

President's Remarks

By: Erica Greer

We have our work cut out for us! Last June at the Annual Meeting, I made the following remark: *Our League, while still strong, faces demographic challenges which will soon severely curtail the work we are able to accomplish. If we don't begin concerted efforts to focus our available resources while at the same time working to increase our membership, particularly of individuals who are able to donate their time and energies to League, we will face much uncertainty in the very near future.*

Those words seem to be coming true a bit sooner than I had anticipated. This year, we experienced a net loss of about 25 members, as our wondering totals went from 135 to 107, a decline of around 20%. I am not a math person, but I know that such a precipitous

membership spells trouble in any organization. For those of us who believe in the importance of what League does and represents to our community, we can't take numbers like that lying down. Accordingly, the board of LWVAA has decided to participate in the Membership Recruitment Initiative, a program which is geared to help Leagues increase their visibility in the community and to teach Leagues to reach out to potential new members in a systematic way. For more specific information about the MRI, please see membership chair Jodie DeLamatre's column elsewhere in this issue.

If you are as concerned as I am, you may be wondering, "What can I do?" Here are a few suggestions: ♦ Contribute your League story

♦ Volunteer to help out on a committee or at a meeting. We need people to help membership chair Jodie DeLamatre, publicity Sara Gibbs, and newsletter editor Diana Kingsbury. This needn't be time intensive—there are little ways you can help too, such as greeting people at a meeting, donating refreshments, or doing a little research from home.

♦ Do you have a special talent that League could use? Can you design flyers? Do public speaking? Write letters? All these can be one-time small contributions that, when combined with others' really add up!

Let's let this membership "crisis" be an opportunity too good to pass up!

Erica

Program Planning Perspectives

By: Sharley Greer

Friends, 31st. When you go through the process of program planning like I was educated by the process. I highly enjoyed and how much I got out of our annual program planning meeting on Saturday, January 17th. I was energized by the

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Program Planning Perspectives (continued)

to tell you a little about why we enjoyed the Program Planning Session, what we got out of it, and why we thought it was beneficial. I struggled with how to write about something that sounds like a very boring thing—Program Planning. It was not! So, I played with the related words and before too long I had a poem of sorts. Please don't judge me on my pentameters. This poem is my attempt to entice you to next year's program planning meeting, to bring old Leaguers with their wisdom and new Leaguers and

friends together to better understand what the League of Women Voters is really all about. My poem is entitled "You Missed It!"

Missed it. Plain words we use to help us understand it. Study, Retain, Update and Prioritize it. Position, Consensus, we analyze it. State, local, US—the goal is befit.

Program-Program-Program it
You missed it. You really missed it.
Boring, so boring sounds it.
No color, diversity, excitement to it.
NO! You really missed it!
But, oh New Members you need it.
Old Members, you feed it.
Leaguers and Friends not there, You

I beg you, next time don't miss it! More there than you know so fit it. Fit it in your life. Take action on it. Come away Leaguers and Friends bright lit.

Membership Recruitment Initiative (MRI)

By: Jodie DeLamatre

A new partnership between National, State & Local Leagues was recently formed to address decreasing membership in the League of Women Voters. This national trend is due not only to demographic shifts but also to changes in communities, media, and other societal demands and issues. LWVAA has not been immune to this trend. This year alone, approximately 25 members chose not to renew their membership for various reasons.

communities, empowering for action & advocacy, and nonpartisanship. We in Akron had already begun to address some of the areas addressed in the MRI at the valuable Strategic Planning sessions Susan Vogelsang and Erica led in 2007. We looked at our strengths, weaknesses, goals and vision for the future. In our Strategic Planning we also identified that we needed to be better at focusing our activities, needed greater visibility in the community and that we needed to increase membership.

digm shift) in that it steers all of us to determine viable links to other organizations to support our community work while making sure we all are asking others to join LWVAA.

