

The Akron Voter



Volume 3, Issue 3

November, 2010



President's Remarks by Diana Kingsbury

The zenith of the 2010 mid-term elections is upon us, and the importance of voter participation has become more apparent than ever. As candidates pursue their offices and ballot issues are debated, the role of public citizen in the electoral process is crucial. American democracy, with both its faults and promise, is supported by the voters who are willing to participate.

As a community, state and nation, we are currently faced with many tough challenges. Our local ballots reflect these issues and it is imperative that we each look ahead and evaluate how these choices will influence our future. The selections we make for statewide

officials, congressmen and women, local levies and proposed charter revisions have a real impact on our personal lives and the future direction of our local communities and our state. It is important that we consider both the short and long-term outcomes of each election.

As League members, we play an important role in educating the public and assisting voters in finding their voices. At a time when civility appears to be lacking in the political arena, our work strives to bring balance to the issues of the day and present an objective perspective. We have much to be proud of in the work we do and should always keep in mind the value voter service brings to the community.

With that said, as we wrap up another election year, we must continue looking ahead at the opportunities to bring our ob-

jective, non-partisan voice into the public.

On November 11, in conjunction with LWV Hudson, LWVAA will participate in a consensus meeting to update our state position on taxation and finance. LWVAA members are encouraged to attend this educational meeting. Our positions are the platform from which our organization bases its work, and the opportunity to shape and amend these positions should not be missed!

Whether you have never had the chance to participate in a consensus meeting or are a seasoned veteran, I strongly encourage you to join us on November 11th at the Hudson Library. Materials to prepare for the meeting are found elsewhere in this edition of *The Voter*.

In addition to the upcoming consensus meeting, we are continuing to look for individuals to chair and serve on

the committee for our proposed study on privatization. This is a crucial time to examine this issue in depth and it is a study topic that has been undertaken by numerous Leagues across the country, including our very own LWVUS! If you have an interest in contributing to the study, please let me know. Your ideas and expertise are always welcome!

In closing, please mark your calendar for Friday, December 3rd. LWVAA will be gathering at the home of Sara Gibbs to celebrate the holiday season and congratulate ourselves on a job well done during this year's election season!

We have much to look forward to as we anticipate the beginning of a brand new year. Please consider what you might give to League in 2011!

Diana

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Volunteers Needed for Post Election Audits by Erica Greer

As many of you know, League of Women Voters of Ohio (LWVO) successfully sued the offices of the Secretary of State and the Governor for 30 years of dysfunctional elections. As part of the settlement it is the responsibility of LWVO to ensure that the Secretary of State's office adheres to the terms of

the agreement until 2015. As part of the League's role, numerous local Leagues, including LWVAA, participated in fact-finding interviews with their local Boards of Election a year or so ago.

In a second phase, LWVO is piloting a program for observing post-election audits. Post

election audits are required to ensure that electronic voting tallies match hand recounts of randomly chosen precincts; these audits are open to the public.

LWVO is looking for volunteers to participate in this project. League volunteers will function as members of

Volunteers Needed for Post Election Audits (con't.)

the public observing the process, not official observers. League "public observers" are there to assess whether the elections board is following the required audit process—not to verify election results.

League observers will report what they see regarding the audit process back to the state League by completing a checklist.

Volunteers would be required to take

approximately two hours of training (date TBD), and then observe our local post election audits, which would require approximately two hours additional time whenever the Summit County Board of Election schedules their audit (probably between November 30 and December 20).

If you are interested in participating in this pilot project, please contact Diana (phone 330-309-7555 or email her at

kingsbury.diana@gmail.com.)

We already have a couple of volunteers, and Diana has let LWVO know we will be participating, but it would be great to have a few alternates in case of scheduling conflicts, illness, etc.

I hope some of you will be interested in volunteering. It should be a very interesting process.

LWVAA Member Spotlight On Sally York

When did you join the League?

I joined LWV Bowling Green in 1969. I joined LWVAA around 1985.

Why did you join the League? Why have you stayed in League?

