



THE VOTER

LWVMC Annual Meeting



Vice-President of Voter Service Barbi Craybill opened the 2011 Annual Meeting of LWVMC with a warm welcome for the room full of Leaguers. She invited all to enjoy the enormous 'pot luck' table of food before getting down to business. As Leaguers enjoyed their food, Vice-President Scott Britton gave the 2011 State of the League report.



State of the League Address

As Presented by Scott Britton, Vice-President, Advocacy League of Women Voters of Metropolitan Columbus

Thank you so much for coming this evening. Though I may be delivering the "State of the League" tonight, credit for the success we have had this year needs to be shared broadly with the entire board, our committee chairs, our able staff member Amy, and especially with my fellow vice presidents, Barbi and Mim.

I think I speak for all three of us when I say how glad we are that the "year with no president" is over! While it was gratifying for all three of us to serve as your VP "troika" this year, we are thrilled to be returning to the standard organization chart with one work. Several of us have been working periodically for more than a year now on president. And as difficult as it was for each of us to run our

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Pictured: Barbi Craybill, David Buzzee, David McCoy

LWVMC Annual Meeting, continued



Pictured: Barbi Craybill, Anne Hammerstein, JoAnne Grossman, Mim Brierley, Ann Henkener, Ellen Haider, Carolyn Piper

Mim Brierley, Vice-President for Membership, took the microphone to recognize the 2011 LWVMC Member of the Year, David Patton, and the outgoing board members.

Out-going Treasurer Bob Brown presented the Treasurer's Report and the Budget for the next year. The Budget was approved by the membership.

A bylaws amendment to align wording with the LWVUS was put forth by the Board. It was passed by the membership present.



Bylaws Amendment

An amendment to the LWVUS bylaws was approved at the 2010 LWVUS Convention and we, therefore, must make this same change to the LWV Metro Columbus Bylaws. As you may recall, the first three articles of the League bylaws set forth the League name, purpose and policy and define membership in the LWVUS. Per LWVUS policy, the first three articles of all local and state League

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LWVMC Annual Meeting, continued

After the new slate of officers was approved, in-coming President Kitty Burcsu took the stage to put forward the need for changes that the new Board will be introducing after its retreat in late June.

The membership was then guided into a small group work activity where members discussed priorities for the coming year in the MC League.



Pictured: Kitty Burcsu, Mary Kaul, Mim Brierley, Marsha Calloway, Lucy Buzzee.



Message from the President

I am honored to serve as your president for the 2011-2012 League year. I am also eager to “hit the ground running!” While summer is traditionally a down time for the League, the Board will be busy! We will meet on June 27 (and throughout the summer) for a retreat/planning meeting during which we will finalize plans for the upcoming year. If you attended the Annual Meeting, you know that a major focus for next year will be “Revisioning, Reinventing and Reinvigorating LWVMC” or what we have come to call the “3R Process”. If you didn’t attend Annual Meeting, don’t worry. All will be revealed in a special edition of The VOTER later this summer.

In the meantime, I can’t conclude my first President’s message without acknowledging and thanking **Mim Brierley, Barbi Crabill and Scott Britton** for their outstanding work this past year. As the Leadership Team for LWVMC, this ‘troika’ went above and beyond not only to manage their respective areas of Membership, Voter Service and Advocacy but to cover the responsibilities that fall to the president. Special thanks also to **Amy Pulles** for another year of outstanding service as our League Administrator. Finally, thank you to Board members, off-Board committee chairs and members, and to all of you for your involvement in and support of the League of Women Voters of Metropolitan Columbus. Have a great summer!

A special note of congratulations to League Administrator, **Amy Pulles**, for becoming a Certified Volunteer Administrator (CVA). This certification is awarded to experienced volunteer managers who successfully complete a rigorous independent study and final exam. The CVA designation, recognized nationally, is the highest level of achievement in the profession of volunteer administration. Congratulations, Amy! As a volunteer organization, LWVMC is fortunate and proud to have your experience and expertise.



