter Unit meetings. Choose the meeting that's convenient for you, no RSVP required.

The Evening Unit will be held Tuesday, February 24 at the Grandview Public Library, 1685 W. First Avenue. The meeting begins at 7:00 pm.

The Morning Unit will start at 9:00 am for coffee and conversation and the program will start at 9:30 am. That will take place at Wesley Glen, 5155 N. High Street, on Thursday, February 19.

Because of Ash Wednesday, the Dinner Unit will be moved temporarily to a new date - Wednesday, March 4. Dinner starts at 5:30 pm at Wings Restaurant, 2801 E. Main Street, Bexley, with the program starting at about 6:00 pm.

Save the Date

Join us for a
community-wide
Town Hall meeting
focusing on
judicial independence.

THURSDAY, MARCH 26

6:30 - 9:00 pm
Jewish Community Center
1125 College Avenue
Columbus 43209

FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Janyce Katz

January 27, 2009, another very good LWVMC program had to be cancelled because of the weather! First, our opening program was cancelled because wind blew out electricity and now a heavy winter storm knocked out our planning program.



Jean Byrd, however, assured me that we can still do program planning (discuss key issues that we thing LWV Ohio should adopt at the state convention) and discuss key LWV issues at unit meetings. All is not lost!

The unit meetings will be in February, with the dinner meeting at Wings on March 4. There is even a Saturday morning February 28 meeting at Wesley Glen. That one's focusing on the National Popular Vote issue.

And the cancelled program, the one originally set for September, has been rescheduled, WEATHER PERMITTING, for February 18. The same LWV stars can tell us about their perception of LWVMC.

Meantime, do you realize LWVMC is older than the national LWV? Truly, it is. We will turn 90 next year. What should we do to celebrate and toot our own horn? **Ann Henkener, Jean Byrd** and **Diane Gosser** are busy planning programs. Contact them with your suggestions for our 90th birthday or, even better, help them plan and develop the programs.

The Advocacy Committee has interesting plans to study local issues and develop or update positions on them. **Scott Britton** and team are working hard. Join them, or check the website (also developed under Scott's leadership) to catch up on what's going on in LWVMC.

Speaking of good ideas, **Lea Madry** and **Dorothy Whitcomb** pulled off a wonderful new membership meeting for those new members braving snow and cold to get to Jean Byrd's house. We have some dynamic new members and, with Lea's leadership, we hope to have more. Meantime, as the income of many households gets tighter, we need to make certain that we retain our current members.

Providing programs that are so interesting that our members wouldn't even dream of leaving

requires some money. Our major fundraiser is Democracy in Action (DIA), scheduled for May 14 (hold that date!). **Sara Meyers** and **Kitty Burcsu** could use your ideas for new sponsors and supporters for the event and could use your help contacting these individuals.

Barbi Crabill will be working with the Franklin County Consortium for Good Government as it meets on February 8 to wrap up the 2008 election candidates forums and start planning for the next year. Contact **Amy Pulles** if you are interested in joining the planning session at the Spaghetti Warehouse on February 8.

Finally, the webpage has become an essential communication tool. Please take the survey so that we know how much you are using it and what other information you would like to see online.

See you February 18 at the Clintonville Woman's Club - if not before!



Welcome New Members!

The following individuals joined the League of Women Voters of Metropolitan Columbus last year. Thanks for joining the League, where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement.

Anita & Jean Ba	Ivan Gilbert
Theresa Baikan-Willis	JoAnne Grossman
Deborah Barksdale	Rhodrick Harden
Teresa Blakely	Michelle Jordan
Annette Boer	Adrianna McAfee
Barbara Brunot	Melanie Morrison
Karen Carpenter	Cathy Novak
Deborah Collins	Adriana Pust
Ruth Conone	Robert Richards
Eleanor DeVore	Holly Setto
Tiffany Dixon	Brittany Sharnsky
Mary Foor	Anne Sheline
Kathleen Gaydos	Heidi Tincher



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Annual Report Highlights League's Voter-Service Role

LWVMC and its charitable arm, the Educational Fund, released its annual report for 2007-2008 last month.

