

The Akron Voter



Volume 4, Issue 4

November 2011



President's Remarks by Diana Kingsbury

Happy election season! This is the time of year the League thrives on—as voters make their decisions about ballot issues and candidates, we are proud to operate with the mission to “make democracy work” for our community.

Over the past several weeks, the League has been working hard on several initiatives to bring information to voters—with our Issue 2 forum in October, the launch of our brand-new Voter’s Guide layout, and an event scheduled for November 10th that will highlight the Clean Air Promise, we are

working diligently to inform and advocate.

LWVAA is proud to be involved in several activities associated with the Clean Air Promise, and is working with both LWVO and LWVUS to ensure that communities across the nation are informed of the dangers air pollution poses to public health. As the regulation of environmental hazards, like air pollution, are called into question, LWVAA will be emphasizing the importance of the Clean Air Promise. I invite you to attend the November 10th event and encourage you to look elsewhere in this newsletter for more information about the Promise.

Additionally, in the coming few weeks, you will be seeing our brand new Voter’s Guide!

A copy of the guide will be mailed to each member, in addition to being available for pickup at Acme grocery stores, public libraries, and other locations across the community. We are thankful for the work of our Voter Service chair Gerry Hall and Publicity chair Sara Gibbs, in addition to those who assisted in their efforts to produce the guide and get it out to our membership. Please let us know what you think about the new layout!

Also in this issue, please see the report by Observer Corps chair, Helen Humphrys. Observing public meetings is an important job the League gladly undertakes. Through your attendance at City Council, County Council, and Board of Education meetings,

you have the opportunity to not only learn more about what is happening locally, but also to represent the League as an organization the is committed to a healthy democratic process. Please check it out!

As we begin looking ahead to the remainder of the year, I encourage you to keep up with the League and consider getting involved! Please continue checking our website, Facebook page, and Twitter feed for information about upcoming events and activities. Particularly as we wind down the year and move into the holiday season, I encourage you to look into 2012 and plan to attend many of the exciting events we have planned!

Diana

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Holidays Party — Save the Date!

Mark your calendars for **Friday, December 2, 2011** for the annual LWVAA Holidays gathering. You won’t want to miss the chance to relax and enjoy the company and lively conversation of your fellow League members to kick off the Holidays season! Make plans to bring a guest as well!

As always, please bring an hors d’oeuvres or dessert to share. League gatherings are noted for their attention to really good food!

Look for your invitation with further details arriving in mid-November!



Board Briefs

by **Martha Lester, Secretary**

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. The next board meeting will be September 1.

At the October 6th meeting the Board:

- Voted to participate in LWV Ohio's portion of LWVUS' Clean Air Promise Campaign at the advanced level; Roberta Aber agreed to chair
- Agreed to co-sponsor a meeting on the Clean Air Promise, along with the National Wildlife Federation and the West Akron Neighborhood Group on

November 10

- Discussed plans for the State Issue 2 forum on October 15, and the difficulty in finding panelists to speak in favor of the Issue
- Discussed ideas for a spring fundraiser for LWVAA
- Discussed developing criteria for an honorary membership to be awarded annually at the LWVAA picnic, on or around Women's Equality Day (August 26)
- Requested volunteers to help with mailing and distribution of the new,

updated Voters Guide

- Discussed the need for more League Observers, not only for City and County Council, but also School Boards; voted to purchase special League Observer pins to be worn at meetings being observed



The Clean Air Promise Campaign

The League of Women Voters is one of ten coalition partners promoting the Clean Air Promise Campaign. The following is taken from Clean Air Promise website: cleanairpromise.org/

The Clean Air Promise is a national campaign to protect the health of children and families across the country from dangerous air pollution. A broad-based coalition of public health, advocacy, and environmental organizations – along with concerned parents across the country – are joining together to mobilize citizens, share their stories, and demand a firm

commitment to clean air from leaders in industry and government.

The Clean Air Promise campaign comes at a time when the Clean Air Act is under attack on all fronts. Even though this landmark law saved the lives of over 160,000 people in 2010, big polluters and their allies in Congress are working to weaken and block long-delayed, life-saving clean air standards that protect the health of our children and families.

The Clean Air Promise campaign will raise the voices of families across the

country that are affected by the harmful effects of air pollution every day.

The following are the coalition partners in this campaign:

- Earth Justice
- Environment America
- Environmental Defense Fund
- Health Care Without Harm
- League of Conservation Voters
- League of Women Voters**
- Natural Resources Defense Council
- National Wildlife Federation
- Physicians for Social Responsibility
- Sierra Club

Clean Air Promise: What Can You Do?

by **Erica Greer**

In the state of Ohio, the impact of polluted air is tremendously significant. In Ohio alone, there are 257,000 children with asthma, and 25,000 children visit emergency rooms every year.