Kitty Burcsu
President, LWVMC

Pictured: Amy Pulles.

Year In Review Committee Reports

Advocacy Committee

2010-2011 Year in Review

Your local League Advocacy Committee worked on a number of fronts in 2010-2011 to advance public policy and public understanding at the local, state, and national levels. Following is a summary of activity:

Federal Advocacy and Education

- Urged U.S. Senators Sherrod Brown and Rob Portman to resist efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act (health care reform)
- Interviewed U.S. Rep. Pat Tiberi upon his reelection
- Submitted a letter to the editor about campaign finance reform, published in local newspapers
- Urged U.S. Senators George Voinovich and Sherrod Brown to support the DREAM Act (immigration)
- Urged Voinovich and Brown to ratify the START Treaty (nuclear arms)
- Urged Voinovich and Brown to support the DISCLOSE Act (campaign finance)
- Urged Voinovich and Brown to support climate change and energy legislation
- Celebrated “birthday” of federal open records law with letter to the editor published in local media

State Advocacy and Education

- Participated in Statehouse Day 2011
- Facilitated local League consensus for the proposed state update of the government tax and finance position
- Facilitated state program planning

Local Advocacy and Education

- Testified before the Franklin County Board of Elections, calling for clearer ballot language for two issues on the November

2010 ballot and earning attention from *The Columbus Dispatch*, “All Sides with Ann Fisher,” and other media

- Based on in-depth interviews with issue sponsors, prepared explanations and pro/con arguments for those same two issues on the November ballot for inclusion in the Voter Information Bulletin: City of Columbus Charter Amendment and Metropolitan Library levy
- Hosted a joint meeting with and served as liaison for the Regional Planning and Land Use Study Committee

Detailed information about most of these activities can be found at <http://lwvcols.org/action/actionhistory.php>. Many thanks to committee members Ann Henkener, Meg Flack, Dave Patton, and Stuart Wright, with special thanks to Ellen Haider and Judy Brachman for co-chairing the land use study. We congratulate Ann Henkener for her selection to sit on a national study committee of privatization of government services and Dave Patton for his selection as Member of the Year. To join the Advocacy Committee, contact Scott Britton at sbritton@wowway.com.



Pictured: Ann Henkener, Stuart Wright

Year In Review Committee Reports

Membership Committee 2010-2011 Year in Review

Plans for the 2010-2011 LWVMC year were carried over from the previous year when information gathered in a survey of members showed why they joined the League, the activities they enjoyed, how long they had been members, and their time for volunteering, if any. These included activities for which membership is responsible: recruiting and retaining members and fundraising discussed below.

Recruitment – There were 25 new members this year as a result of the membership committee and board members' recruitment efforts. Each received information and a phone call welcoming them to LWVMC.

Recruiting continued throughout the year with members inviting friends and colleagues to Advocacy, Education and Membership meetings. Information about the League displayed at these meetings included posters and membership applications. The new members tended to be retirees, young professionals and professionals from partnering organizations.

Current membership is at 224 down from 265 at the beginning of the year. Some attrition is expected, the decline this year is due to a new directive from LWVUS which required at-large members to pay dues to their local leagues. 40 at-large members served by MC failed to do so. They will be notified again about the change in policy when renewal letters are sent in August.

Retention – A revised letter announcing upcoming activities and events in 2010 was sent in late August asking members to renew. As an

incentive, those who sent in dues by the end of September qualified for a drawing to win a gift certificate for two at a Cameron Mitchell Restaurant. Cards, phone calls and email messages were effective reminders.

A strategy to retain members was to include time for members and guests to socialize at business, education, or general meetings. Outstanding successes included the Arena Grand showing of *Iron Jawed Angels*, the Holiday Party with a gourmet pot luck and entertainment by League's favorite auctioneer, Brent Taggart, and the General Membership Meeting featuring the 2010 Democracy in Action recipient, David McCoy. Advocacy's soup supper before LWVO program planning and Education's light refreshments before the Immigration Panel Presentation also allowed time for members to do some socializing before getting down to business.

