

The Akron Voter



Volume 3, Issue 1

September, 2010



President's Remarks by Diana Kingsbury

Greetings! It is with great pleasure that I write my first remarks as LWVAA president. I'm grateful for the opportunity to serve in this position and hope to build on the successes of previous years as we look ahead to the future. I've only just begun my term and already many exciting things have happened and are planned for the coming year.

In June, Erica Greer and I had the opportunity to attend the LWVUS Convention in Atlanta, GA. For four days, we were immersed in League work and learned about what local Leagues from across the country are doing in their communities to make democracy work. It was energizing

to learn what the League is capable of and to hear how commitment to our causes can bring about positive change. By meeting and talking with members from Leagues of all sizes, it becomes apparent that it simply takes a small spark and some dedication to accomplish a wide variety of tasks. In addition to the interesting workshops and presentations, it was remarkable to learn how hard LWVUS works and to hear from engaging speakers like Congressman John Lewis and Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius.

I returned from Convention with a great deal of energy and vigor and a large toolkit of ideas and resources. I strongly encourage everyone to consider attending either a state or national convention. It truly was a memorable experience!

This summer has also included the important work of conducting our combined board

meeting and calendar planning.

At the combined board meeting, outgoing and incoming board members had the chance to meet and discuss various tasks that we will be addressing in the coming year. It was also a chance to review our nonpartisan policy and the procedures that guide the board's work.

During calendar planning, all members in attendance (both on and off-board) reviewed our organization's goals and determined how we might reflect them through our programming. As we finalize the calendar and prepare the 2010-2011 handbook, our schedule of events will be made available to you.

As we embark on a year full of events, I encourage you to consider donating some of your time and talent to the League. Our unique, nonpartisan voice is valuable in the current political climate and our services for citizens and officeholders alike cannot be matched!

Please consider renewing your commitment to League

and its causes and plan to join us in any capacity you can by either attending our events or serving as a volunteer.

I strongly encourage you to attend our upcoming meeting on Saturday, September 18th at the Red Cross as we focus on the City of Akron's proposed charter revisions.

Also to keep in mind, both LWVUS and your very own LWVAA are beginning the important work of conducting studies in the coming year. With the approval of two national studies at convention, and the adoption of our privatization study at the annual meeting, your input would be most valuable. Please stay tuned for future communication about these topics.

I look forward to the year and the possibilities ahead!

Diana

Inside this issue:

Member Spotlight	2
Recall Position	3
Board Briefs	3
Convention Report	3
National Popular Vote	4
New Member Profile	5
Annual Picnic	5
Volunteer Opportunities	5

Observer Corps Report

by Mary King

Please note that since this report was written, City Council opted to put the issue of the Charter changes in campaign finance on the November ballot. LWVAA will host a forum on this issue on September 18 at the Red Cross headquarters on West Market Street from 9:30 to 11:30 am.

Rules Committee

Akron City Council members Sommerville, Fusco, Crawford, and Jones proposed changes to the campaign finance reform law passed by voters in 1998.

The new language is being brought as an amendment to the city ordinance, so that voters will not have a voice this time.

Law Director Cheri Cunningham read the proposed changes

to the law and said that they would put the city's campaign finance ordinance in line with state law and would simply be "a clarification of what has been here."

Observer Corps Report, con't.

At issue, however, is the question of contribution limits, the subject of the 1998 law. That legislation limited individual contributions to \$100 per campaign for ward council candidates and \$300 per campaign for council-at-large and mayoral candidates, who run city-wide campaigns.

The proposed amendment says that contribution limits do not apply to any monies used for purposes other than directly supporting a candidate's nomination or election to city office. Candidates may accept unlimited contributions to fund such purposes as running for state or national office, contributing to campaigns

of other candidates, supporting community activities, travel, and sponsoring youth sports teams.

Three members of Council questioned the appropriateness of this change. Councilman Mike Williams pointed out that all funds raised by a candidate are by law mingled in a single campaign account, not separated according to how the money is to be used. The proposed change would permit "unlimited fundraising" and create "an accounting nightmare." He said the amendment goes against the spirit and the intent of the 1998 law.

Linda Omobien observed, "If you are

in the position where you can raise huge amounts of money and then you can support all kinds of entities in the community, that certainly creates an opportunity for those people to give to your campaign at a time when you run for something. I don't understand why we need to create this kind of opportunity."