That is why LWVAA has decided to participate in the Membership Recruitment Initiative (MRI). Erica Greer and I spent a Saturday in Columbus along with representatives from Toledo-Lucas County, Greater Youngstown, Canton, Greater Dayton, Cuyahoga Area, and Tiffin to hear state and national officials explain how to reexamine our organization and become more active recruiters by showcasing the attributes of LWV that brought us to and keep us members of the League, such as: educating com-

munities, empowering for action & advocacy, and nonpartisanship. We in Akron had already begun to address some of the areas addressed in the MRI at the valuable Strategic Planning sessions Susan Vogelsang and Erica led in 2007. We looked at our strengths, weaknesses, goals and vision for the future. In our Strategic Planning we also identified that we needed to be better at focusing our activities, needed greater visibility in the community and that we needed to increase membership.

Our goal is to achieve a 5% NET growth in membership this year—that is, over and above any member we may lose. To accomplish this, we need to let others know why we are a part of the League and why they should be too. We know the League to be a truly valuable community asset; now it is up to us to let the public know too. We can do this in part by telling our stories of what League means to us.

Inspirational Words

"Let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a President and senators and congressmen and government officials, but the voters of this country." —Franklin D. Roosevelt

Observer Corps Report: Summit County Council

By: Janet Vadson

The meeting started on time, and the president reminded council members and guests to speak into the microphone when addressing council or when council members had comments. A young woman from Barberton addressed council and presented problems she had encountered trying to receive aid from the

Breast and Cervical Cancer Project. Two representatives from the Health Department responded that they were aware of the woman's difficulties and agreed to assist her to resolve her problems. Council expressed interest in the case and want a follow-up on it.

First and second resolutions required approving carryover funds, executing required documents for grants, awarding 2 years of space to a Congressman for one dollar a year, disbursing funds and confirming award for carryover funds and various expenditures for services and grants.

Observer Corps Report: Akron City Council

By: Sandra Kurt

I attended the Akron City Council meetings January 5, 12, 26, and February 2. I'm including in my report items that I noted that are not available on the agendas and minutes published online.

at a 2.5% increase, which matches what was given to AFSCME. On January 12, a similar ordinance was passed for permanent full-time bargaining unit members of the Civil Service Personnel Association, Inc. bargaining unit and for School Crossing Guards.

they already have. Councilman Conti proposed Resolution No. 34-2009 urging Congress to hold investigative hearings on the current financial crisis. Council President Sommerville appointed Bob Keith the Clerk of Council and accepted his resignation as Ward 8 Councilman. Councilman Freeman announced that there had been two suicide attempts off the Y-Bridge, with one successful, and urged Council to consider using capital funds to fence in the Y-Bridge.

Highlights from the January 5 meeting (with some January 12 follow-ups): Council passed an ordinance amending and/or supplementing Ordinance No. 7-2006 to provide for modification of prescription plan deductibles for permanent full-time employees classified as management and non-bargaining personnel and establishing a hearing care plan. This affects about 500 employees and covers only the employees—not their families.

Ophelia Averitt spoke at length about the Stevens shooting in the summer of 2008, the police response, and the Police Auditor's response. She stated that the Beacon Journal's statement in the Sunday, January 4th edition that the NAACP wasn't involved was false. She requested a fair-minded community review board, and stated that the community needs to be receptive to the police. Representatives from the Justice department will be in town the first week of February to review the case.

Highlights from the January 26 meeting: An ordinance was passed authorizing the purchase of 31 additional Tasers for the police department, brining the total to 180. An ordinance passed authorizing the Director of Health to contract the temporary services of an Engineering Aide for the Akron Health Department to temporarily replace an employee on military active duty. Council President Sommerville announced that 20 applicants had been received for the Ward 8 seat.

Council passed an ordinance amending and/or supplementing Ordinance No. 6-2006 to update the prescription plan and establishing a hearing care plan for permanent full-time bargaining unit members in the Akron Nurses Association. On January 12, a similar ordinance was passed amending and/or supplementing Ordinance No. 5-2006 for permanent full-time bargaining unit members of the Civil Service Personnel Association, Inc. bargaining unit.

Council President Sommerville said that State Representative Vernon Sykes has been involved in this case. In addition, he said the Police Department, the Mayor's Office, the Law Department, the Police Union, and members of the community will be meeting with the Justice Department. He agreed that it is important to ensure the Police Auditor is engaged.