An orientation with wine tasting and snacks to introduce new members to League terminology, program and volunteer activities seemed like a good idea. Unfortunately it had to be postponed but Membership hopes to reschedule at another time.

Fundraising – Membership dues, the Friends letter and the Holiday Auction are the main sources of funding for LWVMC. This year's Auction raised the most funds since the 2006 Party.

Many thanks to Amy Pulles in the office, Committee members Lucy Buzzee, Joanne Grossman, Sonja Nelson-Jones, Pat Larson, Jan Patton and Danielle Smith whose dedication and hard work contributed to membership successes this year and to board members and others who helped make calls and supplied gourmet eats for membership meetings.

Year In Review Committee Reports

Voter Service Committee 2010-2011 Year in Review

Nationwide Insurance's RISA event

The Metro League staffed an information table at Nationwide Insurance's Annual RISA® (Raising Interest in Spanish Awareness) event celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration. Voter registration information was available as well as information prepared by Metro's Advocacy Committee regarding Issue 12: the proposed Columbus City Charter Amendment and the Issue 4: the Columbus Metropolitan Library levy. League membership information was also available.

Franklin County Consortium for Good Government Fall Candidates Forums

The Franklin County Consortium for Good Government hosted 10 candidate forums this year. In addition, an ISSUES ONLY forum was held at the 1st Unitarian Universalist Church. Generally speaking, the turnout at the suburban sites in Reynoldsburg, Worthington, Prairie Township, Gahanna and New Albany was good to very good. Turnout at the other events, including Brookwood, was embarrassingly low. All sites are being re-evaluated for their location and commitment as host sites.

It is becoming more and more difficult to overcome the effects of the 24-hour news cycle and negative advertising to generate interest in voters to come out and meet their candidates face-to-face. In addition, some candidates are reluctant to meet the voters in these public open forums where they fear their words may be recorded and taken out of context to be used against them in a 30 second sound bite!

Consortium Presents Annual Awards

Since 1988, the Franklin County Consortium for Good Government has given two annual awards

to recognize individuals or groups who show a deep commitment to our democracy and reside or work in Franklin County.

The 2010 *Good Government Award* was presented to Matthew Damschroder, former Deputy Director of the Franklin County Board of Elections.

The 2010 *John Schrak Award* was presented to Earl Wurdlow, who has held community leader forums at the First Unitarian Universalist Church for over 10 years.

VIB

The Voter Information Bulletin (VIB) was published in the Dispatch's October 17 edition. This is a week earlier than in past years due to the affects of early voting. Amy delivered 20,000 overruns of the VIB to local libraries and other establishments.

Election Day Phone Bank

Volunteers answered phones at WBNS-10TV Election Day phone bank.

Volunteers also acted as observers for the post-election audit conducted by the Franklin County Board of Elections. Training was provided by the State League audit observation project.



Pictured: Peg Rosenfield and Sue Phillips

Year In Review Committee Reports

Development Committee 2010-2011 Year in Review

The LWVMC Development Committee was formed in August, 2010 to *oversee all revenue-generating activities; initiate new and innovative fundraising strategies to increase member and non-member support; seek in-kind resources as appropriate.*

Committee members are: Scott Britton, Kitty Burcsu, Lucy Buzzee, Esther Connors, Janyce Katz, Anne Nelson, Sue Phillips, Amy Pulles, Caroline Ramsey

Goals for 2010-2011:

- ❖ Increase corporate support for Democracy In Action and League in general;
- ❖ Initiate a planned giving program;
- ❖ Seek grants for the VIB and other Education Fund Activities.