Ron Neal also objected to the proposed change in the law, stating similar concerns.

Rules Committee Chair Tina Merlitti's proposal that the committee take time for further study was approved.

Member Spotlight on.....Bruce Greer

When did you join the League?

I think it was in 2005.

Why did you join LWVAA? And why have you stayed in League?

My wife Erica was involved, and I started attending meetings and was impressed with the focus of the League. I've stayed in the League because I believe in what League does. Revamping the website gave me a greater appreciation for League and how it works.

What positions have you held within the League?

I have been the LWVAA webmaster for 5 years. LWVAA had a website, but it was very out of date. I got it updated in time for the 2006 elections. I did a complete redesign of it, completed in mid-2010, and I have been keeping it current. I also serve on the Observer Corps, attending County Council meetings, and have been on the LWVAA board the last two years.

What do you find most rewarding about being a League member?

I think it's great to be part of a non-partisan political organization. League presents positions and issues from a non-partisan perspective, which I find really refreshing. There's always two sides to a story, and League presents both sides and allows you to make up your own mind.

What do you think is the biggest issue voters face?

I think there are a couple. First, getting unbiased information. There is a lack of fact-based information on candidates and issues. Depending on who you listen to, you can get an entirely different story. Second, there is so much apparent apathy and ignorance. Democracy needs knowledgeable and involved voters in order to work.

Are you involved in any other community organizations?

I have been a volunteer at Stan Hywet Hall and Gardens in the collections department



since 2002.

What interests do you have outside of League?

I'm interested in digital photography, web design, tai chi, local history. I have been researching my wife's and my family history, and have created websites to tell those stories. I also enjoy travelling and spending time with my grandchildren.



Inspirational Words....

"Women have suffered agony of soul which you can never comprehend, that you and your daughters might inherit political freedom. That vote has been costly. Prize it!"

Carrie Chapman Catt, August 26, 1920

Recall Position Statement

by Diana Kingsbury

On Thursday, August 5th the LWVAA board agreed that consensus has been reached in regard to the recall election study and the following position statement was accepted and will be included in LWVAA's program:

In keeping with the spirit of the democratic process, the League of Women Voters of the Akron Area (LWVAA) supports the electorate's

right of recourse to recall for the removal of elected officials from office. LWVAA maintains that a structure should be in place to prevent the misuse of recall elections and to minimize their costs. LWVAA supports mechanisms that reflect just cause for conducting a recall, consider the interests and concerns of citizens, and protect the integrity of elected office.

The inclusion of this position statement in the LWVAA program brings to a close the year-long recall election study and reflects the hard work of the study committee and our membership.

This position statement will guide LWVAA's future work and reflects the consensus our members have achieved throughout the study process. Thank you to all who played a part in this undertaking!

Board Briefs

Meetings are held the first Thursday of each month at 5:30 pm at Christ United Methodist Church, 380 Mineola Avenue in Akron, and are open to the public.

At the August 5 board meeting the LWVAA board:

- Discussed plans for the upcoming calendar year.
- Was introduced to LWVAA's Facebook page, which can be found by searching for "The League of Women Voters of the Akron Area" on the Facebook homepage. The page currently has 33 "fans" and will be used to promote the group and events.

- Discussed the two upcoming national studies (privatization and the federal role in public education) and LWVAA's upcoming study on privatization.
- Discussed meeting jointly with LWV Hudson to develop consensus on LWVO's taxation and finance position update.
- Finalized plans for the annual picnic on Thursday, August 26th at Coventry Oaks Shelter.
- Voted on the final wording for LWVAA's position on recall, based on the consensus of members following our year-long study of the issue.

- Discussed plans for the voters guide and voter service forums.
- Discussed plans to offer dues assistance to eligible LWVAA members
- Discussed volunteer job descriptions for volunteer opportunities for LWVAA members.



LWVUS Convention 2010 Report

by Erica Greer

Convention 2010 in Atlanta, although smaller than usual (602 delegates) was as exhilarating an experience as ever. The five days were packed with caucuses, workshops, and plenary sessions from 7:30 AM until 10:00 PM, with a little time out for meals. There were wonderful speakers, including Civil Rights activist John Lewis, a panel of past LWVUS presidents, and Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, all of whom were so inspirational.

