

*June/July/August 2009*

## **Byrd named Member of the Year at Annual Meeting, New Board Elected, City Officials Discuss Fiscal Crisis**

Beyond the usual business of accepting financial reports and approving a budget for the new fiscal year, League members gathered, June 3, to approve a new study of mass transit in central Ohio and to recognize **Jean Byrd** as Member of the Year.

Byrd, who resigned from the Board of Trustees earlier this year because of health problems, was honored for her service, leadership, and dedication.

Formerly the League's treasurer, she has continued as a member of the Educational Events Committee, coordinating units, town hall meetings, and issue forums. Over the years, Byrd has organized a number of member and public programs on such topics as women and poverty for the United Nations Millennium project, chaired the Budget Committee, and launched the "Beyond the Units" project.

Byrd also serves on the state League Lobby Corps as a specialist on solid waste. She began her League career in Oklahoma.

Guest speaker Joel Taylor, finance director for the City of Columbus, described the city's structural deficit and laid out the need for an increase in the municipal income tax. He also discussed the recession and its effect on city finances. Mayor Michael Coleman and City Council have placed an income tax increase, from 2 to 2.5 percent, on the special election ballot August 4. Council Member Eileen Paley was on hand to ask for the League's support, stating that failure to pass the increase will dramatically affect quality of life in the city, particularly police and fire protection. The municipal income tax has not increased since 1982, and Paley said it is unrealistic for the city to operate on a 27-year-old revenue model. Taylor hinted that another \$10-11 million reduction in estimated revenue is on the horizon, making the need for new revenue even more urgent.

During the League's business meeting, President **Janyce Katz** noted the impact of the economic downturn on the League's fundraising efforts while extolling the scores of volunteers whose dedication made the 2008-2009 year successful in so many other ways. She also bid farewell to outgoing Board members **Lea Madry, Sara Meyers, Dave Patton, and Joy Rose**. The slate of new officers and trustees for the Board recommended by the Nominating Committee was unanimously approved. (*See inside for the complete Board roster.*)

In addition, the proposed budget was adopted as presented; a study of mass transit in Central Ohio was approved, with **Ellen Haider** and **Nancy Brown** appointed co-chairs, and **Lucy Buzzee, Mary Helen Hart, Mary Schmertz, Richard Borzy, and Stuart Wright** appointed to the committee; and bylaws amendments were approved.

## **Metro Columbus League is Going Green**

To conserve both natural and financial resources, the League will no longer mail a printed VOTER after the September issue. Instead, members will receive the newsletter via e-mail, and it will also be available on the website at [www.lwvcols.org](http://www.lwvcols.org).

If you cannot access the Internet, notify the office (614-837-1089) and a black-and-white version will be printed from the League computer and mailed to you each month. If you are not certain we have your correct e-mail address, please contact the office at [vote@lwvcols.org](mailto:vote@lwvcols.org).

# FROM THE PRESIDENT

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by Janyce C. Katz, Esq.

The new fiscal year has started. While we will very much miss those individuals who left the Board, the new Board has an exciting energy that is pushing the planning for this year forward at a rapid pace.



This is the year LWV celebrates its 90th birthday both nationally and locally. **Dorothy Whitcomb** and **Lucy Buzzee** have incredible ideas about what we need to do in Columbus to remember why LWV came into existence. The celebration will be integrated into many events this year and will culminate in one big birthday bash. New Board member **Mary Cannon** has access to information about the history of LWVMC and Ed Fund that will be incorporated into the celebration.

By the way, **Dorothy Whitcomb** has access to dress plans for the latest in authentic suffragette wear. Feel free to contact her to work on the event or to find out how to get one of those outfits made to fit you.

New Board member **Tiffany Dixon** says that planning for the September 2009 opening meeting is underway. Wearing your newly-made suffragette outfit will be appropriate if you have it finished in time. Or, just plan on coming to an extremely interesting and somewhat different event. Date and other information will show up in your mailbox, in your e-mail and on the LWV webpage shortly.

