

February 2010

Units Meet in February

by Tiffany Dixon

Please stop by to participate in a lively discussion with Metro League members during one of the upcoming Unit meetings about *Policy in the Technology Age: Maneuvering the Information and Technology Divide*.

Given modern day technology divides and the recent Supreme Court decision announced in *Citizens United v. FEC*, we absolutely must be aware of the various resources used by voters to get information (i.e. blogs, television, radio, etc.) What does *Citizens United v. FEC* mean to us? How do these resources impact the League's ability to provide information to voters? How can the League ensure these efforts to reach voters are effective? See the LWVUS statement on the decision inside this issue of the *Voter*.

Don't forget to check the Metro League website for additional units and topics.

Morning Unit at Wesley Glen

Thursday, February 18 | 9:30 - 11:00 am
5155 N. High Street, Columbus 43214

Dinner Unit at Wings Restaurant, Bexley

Wednesday, February 24 | 5:30 - 7:00 pm
2801 E. Main Street, Columbus 43209

Public Transit General Meeting Set for March 18

by Scott Britton

Is central Ohio ready to go "Beyond the Bus?" Join us March 18 to hear different visions for the future of public transit in the metro area.

Gulsah Akar, a visiting assistant professor in city and regional planning at OSU's Knowlton School of Architecture, will moderate a discussion of transit prospects among a panel that will include:

- Chester Jourdan, executive director of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC);
- Bill Lhota, president and chief executive officer of the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA); and
- Brent C. Simonds, advocacy coordinator, Mid-Ohio Board for an Independent Living Environment, Inc. (MOBILE).

The program, entitled *Beyond the Bus? Public Transit in Central Ohio*, begins at 7:00 pm. It is free and open to the public.

Dinner will be available at a cost of \$25 beginning at 6:00 pm. To reserve a meal, contact **Amy Pulles** at the League office, 614-837-1089 or vote@lwvcols.org, by March 8 and specify regular or vegetarian. (Payment can be made at the door, but a dinner reservation must be made in advance.)

The general meeting - open to members as well as anyone who wants to learn more about transit options - is hosted by the League's public transit study committee, chaired by **Ellen Haider** and **Nancy Brown**. The committee, which includes two members of the Delaware County League, has been working since last

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LWVMC GENERAL MEETING Where We Stand

Thursday, January 28

6:00 - 8:30 pm

Wesley Glen, Ravine Room
5155 N. High Street
Columbus 43214

Ever thought to yourself, "Why doesn't League do something about that?" Then join us for a light supper and learn more about national and local League positions. Lend your voice to the League's advocacy platform for 2010-2012.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Janyce C. Katz, Esq.

Finally we can all cheer **Phyllis Shwartz** as she receives a lifetime achievement award for all she has done to protect the right of women to choose when to have a child. It is an important right, one for which many fought. It is a right that continues to be at risk.



Far too many people do not understand that the decision to have a child is a personal decision, one that should be carefully thought through. A child should be brought into a loving family, should be supported, cherished, helped through life, read to, cared for and given a chance at a decent life. A child is a blessing.

Sometimes there are reasons why a woman decides to protect her own life. It is a choice that most make reluctantly, and it is not a choice that should be forced on anyone. At the same time, it is not a choice that should be forbidden by law or by lack of financial resources.

I have a friend who was pregnant at a time when there was no choice. OK, people could make decisions to find ways to have abortions, but they were often dangerous and some women who found these ways lost their ability to have children or died. My friend's baby died sometime after her sixth month of pregnancy. My friend feared the back alley doctors. So, she had to wait for it to be delivered and, in the process, hope carrying the dead baby would not harm her health.

I also know people who were born because their mothers did not have an abortion. Their mothers were able to have them, to support them and to care for them although circumstances were difficult for them.

We have a Constitution that protects all religions, not pushing one over the other and letting each one observe. Religions look at the issue differently. That right deserves protection as well.

Part of protecting the right means ensuring that women have the tools with which to make a

good choice. They know how to prevent a pregnancy and they can access those tools should they want. At the same time, they know how to access the resources needed to bring a child into the world, the health care for mother and child, the job support to allow a mother to be pregnant and maintain a roof over her head and food, and a system able to educate all children well.