Much business was also accomplished at convention. Concurrences, resolutions, program, PMP, and the budget were presented, debated, and voted on. It's actually hard to believe in retrospect that we

managed to get through all the business without cutting into workshops or caucuses!

Here is an abbreviated list of items passed at convention:

Studies

- 1) Convention adopted a study of the Federal Role in Public Education. The study would focus on the role of the federal government in education policymaking, with possible consideration of funding, common standards and/or governance relationships among all levels of the government. The scope will be dependent on available re-

sources, including committee and LWVUS staff time.

- 2) Convention also adopted a study on privatization: the policy agenda to transfer government functions, services and assets to the private sector. (Scope to be determined by the LWVUS board)

Concurrences:

1) Arms Control

Convention adopted the LWVUS Board proposed concurrence to update the arms control position (see all the changes on the LWVUS website)

LWVUS Convention Report, con't.

Concurrences, con't.

2) Marriage Equality

Convention adopted unanimously the following position to be added to the Equality of Opportunity position:

The League of Women Voters of the United States supports equal rights for all under state and federal law. LWVUS supports legislation to equalize the legal rights, obligations, and benefits available to same-gender couples with those available to heterosexual couples. LWVUS supports legislation to permit same-gender couples to marry under civil law. The League believes that the civil status of marriage is already clearly distinguished from the religious institution of marriage and that religious rights will be preserved.

3) National Popular Vote (NPV)

Convention adopted by concurrence that the following words be added as the third sentence to the LWVUS position on selection of the president:

"We support the use of the National Popular Vote Compact as one acceptable way to achieve the goal of the direct popular vote for election of the president until the abolition of the Electoral College is accomplished."
(See a brief explanation of National Popular Vote Compact elsewhere in this issue.)

Resolutions

A number of resolutions were passed at convention, including:

- 1) Support for lifting the travel restrictions for Americans going to Cuba;
- 2) Support of safe drilling and mining for energy resources, including strengthening appropriate regulations, oversight, inspection, and penalties, as well as eliminating exemptions for environmental regulations such as the Clean Air Act;
- 3) Support for LWVUS to call upon the Senate to limit the use of the filibuster;
- 4) To add the principle of Transparency to the SARA Resolution on elections

(Security; Accuracy; Recountability; Accessibility; Transparency)

- 5) Call upon LWVUS Board to advocate strongly for bills that legislate for improved Medicare for all;
- 6) Support for LWVUS to call upon those responsible for the Gulf oil disaster to be held accountable and liable.

Bylaws:

- 1) In Article III, Section 2, the word "honorary" was removed in reference to life members (many of these members are still active.)
- 2) The budget was changed from a one-year to a two-year budget to be adopted at convention.

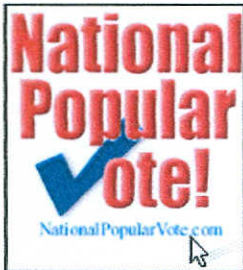
PMP

A PMP of \$29.70 for 2010-2011 was approved (Per Member Payment is what each local League must remit to LWVUS for each local member).

PMP for 2011-2012 was passed at \$30.00.

National Popular Vote (NPV)

by Erica Greer



At the LWVUS convention, delegates approved by concurrence an addition to League's position calling for the direct election of the president and

the abolition of the Electoral College. The added sentence reads as follows: "We support the use of the National Popular Vote Compact as one acceptable way to achieve the goal of the direct popular vote for election of the president until the abolition of the Electoral College is accomplished."

LWVUS had conducted a study of NPV in 2008-2009 (LWVAA did not participate), but no consensus was reached among participating Leagues. However, in the consensus process, the

only choice given was to keep our position on direct election of the president by the abolition of the Electoral College, OR to support NPV. Many League members participating in consensus expressed that they would have supported *both positions* has that been an option, and so it was brought to Convention as a concurrence.

The National Popular Vote Compact is a compact between the states. States that vote to become a member of the NPV Compact agree that when enough states have joined the compact to give a plurality of Electoral College votes (270), all the states in the Compact would agree to have their electors cast their vote in accordance with the results of the nationwide popular vote for president.