Committee activities have included:

- ❖ Exploring utilization of The Columbus Foundation to house and manage the League's planned giving program;
- ❖ Securing Board approval and resources to establish an Organization Endowment Fund at the Columbus Foundation as a repository for planned giving contributions;
- ❖ Developing an initial promotion and "roll out" plan to introduce the League's planned giving program;
- ❖ Creating a Voter Services information packet to accompany corporate requests for sponsorship of Democracy In Action;
- ❖ Initiating and following up on sponsorship requests for Democracy In Action;
- ❖ Conducting a targeted promotion to the legal community to become sponsors, patrons and attendees of Democracy In Action;

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Land Use Study Committee 2010-2011 Year in Review

The members of the Regional Planning and Land Use Committee held our first meeting last June, so we have been studying this broad topic as it relates to Metropolitan Columbus for a year now. We have conducted several interviews, including ones with staff members from the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC), the Columbus Chamber of Commerce and the Columbus and Franklin County planning engineers. We've read widely on related topics, both "how to" books and articles about what is going on locally and elsewhere. Since the topic is so broad and amorphous there has been no attempt to be complete since we aren't prepared to devote the rest of our lives to this study!

Through our wide-ranging discussions at meetings, we have gradually come to see that healthy regions are made up of healthy diverse neighborhoods. Although experts recommend policies to follow to develop such a region, it's clear that success stories are rare. It's also clear why that is the case. Although everyone says they want to live in a healthy region, when decisions are made on a local level too often parochial interests win out. That is especially true in Ohio where there are so many different forms of local government.

There are some initiatives underway locally. One example is the Watershed Planning Partnerships being organized by MORPC in the twelve-county Central Ohio area. They are currently holding meetings of communities and their residents who live in Big Darby, Big Walnut, Upper Scioto, or Walnut Creek watersheds. Using the proactive process of Balanced Growth Planning,

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State of the League, continued

own committees while ensuring that the “presidential duties” were fulfilled, I do believe that the regular communication amongst the three of us that this structure required went a long way toward enhancing the League and improving our own committees’ work.

You have in your booklets individual reports of accomplishments from each of the major committees, and so I won’t review all of our many achievements right now – though I do encourage you to read these reports in case you missed how busy we were this year. I do want to highlight just a few things:

- 1) Our Educational Events Committee, chaired by our Member of the Year, Dave Patton, came together earlier this calendar year in a remarkable way and has been meeting regularly and working hard to develop compelling programs. The committee has agreed to remain in place through next year so that they can – perhaps for the first time ever – develop our events schedule far in advance. They already have plans for our September general meeting.
- 2) After Cheryl Markino stepped down as our longtime Voter editor, I was concerned that no one would fill the vacuum. But Jean Byrd took on the volunteer role and has been reliably publishing a beautiful, photograph-filled newsletter each month.
- 3) If there’s any doubt that the League is still the first place many voters turn to with questions during election season, you have only to talk to Amy about the 500-1,000 calls she field every year before an election. Add that to the hundreds of

questions we get at the WBNS phone bank, and you can appreciate one critical niche we fill.

- 4) Finally, I want to highlight our current study of regional planning and land use, and thank Ellen Haider and Judy Brachman for their leadership on this complex issue, and all of the committee members for the time and effort they have put into interviewing experts, compiling information, and assembling educational materials for our members.

In spite of all of these achievements, there is some less cheerful news I need to share with you tonight – bear with me because despite the dreary tone I’m about to take, there will be a happy ending. You will notice that we have no speaker tonight, as we usually do at annual meetings, and that we have allotted some time at the end of our agenda for discussion and small-group developing a strategic plan for the League. The need for such a plan is clear for any nonprofit, but is especially dire for the League of Women Voters. Consider:

- 1) Despite our best efforts, membership in the League continues to plummet. Since 2006, we have seen steady declines in membership, starting at 2 or 3% per year and then dropping precipitously in 2009 and 2011 by 11 and 10% respectively. Our local League now has barely more than 200 members. We cannot sustain further losses like this.
- 2) Along with that, and my earlier reference to the “year without a president,” our nominating committee is finding it harder each year to recruit members to serve on

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State of the League, continued

the board and, in particular, to serve in leadership positions. That's not to discount the willingness of our members to step up as state League lobbyists and board members, but as our overall numbers shrink, so too does the pool of potential leaders for our local League.

