

The Akron Voter



Volume 3, Issue 7

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President's Remarks by Diana Kingsbury

As our attention turns to warm weather, I'd like to also bring your attention to what's been happening in the League the past month and to let you know about some upcoming events.

On Saturday, March 19th, the League of Women Voters of the Akron Area, with the support of twelve co-sponsors (including LWV Hudson and Tallmadge), held a townhall forum titled "Secret Money in Elections: Transparency in Government?". The purpose of the panel was to discuss the aftermath of election spending following the *FEC v. Citizens United* Supreme Court decision and to consider what could be done to curtail growing levels of spending within political campaigns. The event

featured keynote speaker Jennifer Brunner and a distinguished panel of speakers that represented differing perspectives on the issue.

The League has much to be proud of, as the information presented was engaging and spoke to the consequences of the decision. In addition, the forum was very well-attended and was much appreciated by those in the audience. Informational sessions such as these provide a great service to the community, by presenting multiple perspectives on issues that are of importance to voters. The League continues to work hard to provide voter service activities such as these, and I encourage you to attend future events, or even volunteer to plan an event, as they are so important to what we do. (A

detailed article about the forum can be found on page 2 of this edition of *The Voter*.)

As far as upcoming events, May 13-15 will be the LWVO state convention, an event that occurs every two years, alternating with the LWVUS national convention. This year's state convention will be held at Maumee State Park in Toledo, Ohio. State convention is an excellent opportunity to meet with other local Leagues across the state and discuss issues that are important to our organization. It is also an opportunity to meet our LWVO leadership and attend meetings and workshops that really assist in getting to know what it is that League stands for and what we're capable of.

If you plan to have that week-

end free, I encourage you to consider serving as a delegate. It is an extremely worthwhile and educational opportunity, for the newest of our new members to those who are more seasoned. LWVAA has the opportunity to send one delegate, in addition to myself. Please contact me if you're interested!

Finally, on Wednesday, May 4th from 8 a.m. —2 p.m. at the University of Akron's Quaker Square Inn, LWVAA has been invited to assist at the 9th annual Street Law day, an educational event for high school students who are interested in pursuing careers in law. If you're interested in volunteering, please let me know!

Diana

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Welcome New Members!

By Erica Greer

The LWVAA town hall forum, "Secret Money in Elections — Transparency in Government?" held on Saturday, March 19, netted 8 new members to LWVAA!

Eileen Goldman

Carl & Lucinda Meador

Eleanor Reed

Rhonda Kotnik

Terry Ramey

Amy Snell

Michael & Annalisa Williams

A warm League welcome to all!



Board Briefs

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.

At the March board meeting we discussed the following:

- Ideas from the regional meeting on advocacy sponsored by LWVO, held on February 26th.

- Final plans to assemble a budget committee to prepare the 2011-2012 budget.
- LWVO Statehouse Day to occur on Thursday, April 7th
- An all-board discussion on vacant positions.
- Preliminary plans for the Annual Meeting on June 2nd.

- Final plans for the March 19th event.



“Secret Money in Elections” March 19 Forum

by Erica Greer

Well over a hundred people turned out on a Saturday morning, March 19, to participate in a town hall forum on “Secret Money in Elections – Transparency in Government?” at Resnik Community Learning Center. The focus of the forum was the impact of the *Citizens United vs. Federal Elections Commission* Supreme Court decision, which declared that corporate and union funding of independent political broadcasts in candidate elections cannot be limited.