Phyllis Shwartz has a wonderful family, and dedicated much of her life to them. She also has been a role model for many of us (ME!!), as she has gone about educating her community and legislators about the choice issue.

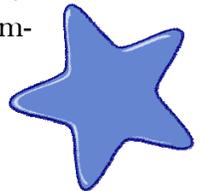
Thanks to Freedom of Choice Ohio and the National Council of Jewish Women, Columbus, she will receive her well-deserved award at the annual FOCO dinner to commemorate the anniversary of *Roe v.*

Wade. No, that is not alternative ways to cross a river, it is the case that made choice possible, the case that has been eroded by more recent decisions, the case that may be overturned if we don't watch out. Anyhow, the dinner is on January 27 at the OSU Fawcett Center, 2400 Olentangy River Road. LWV is a member of FOCO. Let's have a table, or two or more and lift a glass (probably water) to Phyllis for all she has done to protect our rights.

By the way, if you are interested in issues, PLEASE consider coming the very next night, January 28, to Wesley Glen on High Street to discuss what should be LWVMC's priorities. This is a time for your input. It is also a time to have hot soup.

By the way, if the weather is such that even hot soup, thick boots and lots of salt won't get your car through the snow, call **Amy Pulles** at the LWMC Office to check if the meeting is on before going venturing out. That checking goes for any meeting.

And, finally, we are still looking for dedicated people to help us with our 90 years of LWV celebration and Democracy In Action. Call Amy and let her know how much time you can commit to helping us get a great start to the next ten years of League.



Membership Report

by Lucy Hadley Buzzee

We have taken a bit of a hit regarding membership. On the bright side, even though, we have fewer members than last year, the net loss is better than the year before!

The beginning of January is the time that each local League must reconcile their total membership in order to pay the National League the correct "per member payment" that is collected with the dues. If you recall, the local League sends payment to the state League, as well. As of January 2009, LWVMC had a net loss of 35 members. As of January 2010, the net loss is nine. Now, the losses include both those members who have renewed locally and nationally, and in that regard, LWVMC only lost six members. This makes our goal of obtaining 90 new members for this year challenging. And as the Board of Trustees looks to update a strategic plan, retention of membership needs to be a major point.

The New Member Campaign is still going on. In the next paragraph, I am about to repeat what was written in the October issue of the *Voter*. Nothing has changed. However, we do have a General Meeting on March 18 on the subject of public transportation/transit. The Study Group has been meeting for months, and this meeting in March will be the first part of the consensus process in order for LWVMC to have a viable position on which to act and advocate.

And so... Please consider inviting your friends, co-workers, people you know who are in other organizations, people who have similar ideas - "To encourage informed and active participation in government" and "to make democracy work for all citizens." We have brochures that we can give you to give to your colleagues or just give us the names and addresses and we will make sure they get an invitation to join your League of Women

Voters. We have found a personal invitation is important. In fact, a personal invitation coming from you to your friend, neighbor, or acquaintance is absolutely the best way to secure new members. Think back to when you joined the League. Chances are, someone invited you to a meeting, to join a mutually interesting task force or to a League social event because they thought you would be the kind of person who would be interested in the League of Women Voters. Do someone else a favor and invite him or her to come with you to the next Unit Meeting or General Meeting on March 18. We can promise a stimulating discussion.

We are always looking for people who might be interested in joining the Membership Committee. If you are interested, contact **Amy Pulles** at the League office, vote@lwvcols.org or 614-837-1089 Also contact Amy with the names of possible new members.

WELCOME to our newest members:

Donna Lossing Jones (*long-time Marion League member*)

Jill Moorhead

Connect Online

Stay up-to-date on all the League news by visiting www.lwvcols.org. In addition to news items of interest and event details, you can find studies and publications on an array of public policy issues. Be sure to also visit the League's Facebook site. It's easy to do; just use the link on the website homepage.



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General Meeting on March 18

summer preparing background materials, pros and cons, and consensus questions that will help the Metro League reach consensus on a new public transit position later this spring.

Background materials on public transit will be available at the meeting and are available now at www.lwvcols.org (click on "events" and then scroll to the March 18 meeting).

Note: The location for this meeting was being changed at press time. Members will receive a postcard once a new venue has been established, and the location will be posted to www.lwvcols.org.