- 3) We have watched our core-mission activities around voter service weaken. So many organizations now conduct voter-registration drives that the League is seldom needed as it once was. Our trusted nonpartisan Voter Information Bulletin – while still printed by the *Dispatch* and highly sought after – pales in comparison to the *Dispatch's* own online interactive voter guide. Many of our candidate forums are sparsely attended. I am not questioning the need or importance of our work in this area – only laying out the challenges we face in being relevant.
- 4) Our advocacy efforts are diluted amongst many, many issues spanning federal, state, and local policy and issues ranging from democracy and good government to social policy and the environment. We fail to draw new members through advocacy because people, especially young people, tend to align with single-issue groups. Moreover, in these increasingly polarizing times, elected officials identify the League as a left-of-center or Democrat-controlled organization.
- 5) Other groups in central Ohio – from the Columbus Metropolitan Club to local talk radio to Internet-based social media sites – have been more successful at offering a “public forum” or educational venue. Their

issues have a broader audience and attract more media attention.

- 6) Finally, we cannot talk about the challenges we face without mentioning money. I will talk later about the proposed budget, but raising revenue, like recruiting members, has been elusive for us. True, this has been a better-than-average year, even though DIA fundraising fell short. But the fact remains that we have withdrawn five-figure sums from our cash reserves on an annual basis since 2006, and those dwindling reserves – as I explained at last year's annual meeting – were setting us on a course toward insolvency.

Even as the League celebrated its 90th birthday, those of us on the Strategic Planning Committee worried about the next 90 years. We asked ourselves some tough questions, like: What is the value of a League membership? Why would people want to join? What is the League's niche in the community? What do we do well? And are there activities that should be dropped or retooled? The more we met, the more frustrated with the usual internal strategic planning process we became.

We finally realized that if the League is to survive another 90 years, we need to take a much longer, harder look at ourselves, involve some outside stakeholders, and embark on a much more intensive process of self-examination than we had anticipated. And this is where we finally get to the good news. Together we decided that the League needs to spend a year on what has been coined by Kitty as the 3 Rs: Revisioning, Reinventing, and Reinvigorating the League.

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State of the League, continued

Kitty has stepped up to serve as President for one year only, to preside over a board made up of trustees who will focus both on carrying out the basic public functions of the League – voter service, education, and advocacy – as well as steer the 3 R process, most likely with the help of a professional facilitator. We expect to dig deep and make significant changes to our work. Some of these changes may be very difficult, even controversial. Thanks to Kitty's influence, our Nominating Committee has recruited a group of solid, long-time Leaguers who have also agreed to come onboard for a year. We will work hard to keep you, as members, informed and involved so that wherever we come out on the other side of this process, we have your support.

As you vote on the nominated slate and on the budget this evening, we encourage you to keep in mind that both have been crafted with this 3 R process in mind. And while we welcome your questions now, we have devoted a good deal of time to discussion about this at the end of the evening.

I would conclude by saying that the State of our League today is fragile, as we struggle to find our place in central Ohio and to build a foundation upon which we can not only survive for another 90 years – but thrive. We as board members are committed, enthusiastic, and optimistic, and we invite you as members to come along for the ride.



Pictured Scott Britton

Bylaws continued from page 2

bylaws must be consistent with those of the LWVUS in order to define and maintain the unity of the organization and the powers and privileges of members.

LWVUS changed the name of the third membership category from "honorary life members" to "life members." Specifically, the amendment strikes the word "honorary" from Article III, Section 2, which should now read:

b. Voting Life Members

Voting members of LWVMC who make a lump-sum life membership payment to LWVUS shall be voting ~~honorary~~ life members of LWVMC. Those who have been members of the League for 50 years or more shall be voting honorary life members excused from the payment of dues.

Redistricting Competition

The League of Women Voters of Ohio Education Fund, the Midwest Democracy Network and Ohio Citizen Action will sponsor the 2011 Ohio Redistricting Competition this summer. The Redistricting Competition is designed to encourage Ohioans to redraw state legislative and congressional districts that:

- Represent the interests of all Ohioans, not just the interests of political parties;
- Make determinations based on fair, objective, measurable criteria; and
- Use a process that is open and transparent.