Keynote speaker Jennifer Brunner, former Ohio Secretary of State, outlined rules changes she managed to get through for Ohio elections, addressing some of the concerns in the aftermath of *Citizens United*:

- Corporations and unions must disclose how much they spend and for whom
- Organizations must include their web addresses in ads
- Campaign expenditures by corpo-

rations with over 20% foreign ownership is prohibited

- Corporations awarded government contracts may not make independent political expenditures within one year of the award

In addition, a panel of experts provided differing perspectives on the *Citizens United* decision, including Nancy Brown of LWV Ohio, who gave the League’s position; Dr. Dave Cohen of the Bliss Institute, who discussed the trends of greatly increasing expenditures in our elections; former State Senator Kevin Coughlin, who discussed why the decision was the correct one in expanding free speech; Appeals Court Judge Eve Bel-fance, who gave some judicial history about the decision; John Wagner of the Tri-County Regional AFL-CIO, who gave labor’s perspective that corporations are not people and should not be given free speech rights to be involved in our elections; and Beth Thames, Regional Repre-

sentative for Senator Sherrod Brown, who talked about Senator Brown’s proposed legislation to address many of the concerns about disclosure, foreign corporations, etc, involvement in our elections.

After a brief question and answer session, each table considered other ramifications of the decision, and then each table reported back to the large group. Many of the attendees expressed a wish that they had had more time for these small group discussions, and appreciated the format for the meeting, which was co-sponsored by many community organizations and the imPACT Project of LWV Ohio Education Fund.

LWVAA appreciates the support of all those co-sponsoring organizations, as well as in-kind and financial contributions from the , Acme Fresh Markets, Akron Education Association, Main Street Muffins, and Starbucks.



Panel for the March 19th forum on Secret Money in Elections



Keynote speaker Jennifer Brunner



Round table discussions at Citizens United Forum



LWVAA President Diana Kingsbury gives closing remarks

Member Spotlight On.....Kathleen Arthur

When did you join the League?

I think it was about 2005 or 2006. I had worked very hard for John Kerry, and was just beginning to be interested in politics.

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

I joined because Gerry Hall invited me. I have stayed in League because of the wonderful presentations — non-partisan, and neutral. I like to hear neutral and informative things that I am interested in. I really thought the program on the sewers was so well done, and I enjoyed some of the meetings on education as well.

What positions, if any, have you held within the League?

I have served on the Observer Corps, observing mostly Summit County Council, but also Akron City Council. I wish I could do it more often, but my golf

night is Monday, so I can't do it in the summer. I find it fascinating.

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

I think it's being able to positively contribute. I love all the meetings and presentations. I have never attended one that wasn't really well done. And I really enjoy all the people I meet in the League. I have enjoyed the social gatherings too.

What do you think is the biggest issue voters face?

I'm afraid we don't have very well-informed voters, unfortunately. I think getting truthful information is the voter's greatest challenge. Voters are given a "message" which may guide their vote, but the message isn't necessarily truthful and so the voter isn't truly informed. And it's very difficult to know who is paying for ads on TV.

Are you involved in any other community organizations?

I'm very active with the Summit County Progressive Democrats. Right now I am serving as their membership secretary.



What other interests do you have outside of the League.

I am an avid golfer, and run our golf league. I also train dogs in agility [a competitive event]. I also knit. In addition, I work part time as a student teacher supervisor for Baldwin-Wallace College, where I am also adjunct faculty.

Notable Quotables

"The labor movement is people. Our unions have brought millions of men and women together, made them members one of another, and given them common tools for common goals. Their goals are goals for all America - and their enemies are the enemies for progress. The two cannot be separated."

John F. Kennedy





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

IMPORTANT DATES

- April 7:** LWVO State House Day
Columbus, Ohio
- April 14:** LWVAA Board meeting, 5:30 PM
CUMC, 380 Mineola Ave., Akron
- May 5:** LWVAA Board meeting, 5:30 PM
CUMC, 380 Mineola Ave., Akron
- May 13-15:** LWVOhio 59th State Convention
Maumee State Park
- June 2:** LWVAA Annual Meeting
Location to be determined.



**Join the nation's most respected grassroots political organization —
Become a member of the League of Women Voters!**

Membership in the League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, is open to any citizen of voting age, male or female. 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: _____

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**Stand up and
be counted!**