So, too, will be this year's Units schedules. Another new Board member, **Helena Schlam**, is putting together interesting meetings. And, if you haven't attended a Unit meeting recently, you might consider trying one or more of them this year.

**Barbi Crabill** has been busy with the Franklin County Consortium for Good Government. To help educate Columbus voters about the income tax issue, the Consortium held a forum on July 20 and was involved with the WOSU event on July 30, on which former Board member **Dave Patton** worked very hard. There will be more such forums this fall. For that reason, Voter Service Committee needs YOU as the fall voter

registration, candidates forums and VIB season is just around the corner.

The Advocacy Committee, led by **Scott Britton**, endorsed the passage of the Columbus income tax. For that reason, the LWV, which staffs and sponsors the Consortium, had to take a lower profile role in the forums on the tax issue. They have also started a study of the mass transit issue. But, you knew that already from looking at the LWV website, kept oh so very up-to-date by Scott and the Technology Committee. They are looking at putting us on Facebook and perhaps even tweeting.

Fundraising will be an important part of this year's agenda as it is so very difficult to raise money right now. Our annual Democracy in Action event will again be a key part of fundraising, but we will also need help on the holiday party and on revamping the way LWVMC and Ed Fund raise money.

Because money will be a little tighter this year than it has been for a while, we are going to try to shift *The Voter* and other publications to the Internet. Contact **Amy Pulles** at the LWVMC office (614-837-1089) if you are unable to access the Internet.

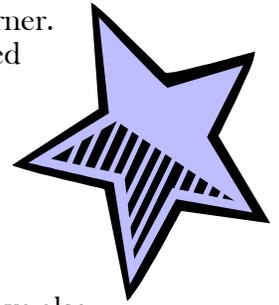
Also, if you have a few extra dollars that you would like to donate, please consider sending it to the League. Although we are mostly volunteer, we still have expenses and can use those dollars to make certain we can continue and increase our programming.

This will be an exciting year. I hope that you will plan to participate as much as possible.

## Study Committee Vacancy

The Mass Transit Study Committee has two vacancies. Members interested in serving on this exciting study of public transportation in central Ohio (no experience necessary!) are encouraged to submit their name to Amy Pulles at [vote@lwvcols.org](mailto:vote@lwvcols.org) or 614-837-1089.

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# Metro's Advocacy Committee Takes on Congress, Climate

by Scott Britton

Your Metro Advocacy Committee has been busy on public policy issues at the federal, state, and local levels of government. Beyond researching and endorsing the Columbus income tax ballot issue and responding to state action alerts about the legislature's budget impasse, the committee has been called on by the League's national office to lobby for legislation to combat global warming.

The House of Representatives made history June 26 by passing the American Clean Energy and Security (ACES) Act of 2009 by a margin of just 219-212. The bill is the first to curb the greenhouse gases that cause climate change and will help move the United States toward a clean energy economy. Here in central Ohio, Rep. Mary Jo Kilroy voted for the bill, but Reps. Pat Tiberi and Steve Austria voted against it.

Members of Congress in the Midwest - Democrats in particular - were targeted for lobbying because of concerns that Ohio's energy and automobile interests would persuade them to oppose the bill. In addition to responding to national action alerts, Metro Columbus League leaders met face-to-face with Reps. Tiberi and Kilroy in the winter and spring. The League continued to meet with Kilroy's staff to discuss the ACES bill, corresponded frequently by letter and e-mail, and even had phone contact with her office the day of the vote.

In coordination with LWV-Ohio, Metro's Advocacy Committee has already reached out to US Sen. Sherrod Brown's Columbus office and will also be meeting with Sen. George Voinovich's staff later this summer.

LWVMC President **Janyce Katz**, **Barbi Crabill**, **Dave Patton**, and **Scott Britton** have engaged in direct lobbying on this critical issue, staying in regular communication with the national League office.