I had thought about joining when my last child started in school. Then a friend invited me to join, picked me up and took me to a couple of meetings, and so I joined.

I have stayed in League because I enjoy being around women who are active and care about what happens in their community and their country. When I joined LWV Bowling Green, a lot of us were stay-at-home moms. That was the height of the women's movement, so those were exciting times to be in the League.

What positions have you held within the League?

I was secretary and president of LWV Bowling Green, and secretary of LWVAA.

I was president of LWVAA once and a quarter times (four of us shared the presidency one year.) I was also Unit Chair one time — my job was to find locations for League meetings. I also chaired the Juvenile Justice Committee.

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

I guess I would say the feeling of having accomplished something meaningful—or at least having tried your best. We worked really hard to get the bottle bill [to require recycling] passed back in the 70's, and even though it didn't pass, we felt a lot of satisfaction anyhow. I think League really expands your mental horizons.

What do you think is the biggest issue voters face?

I worry that people don't investigate the candidates they vote for, and don't have much knowledge about the issues coming up. If you just get your information from television, you are not an informed voter.



Are you involved in any other community organizations?

I am active with the Akron Symphony Guild and the Hower House Victorians. I am also a member of the bell choir at my church.

What other interests do you have outside of League?

I am most active with the Akron Symphony Guild. I also love to read.

Board Briefs

by Diana Kingsbury

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

Board was busy at the October meeting, taking care of the following:

- Discussing the November 11th consensus meeting with LWV Hudson. (Information will be made available via *The Voter*)
- Considering the potential inclusion of LWVAA volunteer opportunities on the

Volunteer Match website (www.volunteermatch.org)

- Reviewing plans from LWVO to participate in a post-election audit at the Summit County Board of Elections (information elsewhere in this issue)
- Discussing plans for an imPACT event in February centered on redistricting
- Discussing the success of this election's voter service activities and the distribution of the Voter's Guide
- Considering the need for volunteers in various League activities

The next board meeting will be Thursday, November 4 at 5:30 p.m. at Christ United Methodist Church, 380 Mineola Avenue, Akron. If you wish to attend, please use the entrance by the Mineola parking lot rather than the entrance by the Crestview parking lot.



Updating League of Women Voters of Ohio's Positions on State Government Finance and Taxation: Background

The following summary is taken from the LWVO website. Please read the original on their website for more complete information regarding LWVO's current position, and more detailed explanations of the proposed changes. The link is: www.lwvohio.org/site.cfm/Member-Area/Taxation-and-Finance.cfm. If you do not have access to a computer and would like to participate in the consensus meeting in Hudson on November 11, please contact the League office (330-836-7079) to request a paper copy of the material.

The League of Women Voters of Ohio's (LWVO) state finance positions were adopted in 1983 and 1989. Since that time there have been changes in Ohio's taxes. It is time to review and update the positions.

The first LWVO state finance study in 1969 focused on services such as education, welfare, and mental health. In 1981 the LWVO conducted a study of state taxes and in 1983 reached consensus on support for the property and sales taxes. Consensus was reached in 1989 to support the corporate franchise and income taxes.

There have been significant changes to the tax structure in the last few years, including repeal of the corporate franchise tax which was replaced with a Commercial Activity Tax (CAT), repeal of the personal property tax on business machinery and equipment, decrease in the sales tax, etc.

In 2007, the LWVO appointed a study group to review and make recommendations to update its positions in light of the new CAT tax and the phasing out of the corporate franchise and personal property taxes.

After the 2001-02 state budget was bal-

anced on one-time monies, a committee was appointed by the General Assembly to study state and local taxes. The momentum for reform continued with the goals of stimulating jobs and capital investment in Ohio and slowing down the growth in government spending.

In 2005, the Ohio General Assembly enacted a substantial tax reform. Many of the reforms were based on recommendations in a 2003 report from a bi-partisan Committee to Study State and Local Taxes and chaired by former Ohio Tax Commissioner Tom Zaino (sometimes referred to as the Zaino Committee).