"We cannot overestimate the critical services to voters provided by the League," said President Janyce C. Katz. "From distributing 400,000 copies of our trusted *Voter Information Bulletin* across central Ohio to hosting 12 political debates that gave citizens a chance to evaluate the candidates up close and personal, the League is unmatched in the breadth of nonpartisan voter services we provide."

The 2007-2008 League board was led by Kitty Bursu. The report covers voter services for the November 2007 General Election.

Read the report online at www.lwvcols.org.

City Budget Suffers; Tax Increase May Be in the Works

by Scott Britton

Even as Franklin County government sits comfortably in the black, state and local governments are suffering devastating cuts because of the national economic downturn. The League's Advocacy Committee has been monitoring news from the City of Columbus budget process, knowing that the fate of the city will have ripple affects throughout the metropolitan area.

As the *Voter* went to press, the city was calling for 130 personnel to be laid off, 11 recreation centers to be closed, and a multitude of social and other city services to be reduced. Mayor Michael Coleman prepared his budget with a gap of \$82.9 million between anticipated revenues and the cost of maintaining city services at current levels, based on estimates prepared by City Auditor Hugh Dorrian last fall. Coleman proposed using \$28.5 million from the city's rainy-day fund to fill the gap, leaving just over \$15 million in the emergency fund. However, Dorrian recently revised the gap upward by \$13 million to \$95.9 million (the first time in 41 years he has had to revise his estimates upward).

Columbus, which must approve a balanced budget, relies heavily on income taxes and interest income to pay for city services. With

unemployment rising and interest rates being cut, those anticipated revenues have dropped precipitously. In 2007, for example, interest income provided almost \$31 million in revenue; in 2009 it is projected to provide only \$9 million. According to a municipal committee looking for solutions to the crisis, Columbus faces a shortage of \$80 to \$100 million each year for the next 10 years.

What is left of the rainy-day fund won't cover the new \$13 million gap if city leaders heed Dorrian's recommendation to leave at least \$10 million in the fund in case the economy worsens. Coleman is negotiating with union employees to accept pay freezes and give up bonuses in order to narrow the gap by \$10 million.

City leaders are looking at several options for shoring up city revenues: Increasing the city income tax, raising user fees such as trash fees, even securing bail-out funds from the federal government through an economic stimulus package now being considered by the Congress.

The League anticipates that an income-tax hike will be put to the voters, possibly in May. Local ballot questions must be certified to the Franklin County Board of Elections by Feb. 19 for that election. While the League's positions on tax and finance prefer increasing the income tax – a "progressive" tax – over increasing other taxes, such as sales taxes ("regressive" taxes), the committee intends to research other options before supporting or opposing an income-tax increase. Along the same lines, the committee will also monitor the work of a statewide task force examining consolidation of services across local government entities.

The play of League positions in the budget can be daunting. Stances on meeting basic human needs, health care, justice and corrections (including juvenile justice), children services, addiction services, urban policy, and others must be weighed against one another and against overarching questions of tax policy.

If you are interested in joining the Advocacy Committee's discussion, contact **Scott Britton** at sbritton@wowway.com or 614-848-4291.

OOPS...

There was a mailing problem with the December/January issue of the *Voter*. If you didn't receive a copy, it is available online at www.lwvcols.org.

Mark Your Calendar...

2nd & 4th Tues LWVO Lobby Lunch, All invited, 11:30 am-1:00 pm, Columbus Metropolitan Library-Main Branch (96 S. Grant Street)

February 18 LWVMC Birthday Celebration & General Meeting

February 19 LWVMC Morning Unit

February 24 LWVMC Evening Unit

February 28 LWVMC Advocacy-Membership Discussion

March 4 LWVMC Dinner Unit

March 26 Town Hall Meeting on Judicial Independence

May 1-3 LWVO 58th Convention, Dublin

May 14 LWVMC Democracy In Action Ceremony & Reception, Statehouse Atrium

Tell Us What You Think...

Please complete the satisfaction survey about the League's improved website.

You should have received a link to the survey in a January e-mail.

If you need the link again, contact Amy at vote@lwvcols.org

or visit the News section of www.lwvcols.org.

Your opinion matters, whether you spend time on the website or not!

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