Highlights from the February 2 meeting: Dr. Raymond W. Cox, an instructor in Public Administration, author of several books, and consultant to various government agencies and non-profits were selected as the new Ward 8 Councilman. He was sworn in by Judge Mary Margaret Rowlands at the beginning of the meeting. -Continued on Next Page-

Observer Corps Report: Akron City Council (continued)

By: Sandra Kurt

A public hearing was held on the Capital Investment Budget of about \$265 million of federal, state, regional, and private funding. A Mr. Burroughs asked what percentage of the budget is going to minority businesses. Mayor Plusquellic responded that per a Supreme Court ruling, the City cannot set numerical standards but can only establish goals.

thorizing Mayor Plusquellic to file an application with the Ohio Department of Development for allocation of about \$3 million to address foreclosures. At the end of the meeting, Mayor Plusquellic spoke about the proposed national economic stimulus package. Mayor Plusquellic said the total city portion of the bill is about \$78 billion and that cities can act faster than states to get people working again. Mayor Plusquellic said the bill contained less than \$100 billion in bo-

th packages for infrastructure. The mayor said Congress wants the contracts out in 90—180 days after the bill passes. With competitive bids required, Council would need to act quickly to meet the deadline. Council President Sommerville added that Council must ensure that the total community benefits from the package.

LWVO Spotlight On...Education Reform Plan Proposed for Ohio's Schools

By: Joan Platz

Governor Ted Strickland's proposed FY 10-11 budget includes an education reform plan to modernize Ohio's education system to ensure that students learn the skills to be successful in the 21st century. The plan also, according to Governor Strickland, creates a constitutional school funding system that will adequately support Ohio's schools when fully implemented.

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ess the impact of HB 920 on school district budgets. The proposed budget is expected to increase funding for primary and secondary education by 4.7 percent in FY10 and 4 percent in FY11, for a total increase of \$925 million for education over current funding levels.

The plan proposes a new Ohio Evidence Based Model (referred to as OEBM or EBM), to determine state aid. When the plan is fully implemented in 8-10 years, the state's contribution to fund schools will increase from the current level of 5 percent to 59 percent. The plan also increases accountability and transparency through a variety of new reporting requirements and oversight by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) Governor Strickland and his administration have developed this evidence-based model over the past year with input from business, education, and community stakeholder groups, and from citizens. The Governor hosted a series of community-based "Conversations on Education" from July through December 2008 to listen to ideas from the public about how to create and fund a world class and relevant education system for all Ohio students in the 21st century.

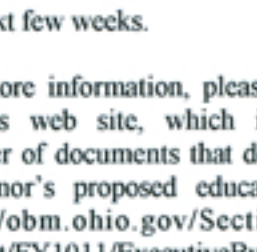
Governor Strickland's proposed plan completely changes the current school funding system, which is now based on a "foundation level" of per pupil support (base cost per pupil). The new "evidence-based" system provides state aid based on ratios for classroom teachers; art, music, and PE teachers; administrators; nursing; media services; counselors; etc. Funding is also included to support students with special needs, those who have limited English proficiency, and instruction for gifted students. A targeted poverty index and Instructional Quality Index are included to compensate for the effects of poverty on student learning, and provide support for highly qualified teachers.

The Governor's plan will be clarified further through the language of the budget legislation, which is expected to be introduced in the Ohio House over the next few weeks. For more information, please visit the OBM's web site, which includes a number of documents that describe the Governor's proposed education plan: <http://obm.ohio.gov/SectionPages/Budget/FY1011/ExecutiveBudget.aspx>.

The plan also lowers the charge-off (local share of education costs) from 23 mills to 20 mills. It allows school districts that are not at the 20 mill floor with voter approval, so that districts can experience growth on 20 mills when property values increase. Any millage that is converted into mills that operate like emergency levies. These changes, according to the Governor, address

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Joan Platz is the Education Specialist/Lobbyist for LWV Ohio.



DC Voting Rights Moving Closer?