The 2005 tax reform legislation made the following changes:

- The corporate franchise tax was phased out, going to 0% in 2010 with no replacement revenue to the State.
- A 21% income tax rate reduction was phased in by 2009, reducing the top income tax rate from 7.5% to 5.95%, also with no replacement revenue to the State.
- The 10% rollback, and the associated reimbursement from the State, was eliminated for commercial and industrial real property (producing some savings to the State).
- The tangible personal property tax was

phased out, with the revenue loss to school districts and other local governments replaced by a new state-wide Commercial Activity Tax (CAT). The CAT, when fully phased in, is essentially a .26% tax on a business' Ohio gross receipts.

The LWVO opposed the reform package for these reasons:

1. A lack of evidence that the CAT would generate economic growth or create jobs.
2. Cuts to state programs that must be made because of insufficient revenue.
3. Not meeting the fair and equitable standard: tax responsibility would be shifted from business to individuals and from wealthier to low- and middle-income individuals.

In 2007 Gov. Strickland recommended, and the General Assembly approved, an expansion of the Homestead Exemption program. Under the new program, the first \$25,000 of value of a senior citizen's or handicapped individual's owner-occupied home is exempt from property tax, regardless of the household's income.

Inspirational Words

"The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any."

Alice Walker (born February 9, 1944, African-American poet and author)



Proposed Updates to the LWV Ohio Positions On State Finance and Taxation

from LWVO Website

LWVO State Finance Update Committee has reviewed the existing League positions and is proposing an update of the state finance and taxation positions of the League of Women Voters of Ohio (LWVO). Language proposed to be added for an update is underlined, while language proposed for deletion is ~~stricken through~~. [For consensus questions, and pros and cons regarding the changes, please see the LWVO website: www.lwvohio.org/site.cfm/Member-Area/Taxation-and-Finance.cfm]

1. CRITERIA (Adopted July 1989):

LWVO supports the following tax principles as criteria to be used in evaluating individual taxes and the tax mix in Ohio. Taxes should:

1. be fair and equitable;
2. provide adequate resources for government programs while allowing flexibility for financing future program changes;
3. be understandable to the taxpayer and encourage compliance;
4. be easy to administer;
5. promote economic competitiveness.

In applying these criteria, greater weight should be given to the first two criteria addressing fair and equitable taxes and adequacy of resources.

2. CORPORATE FRANCHISE TAX (Adopted July, 1989):

Option 1: LWVO supports ~~the corporate franchise tax~~ taxes on businesses as a source of state revenue, especially because businesses should help pay for services received.

Option 2: Eliminate the position: ~~LWVO supports the corporate franchise tax as a source of state revenue, especially because businesses should help pay for services received.~~

Note: the title of the section would be reworded to reflect any change, if approved.

Please note: Consensus questions, and pros and cons for all these proposed changes are available on the LWVO website: <http://www.lwvohio.org/site.cfm/Member-Area/Taxation-and-Finance.cfm>

If you cannot access this material, please contact Erica, 330-882-3106 or via email: erica@greerzone.com for a hard copy.

3. INCOME TAX (Adopted July 1989):

LWVO supports a personal income tax as a source of state revenue because it meets fair and equitable tax principles. The state income tax rates should be graduated.

Note: There is no proposed update to this position.

4. PROPERTY TAX (Adopted March 1983)

1. LWVO supports real property tax relief, financed by the state, in the form of the Homestead Exemption based on age, income, and disability income.

2. LWVO supports the elimination of the real property tax rollbacks, both across-the-board and for owner-occupied homes, providing the rollbacks do not unduly burden low-income individuals and families.

5. STATE SALES TAX (Adopted March 1983; revised June 1989)

1. LWVO supports a change in the base rather than a change in the rate of the sales tax. We favor broadening the base by reducing the number of exemptions.

2. LWVO supports application of the sales tax to nonessential services, tickets for professional athletic and entertainment events, and prepared food purchased for on- or off-premise consumption.

3. LWVO supports exemptions for food,

other than prepared food sold for off-premise consumption, prescription drugs, prosthetic and surgical devices, and items for direct use (components in manufacturing and agricultural use).