The League and its partner, Oxfam America, supported the bill even though numerous compromises were made to the original draft, including:

- Reducing emissions targets to 17 percent below 2005 levels by 2020, which translates to only 3 percent below 1990 levels, when the original goal, using the best available science,

called for a cap 20 percent below 1990 levels;

- Reducing funds available for adaptation to 1 percent of revenue, divided between domestic and international spending (about \$660 million over 10 years), when the original goal was at least 3 percent devoted entirely to international adaptation; and
- Reducing allowances and revenue from the auction of permits below original goals.

The League and Oxfam continued to support the bill because:

- The language on adaptation in the final bill is good, recognizing the responsibility of the United States to support developing countries in adapting to climate change;
- Goals remain in place to drastically reduce emissions by 2050;
- The bill gives the US a framework for negotiating internationally at the upcoming Copenhagen summit; and
- Without action this year, it is unlikely that *any* climate change legislation would be taken up for at least another four or five years because of various election cycles.

For background information and resources, see the global climate change section online at [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org) and at [www.oxfamamerica.org](http://www.oxfamamerica.org). Oxfam has produced a helpful documentary, *Sisters on the Planet*, that explores how four women are fighting back against climate change.

Chances are high that the bill will be further compromised in the Senate - if there is enough support to pass it. Again, Midwest senators will be key to the bill's success. You can make a difference by expressing your support for strong energy and climate change legislation to Sens. Brown and Voinovich. See the Action Alert at [www.lwvcols.org](http://www.lwvcols.org) for details. Lobbying Ohio's senators is easy and takes only a few minutes of your time.

If you are interested in joining the Advocacy Committee to take action on this and other critical public policy issues, contact **Scott Britton** at [sbritton@wowway.com](mailto:sbritton@wowway.com).

# Redistricting Contest Proves Better Boundaries Possible

by Ann Henkener

Several weeks ago the results of the Ohio Redistricting Competition were announced and Metro Columbus League member **Stuart Wright** was among the three winners. Congratulations, Stuart!

The goal of the Ohio Redistricting Competition was to demonstrate that an open process based on objective criteria can produce fair legislative districts in Ohio. The Competition represents the culmination of more than nine months of planning by the League of Women Voters of Ohio (LWVO), Ohio Citizen Action, Common Cause, Ohio Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner, former State Rep. Joan Lawrence, and State Rep. Dan Stewart.

In crafting proposed redistricting criteria, competition partners paid special attention to the need for balance between traditional redistricting principles long recognized by courts and modern redistricting principles that can help achieve fairer districts in Ohio. The following criteria were used in the contest to draw Congressional districts, based on the 2000 census data:

- **Compactness.** Sometimes referred to as the “look” of a district, compactness assures that bizarrely-shaped legislative districts are minimized.
- **Communities of Interest.** Counties, municipalities, and other government boundaries give Ohioans a sense of place and shared interests. This measure seeks to minimize counties divided between districts.
- **Competitiveness.** Our democracy thrives when the marketplace of ideas is truly competitive, especially on Election Day. This measure seeks to maximize the number of legislative districts that could be won by either party, providing Ohioans with a stronger voice in choosing their representatives.
- **Representational Fairness.** The counterbalance for competitiveness is assuring that a final redistricting plan does not unfairly bias one party over another. This measure seeks to minimize this outcome by comparing the partisan bias of legislative districts to the real world voting history of Ohioans.

In addition, all plans needed to meet some basic criteria:

- **Population Equality.** Federal case law requires that districts be as equal in population as possible.
- **Contiguity.** All districts must be contiguous, meaning that every part of a district must be reachable from every other part without crossing the district’s borders.
- **National Voting Rights Act.** All plans must provide for at least one majority-minority congressional district, in keeping with federal law and case law.

## The Competition results:

- Fourteen plans were submitted by members of the public.
- Three plans were disqualified because they did not meet three threshold requirements.
- Three plans were declared the winning plans based on the scoring criteria used in the competition.
- Even the worst-scoring plan submitted in the competition was quantitatively fairer than the actual 2000 redistricting plan.