The Compact would not go into effect until that "magic number" of combined electoral votes of the states in the Com-

pact is reached; once that total is reached, no state may back out of the Compact and each state's electors must cast their vote for the winner of the nationwide popular vote.

The National Popular Vote bill has already been enacted into law in states possessing 73 electoral votes — 27% of the 270 electoral votes needed to activate the legislation. These states are Hawaii, with 4 votes, New Jersey with 15 votes, Illinois with 20 votes, Maryland with 10 votes, Washington with 11 votes, and Massachusetts with 12 votes.

For more information about the NPV Compact and its status, visit their website at www.nationalpopularvote.com.

League Celebrates Women's Equality Day

by Erica Greer

LWVAA celebrated Women's Equality Day with a picnic at Coventry Oaks Pavilion in Summit County MetroParks on Thursday, August 26. We marked the 90th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which at long last made American women full citizens of our nation – after 144 years of second class status and no voice in making the laws which governed them.

About 25 members enjoyed delicious food, and an engaging talk by Karen Fritschel, Mayor of Stow and long-time member of the League of Women Voters. Karen attributes her career in politics to the influence and experience she gained

through her membership in the League. Although Karen said she personally didn't experience much difficulty being a woman in what was previously pretty much a man's world, there was a period of adjustment for all concerned when she was elected to Stow City Council. She also discussed the challenges facing our cities in these tough economic times, particularly here in Northeast Ohio, where the economy has been challenged much longer than in many other areas.

Remarks by President Diana Kingsbury highlighted the reason for celebrating Women's Equality Day, and also the need for people to make some time in their

busy schedules to give back to League. Volunteering for League is a fun and rewarding experience, and both the volunteer and the League will benefit.

Erica Greer shared an Op Ed piece from the New York Times, *A Forgotten Fight for Suffrage*, authored by Christine Stansell, Professor of History at the University of Chicago. While most people nowadays take women's right to vote for granted, it was in truth an epic struggle. The final state to ratify the 19th amendment was Mississippi, which did not endorse women's right to vote until 1984. Isn't that hard to believe?



LWVAA President Diana Kingsbury



LWVAA members enjoy remarks by Stow Mayor Karen Fritschel



Stow Mayor Karen Fritschel at LWVAA annual picnic celebrating Women's Equality Day

Volunteer Opportunities

LWVAA needs a few good individuals to assist with our upcoming year. Volunteering with League is fun and rewarding, and need not require a lot of your time.

Opportunities are there to help register voters, screen questions or timekeep at candidate forums, or sign in people at League events. Any of these require only an hour or two of your time. If you are interested, please contact Voter Service Chair Gerry Hall at 330-688-1375.

If you have a little more time, please

consider helping out with the Observer Corps. What better way to find out what is going on at City or County Council, and how your elected officials are spending your tax dollars, than to go in person and see for yourself. At the same time, you'll be learning more about how government works, keeping sunshine on local government and raising the visibility of League in our community – a trifecta!

For more information, contact Jodie DeLamatre at 330-376-0399.

There are other ways you can help out – getting the newsletter ready for mailing, helping plan events, or even serving on the League board. However you decide to contribute, you will find it a rewarding experience, and both you and League will benefit.

If you want to learn more, contact LWVAA President Diana Kingsbury at 330-309-7555, or Membership Chair Erica Greer at 330-882-3106, or visit our website, www.lwvaa.org and click on Get Involved!

Volunteers don't get paid, not because they're worthless, but because they're priceless.

Sherry Anderson



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Membership: Erica Greer (330) 882-3106

Editor: Position is open at this time; contact Diana Kingsbury if you are interested

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IMPORTANT DATES

September 18: 9:30-11:30 AM American Red Cross LWVAA forum on proposed Akron City Charter changes in campaign finance rules

September 28: Absentee voting begins

September 28: Candidates forum 7:00 PM Copley Community Center

October 4: Deadline to register to vote in November election

October 5: Matt Leighninger, E.D. Deliberative Democracy Consortium 7:00-8:30 PM Summit County Red Cross

October 14: Debate between Frank Comunale and Frank LaRose 11:30 AM lunch Greystone Hall

November 2: Election Day



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.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Send to:

League of Women Voters of the Akron Area (LWVAA), 380 Mineola Avenue, Akron OH 44320