Note: There are no updates proposed to this position.

6. TAX MIX (Adopted July 1989)

~~LWVO supports the state taxes that are currently in effect:~~

If an increase in state revenue taxes is needed, LWVO prefers corporate income tax, followed by personal income tax as a source of revenue because income taxes tend to be progressive rather than regressive. Applying means testing to state property tax-relief programs would increase the revenue generated by the tax and make the system more equitable by not unduly burdening low-income individuals and families. Taxes on alcohol and ~~cigarettes tobacco~~ are another revenue source if needed. An increase in sales tax, although less desirable, is another possible revenue source; preference is given to expanding the base, followed by an increase in the sales tax rate.

If a decrease in state taxes is called for, LWVO supports reducing the sales tax because it is regressive and less equitable.

The Newsletter deadline is November 15, 2010. Please submit any material to Erica Greer via email: erica@greerzone.com, or by mail to 408 Ott Drive, Clinton, OH 44216

Voter Service Report

by **Gerry Hall**

Voters Guide

Financed by the LWVAA Education Fund, the 2010 Voters Guide to the candidates and issues on the November ballot was available in printed form and in an expanded version on our website, www.lwvaa.org.

We coordinated our efforts with the Hudson LWV to avoid sending duplicate questionnaires to all the candidates in Summit County. A special thank you to Belinda Wing, Bev Dorson, and Bonnie Evans of the Hudson League for all their help. Almost of the candidates responded by email making the job of assembling the guide much easier.

Most of the 6500 printed guides were distributed to Summit County Acme stores and Public Libraries. The 2010 Voters Guide included information on Summit County candidates and the City of Akron proposed charter amendments.

Diana Kingsbury did all the work on the LWVAA explanations of the charter

amendments. Our website linked viewers to the state League's site for information on state candidates.

We also owe a big thank you to Bruce Greer for all his work on putting all the election information on our website. Other volunteers who deserve a thank you are Jean Questel and Janice Jacobs, who are always available with help and wise advice.

Candidate Forums

On Tuesday, September 28th, we moderated a candidates' forum for the Township Association of Summit County at the Copley Community Center. The Township Association invited candidates for the 27th District State Senate seat, 41st & 43rd District State Representative, and Summit County Council-at-Large to discuss issues related to township government.

League members Amy Mitch and Mary Lou Gault helped with timing and Gerry Hall served as moderator.

On Thursday, October 14th, LWVAA, Kiwanis Club of Akron and the Greater Akron Chamber co-sponsored a luncheon debate between Frank Comunale and Frank LaRose, candidates for the 27th State Senate District. The well attended debate was held at Greystone Hall in downtown Akron.

League member Ardith Keck was the moderator. Janice Jacobs screened questions with the help of members of Kiwanis and Greater Akron Chamber. Amy Mitch and Kathi Arthur were the timers, while Erica Greer and Gerry Hall collected written questions from the audience.

A special thank you to Megann Eberhart of the Greater Akron Chamber who did all the work of arranging the debate and the luncheon.



Save the Date: LWVAA Holidays Gathering!

Mark your calendars and make plans to attend LWVAA's Holidays gathering!

When: Friday, December 3
7:00 to 9:00 PM

Where: The home of Sara and Art Gibbs
2405 Covington Road, Akron

Who: LWVAA members and guests

Enjoy conversation and conviviality with other League members. Invite a newer member to welcome them into the League fold. Invite a friend or neighbor—a great way to bring a potential new member into the League. Please bring a dish to share.

Watch for your invitation in the mail, coming soon!



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Membership: Erica Greer (330) 882-3106

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

IMPORTANT DATES

November 2: Election Day

November 4: Board Meeting, 5:30 PM

November 11: Consensus meeting on LWVO's update
of their taxation and finance position
Hudson Library, Flood Room 7:00 PM

November 15: Newsletter deadline

December 3: Holiday Gathering at the home of
Sara and Art Gibbs,
7:00 —9 :00 PM

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:** _____

Email: _____ **Phone:** _____

Send to:

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