League of Women Voters
of Metropolitan Columbus
PO Box 130
Blacklick, Ohio 43004-0130

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Transportation Funding

by Ellen Haider

As we prepare to come to a consensus on public transit, it may be helpful to look at the broader picture of transportation funding.

Since shortly after the invention of the automobile, Americans have embraced cars as a favorite form of transportation. President Eisenhower, having seen the value of roads in fighting World War II, worked for and was successful in achieving legislation in 1956 that would be the basis for the Interstate Highway System and establish the federal gas tax, dedicated to the Highway Trust Fund.

Quite a bit has changed since then. The Highway Trust fund is severely depleted due in part to sharply declining receipts from the federal gas tax. The federal surface transportation act (SAFETEA-LU) expired last fall. Congress has been granting extensions since then. Congress is wrestling with how to fund transportation in the future and how the money will be divided between the various modes of transportation. In the meantime, stimulus money from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act has been helping to bridge the gap both for highway funding and, to a lesser extent, for transit funding.

Ohioans pay 18.4 cents per gallon for the federal motor fuel tax. They also pay 28 cents per gallon in state tax, which is not indexed or adjusted for inflation. The state constitution prohibits the use of these funds for projects that are not highway related.

In 2008, Gov. Ted Strickland appointed Ohio's 21st Century Transportation Priorities Task Force. He charged the members of the task force with looking at the broad picture of Ohio's transportation needs and developing recommendations for how those needs can best be met. The task force submitted its report a year ago, in January 2009. The report presents a set of strategies for developing an efficient multi-modal transportation system, pointing out that currently the state has no dedicated funding for non-highway transportation. Since then, the Ohio Department of Transportation has been working on a plan to submit to the legislature for a new way to fund transportation in Ohio.

This would require a change in the constitution.

So, as we work toward consensus on a local public transit position, we will do so not knowing how transportation will be funded on either the federal or state level, but knowing that it surely will be different from what it is today.

Decision Sets Off Revolution in Campaign Finance

The League of Women Voters of the United States, which filed an amicus brief in the case, released this statement by President Mary G. Wilson regarding the Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United v. FEC*:

The Supreme Court has made a tragic mistake. Their decision in Citizens United v. FEC is constitutionally irresponsible and will surely bring about an anti-democratic revolution in how we finance elections in this country. Basic pillars of American democracy have been undermined - that elections should not be corrupted by vast corporate wealth and that the voters should be at the center of our democratic system.

Justice Stevens had it right when he said, in his dissent, 'The Court's ruling threatens to undermine the integrity of elected institutions across the Nation. The path it has taken to reach its outcome will, I fear, do damage to this institution.'

In creating a new constitutional right for corporations to spend unlimited amounts of their shareholder's money to determine the outcome in candidate elections, the Court has unleashed into our elections tremendous sums of money from for-profit corporations that cannot possibly be matched in quantity by contributions from ordinary citizens. The only possible outcome of this is that big money and special interests will have an even tighter grip on our democracy.

Congress and the President enacted campaign finance laws over a series of decades for a reason - to protect our democracy from the perverse influence of big money in our elections. In making this decision, the Court has ignored the best interests of the American public and our representative form of government.

Volunteer Needed

LWVMC is looking for a volunteer to serve as editor of the *Voter* starting after the Annual Meeting in June.

Basic duties include securing news items and photos from Board members, proofreading, and layout. The newsletter is issued ten times annually.

For questions or more information, contact Cheryl Markino at cherylmarkino@att.net or 614-805-7697 (cell).

Dollars and Census

by Karen Rainey, Meg Flack, Mary Helen Hart

In addition to the need for an accurate population count for redistricting, a compelling argument for League involvement in the 2010 census is the financial benefit to our communities from federal and state dollars allocated on Census data.

Nationally over the coming decade, about \$400 billion in federal funds will be distributed based on demographic information. This is estimated to be about \$1,200 per person per year -- or \$12,000 per person over the next decade. Thus, for every person not counted, communities stand to lose \$12,000.

These federal funds include grants for Medicaid, Head Start, the Child Care and Development Block Grant, the Community Services Block Grant, WIC (Women, Infants and Children food and nutrition program), Emergency Food and Shelter Grants, Community Development Block Grants, education funds for special and vocational education, public housing assistance and transit programs. Many of these programs form the safety net critical to individuals and families hurt by the recession. Other programs aid communities struggling to continue to provide services while coping with revenue shortfalls.