Stuart Wright’s plan included nine districts leaning Republican and nine leaning Democratic; 11 of 18 Congressional Districts rated as competitive for either political party; 20 county fragments, providing a high level of community preservation; and compact districts, providing districts that “look” fair.

By contrast, the current plan drawn in 2001 includes 13 districts leaning Republican and five leaning Democratic; only seven of 18 Congressional Districts rated as competitive for either political party; 44 county fragments, providing a low level of community preservation; and uncompact districts, creating districts that do not “look” fair.

The Competition proved that Ohioans can draw fair districts, and the League needs to continue getting the message out.



## State Settles Historic Election Lawsuit with League

In June, the League of Women Voters of Ohio, the League of Women Voters of Toledo-Lucas County, and a dozen Ohio citizens reached a historic agreement with the State of Ohio to fix defects in the way Ohio conducts its federal elections.

“Ohio voters won a great victory with the settlement of this case, which was about giving all eligible Ohio voters the chance to vote in a fair election and have their votes counted,” said LWVO President Meg G. Flack. “Careful planning and uniform execution of elections was our goal, and we believe this agreement achieves that.”

The agreement, calling for new institutional procedures in the electoral process, settles a lawsuit filed in 2005 that alleged then Ohio Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell, Gov. Bob Taft, and their predecessors had failed to protect the fundamental rights of eligible Ohio voters to cast a meaningful ballot, as required by the Equal Protection and Due Process Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.

This landmark agreement is binding on the state to provide for uniformity and consistency in Ohio election procedures so the opportunity to vote can be enjoyed equally by all Ohio citizens.

## League Endorsed Issue 1

After examining the tax issue thoroughly, the League of Women Voters of Metropolitan Columbus endorsed Issue 1, the Columbus income tax increase included on the August 4 special election ballot.

The organization has a longstanding public policy position both locally and nationally supporting adequate resources for government and preferring the income tax over other taxes as a means of ensuring sufficient revenue.

Although raising taxes may not be popular, particularly in the current economic climate, the League concluded that raising the income tax is the fairest and most expedient way to ensure that essential city services, from police and fire to health care and recreation centers, continue to enhance the quality of life in Columbus.

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*Learn about your Board.*

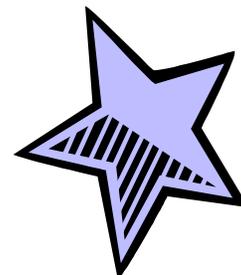
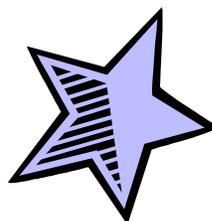
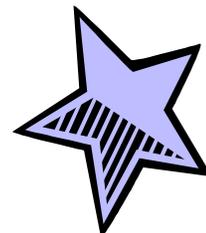
*Read their bios online at [www.lwvcols.org](http://www.lwvcols.org).*

## MC Members on LWVO Board

The League of Women Voters of Metropolitan Columbus congratulates local member **Meg G. Flack** for her election to president of the League of Women Voters of Ohio at State Convention in May.

We also congratulate **Ann Henkener** for her re-election to the state board and **Nancy Brown** for her appointment to the board.

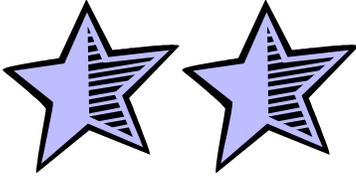
Show your support for Meg, Ann, and Nancy by making a Power Pledge to the state League today at [www.lwvohio.org](http://www.lwvohio.org)!



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## Mark Your Calendar...

- August 11    **LWVO Lobby Lunch**, 11:30 am-1:00 pm, Columbus Library-Main Branch (96 S. Grant Street), third floor. Join the League of Women Voters of Ohio Lobby Corps for a brown-bag lunch and discussion of the most critical issues at the Statehouse.
- August 25    **LWVO Lobby Lunch**
- September 8    **LWVO Lobby Lunch**
- September 14    **LWVMC Board of Trustees Meeting**



*The League of Women Voters  
is where hands-on work to safeguard democracy  
leads to civic improvement.*

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