By: Erica Greer

The League of Women Voters has supported D.C. self-government since 1938. Since 1961 D.C. residents have made some gains in the drive for full citizenship rights. The remaining goals—voting representation in both the House and Senate and full home-rule powers—were made explicit in the LWVUS program in March 1982.

It's not clear when the legislation will reach the Senate floor for what is likely to be its main showdown. In 2007, a similar bill died in the Senate after failing three votes short of the 60 needed to head off a filibuster. But proponents believe they are in better shape now thanks to Democratic gains in the last election.

According to information on the LWVUS website, American citizens living in our nation's capital have no vote on important issues affecting nearly every aspect of their daily lives including: health care, Social Security, environmental protection, crime control, public safety and foreign policy. Parents, teachers and community leaders have no vote when it comes to shaping national educational policies and academic standards. D.C. business owners and workers are denied a vote in determining how Congress regulates business policy and the economy. Local laws passed by locally elected officials are routinely overruled by members of Congress pursuing their own personal agendas without regard for the welfare of D.C. residents.

Now it appears that D.C. may be one step closer to realizing representation in the U.S. House of Representatives. The Washington Post on February 12, 2009 reported the following:

The measure would permanently expand the 435-member House by two seats. One would go to the overwhelmingly Democratic District, and the other to the state next in line to pick up a seat based on population. For the next few years, the seat would go to Utah, which leans Republican."

Perhaps 2009 will be the year that the League's goal to have people living in our nation's capital become full-fledged citizens, with representation in Congress, will come to fruition.

LWVAA Spotlight on.....Mary Lou Gault

Each month, The Akron Voter will feature a membership profile of one of the LWVAA's valued members. For our March edition, we will offer a profile of long-time member Mary Lou Gault. To nominate someone for a membership profile, please contact editor Diana Kingsbury at 330.309.7555 or kingsbury.diana@gmail.com

1974 when I became LWV active. I can remember the first MWV of Cuyahoga Falls meeting I attended. The information shared by the different committee chairmen blew my mind! And I wanted to be as "in-the-know" as they were.

for the mind. What do you think is the biggest issue voters face? That can run the gamut from how to register, where to vote, understanding issues on the ballot, find out about candidates, make a choice, get to the polls and cast a vote. This is a real commitment by voters who live with a government of the people, by the people and for the people. We don't want to lose that.

When did you join the LWVAA? I think it was 1967.

What positions have you held within the LWVAA? I served as Vice-President 2001-2003; President 2003-2005; Editor 2005-2006; Natural Resources Chair 2006-2007; and am currently serving on the Board of LWVAA. I am also a member of the Lake Erie Basin Committee composed of those Leagues whose community water flows into Lake Erie in the states of Ohio, New York, and Pennsylvania.

What do you enjoy doing outside of League? Read; play the piano; water exercise; hiking in the parks; jigsaw puzzles; playing Scrabble with Don; volunteering to sing with the funeral choir at my church; playing bridge; Falls Travel Club and one-day bus trips; and watching the Cavs games on TV. Go Cavs!

Why did you join the LWVAA? When my husband, Don, became a Cuyahoga Falls Councilman, I was a young stay-at-home mom. I felt the need to be more educated about civic affairs to be more help to decision. For several years, I paid LWVAA dues in order to receive the very informative newsletter. I think it was

What is your favorite part about being a member of LWVAA? It is very stimulating and educational

BECOME A MEMBER TODAY!!

Any citizen of voting age, male or female, may become a League member. Annual dues of \$60 include local, state and national membership, including newsletters from each. Dues are \$30 for those under 30 years of age. Household membership (same address) is \$30 for each additional member. Dues are half-price between now and the end of our fiscal year, June 30.

Name: _____

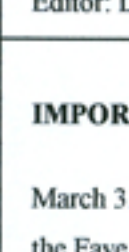
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IMPORTANT DATES

March 3: LWVAA member Christine Freitag receives the Faye Dambrot Heroine award from Women's History Project of the Akron Area, Inc.

March 8: International Women's Day

March 14: Tour METRO RTA, Our Star on Broadway 9:30 to noon

March 15-21: Sunshine Week

March 15: Newsletter submission deadline

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.