The Redistricting Competition provides the public with the opportunity to draw district lines for the Ohio House and Senate, as well as the U.S. House of Representatives, using publicly available software and the same population and voting data that will be used by Ohio public officials .

Anyone with a computer and internet access may participate by logging on at www.drawthelineohio.org. State legislative plans will be due the end of July and U.S. congressional plans will be due the end of August.

\$5,000 in cash prizes will be shared by the authors of the highest scoring plans and will include cash scholarships for the top plans created by high school or college students.

Winning plans will be submitted to the Ohio Apportionment Board and Ohio legislature for their consideration before they establish new districts which will remain in effect for the next decade.

Plans will be scored using four objective criteria:

- (1) Preserving County Boundaries** -- measuring the number of counties which are unnecessarily split into separate districts. This helps keep communities of interest together and makes it easier for citizens to understand in which district they live.
- (2) Compactness** – measuring the geographical compactness of the districts. This discourages bizarrely-shaped legislative districts which unnecessarily spread voters apart.
- (3) Competitiveness** – measuring the number of districts which are truly competitive. This gives Ohioans a stronger voice in choosing their representatives.
- (4) Representational Fairness** – measuring the degree to which a plan unfairly favors one political party over another. This encourages plans in which the number of districts which favor each political party reflects the statewide political balance.

For more information about redistricting contact Ann Henkener or the LWV Ohio office, lwvohio.org or 469-1505.

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- ❖ Coordinating and conducting the annual LWVO Phonathon campaign.

As we look ahead to 2011-2012, the Development Committee will continue its work on the planned giving program, evaluate and adjust fundraising efforts for Democracy In Action, and continue to investigate and pursue additional sources of financial and in-kind support for LWVMC. The Development Committee welcomes new members! Contact Kitty Burcsu at ohburcsu@juno.com for more information.

Land Use continued from page 8

participants are coming together to help create a plan to prioritize areas for conservation and development. It is voluntary and incentive-based. To encourage participation, the state will give these areas priority consideration when they apply for state-funded assistance. More information can be found at <http://balancedgrowthplanning.morpc.org>.

The committee plans to present an educational forum this coming November in preparation for a consensus meeting.

Members Want To Know: Redistricting

Here are a few facts and figures about the current Ohio redistricting process taken from an article in the Toledo Blade written by Tom Troy with LWV of Ohio Restricting Specialist Ann Henkener.

Ohio is known as a battleground state in presidential politics because the state is evenly split.

Republicans now hold 13 Congressional seats and Democrats 5, after a GOP tide in the 2010 elections.

Ann Henkener said the Legislature should lean toward creating more, rather than fewer, competitive districts, which would encourage at least a few Ohio congressmen to take moderate, centrist stances.

The population target for each of Ohio's new Congressional districts is 721,032 people -- up from the 630,730 for each district in 2001.

The larger population of each congressional district means virtually the remaining 16 districts will grow in area. But so far, no one can predict exactly how.

Ann said a balance of eight Democrats and eight Republicans, or nine Republicans and seven Democrats, would be "representationally fair."

"I think our public interest is best served by something that looks politically like Ohio," Ms. Henkener said. "I think the bulk of Ohioans are somewhat toward the middle."

The proposed map of Ohio's newly drawn Congressional districts will originate in the Ohio House of Representatives and must be approved by the majority vote of both houses and signed by the Governor. The House is expected to hold hearings beginning this summer.

League Activities

Lobby Lunch
General Meeting

Tuesday, Jun. 28 11:30 AM Metropolitan Library
September

Looking Forward To September

Watch for announcements for the dinner meeting/program to kick off the League year! A social time and dinner will give members and guests an opportunity to get better acquainted---followed by a topical program and discussion. Would you like to be involved in planning the dinner or the program? Contact Anne Light Hoke (annelhoke@yahoo.com), Mim Brierley (mimb@columbus.rr.com) or Jane Young (Janebyoung@aol.com).

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