In addition to the financial resources the census brings into a community, census data are key to shaping public policy decisions about land use, economic and workforce development, housing and transportation planning. This again reinforces the need for an accurate count.

Those most at risk of not being counted include highly mobile people (renters), the unemployed, young children of minorities, and those living in illegally converted housing units. Language barriers, low education levels and illiteracy also contribute to an undercount. A distrust of government and fears that information will be used by immigration or law enforcement officials are also major factors. It is important to note that the confidentiality of census data is guaranteed; personal information

is not shared with other government agencies. Leagues can play a critical role in their communities by promoting a complete census count. Numerous web resources have information about connecting with your local or county Complete Count Committee:

www.census.ohio.gov

www.youcancountonmeohio.org

www.nonprofitscount.org

In addition, you can find more information about the census at www.ohioimpact.org.

It's only a few months until Census Day-- April 1. Let's ensure every Ohioan is counted.

A Note of Thanks

From League Member Gloria Davis

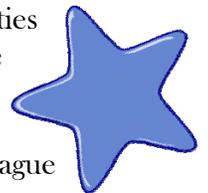
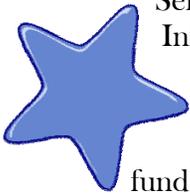
As many of you remember, I was hit by a car on September 24, 2009, on my way to a League event at the Lincoln Theatre. **Janyce** mentioned it in her president's column in the *Voter* and I was gratified by the thoughtfulness of the many, many League members who sent me notes and cards, called me, gave me books, or visited me while I was in rehab. I want to thank all of you for your support and encouragement.

I was at Altercare of Hilliard for rehab for more than two months and came home on December 2. A physical therapist comes two days a week and I exercise twice a day. I use a walker and hope to be on a cane before too long. Recovery is slow and my therapist reminds me that this is a marathon and not a sprint.

In promoting League membership, one of the many benefits listed, is making friends. How very true. The friends I made through League continue to be my friends. I heard from so many of you. I hold the record at Altercare of Hilliard for the most mail and the most visitors.

As an aside, I pestered the Activities Director for information on absentee voting for myself and the other patients. He was quite unaware of the regulations and I felt I did my League duty.

My sincere thanks to all of you for your positive thoughts and prayers as I travel this slow recovery road.



Mark Your Calendar...

- January 27** **Freedom of Choice Ohio Dinner & Program** commemorating the 37th Anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, featuring activist and author Cristina Page, and award presentation to Phyllis Shwartz, 6:00 - 9:30 pm, Fawcett Center.
- January 28** **LWVMC General Meeting: Where We Stand**, 6:00 - 8:30 pm, Wesley Glen, Ravine Room, 5155 N. High Street, Columbus 43214. Includes light supper. RSVP to the League Office for this program planning meeting.
- February 9** **LWVO Lobby Lunch**, 11:30 am - 1:00 pm, Columbus Metropolitan Library, Third Floor, 96 S. Grant Avenue, Columbus 43215. Bring your lunch and join the conversation.
- February 18** **LWVMC Morning Unit**, Wesley Glen, 5155 N. High Street, Columbus 43214, 9:30 am.
- February 23** **LWVO Lobby Lunch**, 11:30 am - 1:00 pm, Columbus Metropolitan Library, Third Floor, 96 S. Grant Avenue, Columbus 43215. Bring your lunch and join the conversation.
- February 24** **LWVMC Dinner Unit**, Wings, 2801 E. Main Street, Bexley 43209, 5:30 - 7:00 pm.
- March 18** **LWVMC General Meeting: Beyond the Bus? Public Transit in Central Ohio** Optional Dinner at 6:00 pm (\$25 payment at the door, must RSVP by March 8.) Panel discussion begins at 7:00 pm is free and open to the public.
- April 14** **LWVO Statehouse Day/State Council**, Vern Riffe Center for Government and the Arts, 77 S. High Street, 31st Floor, Columbus 43215, 9:45 am - 3:30 pm.
- May 13** **Democracy In Action**, sponsored by LWVMC, 5:30 pm.