The impact of power plant pollution is also quite serious. In 2010 alone there were 1,249 deaths, 19,683 asthma attacks, and 1,934 heart attacks attributable to toxins spewed into the air by Ohio power plants, according to the Clean Air Promise website.

So what can you do about this enor-

mous problem?

First, you can sign on to the Clean Air Promise, which states:

"I Promise to protect America's children and families from dangerous air pollution.

"Because toxics and pollutants such as mercury, smog, carbon, and soot, cause thousands of hospital visits, asthma attacks, and even deaths,

"I will support clean air policies and other protections that scientists and public health experts have recommended to the

EPA to safeguard our air quality."

You can sign on to the Clean Air Promise online at their website: www.cleanairpromise.org

You can also make plans to attend the forum on November 10, co-sponsored by the National Wildlife Federation, LWVAA, and the West Akron Neighborhood Group.



LWVAA Forum on State Issue 2

by Erica Greer

As we advertised in our last issue of *The Akron Voter*, LWVAA had planned on a balanced forum on State Issue 2, the referendum on Senate Bill 5, planning two panelists from each side: one elected official, and one other spokesperson. We had lined up State Senator Tom Sawyer and University of Akron professor Steve Aby to represent the anti-Issue 2 position quickly. But finding someone to represent the pro-Issue 2 side proved much more challenging.

We contacted Frank LaRose, Kristina Roegner, Todd McKenney, and Lynn Slaby. Unfortunately, not one of them was available or able to send a representative. So LWVAA was left with not one of your local elected officials who voted Yes on this bill to help us with representing the pro side of this issue, or to answer your questions.

We tried contacting Building a Better Ohio both via their website and by telephone, which netted us requests for donations, but no speaker. We contacted the Greater Akron Chamber, but they knew of no one speaking for State Issue 2. We even tried the Governor's office, but they merely referred us to Building a Better Ohio.

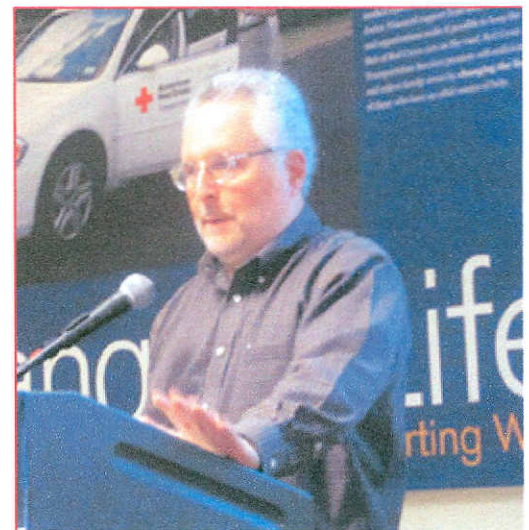
So at the last minute, without representation on both sides of the Issue, we were forced to change the format. As LWV Ohio is neutral on Issue 2, we couldn't go forward with an unbalanced panel. We decided to let Senate Bill 5 speak for itself, with assistance from University of Akron Law Professor Bill Rich, who served as chief interpreter, and State Senator Tom Sawyer providing background and other information.

Although it was not what we would have wished, it proved pretty effective to learn all the ins and outs of Senate Bill 5 and what the ramifications might be, both for government entities and the public employees unions. Perhaps the most important question one was left with as a result of this exploration of SB 5 is: Where are the flexibility and savings for local governments that were the supposed point of the legislation? It seems that the legislation could severely constrain both sides in future bargaining.

LWVAA owes a huge debt of gratitude to Bill Rich, who agreed to change from a ten-minute role providing background, to taking on the entire program *the night before the event!* It's difficult to find words to express our appreciation!



State Senator Tom Sawyer gives background on State Issue 2/Senate Bill 5



University of Akron Law Professor Bill Rich explains provisions of Senate Bill 5

Notable Quotable

For too long we've been told about "us" and "them." Each and every election we see a new slate of arguments and ads telling us that "they" are the problem, not "us." But there can be no "them" in America. There's only us.

Bill Clinton, 42nd President of the United States



Voter Suppression, 21st Century Style by Elisabeth McNamara

The following editorial, by the LWVUS President, is taken from the LWVUS' Leaders Update of October 11, 2011.

Carrie Chapman Catt called for a League of Women Voters to "make our democracy so safe for the nation that every citizen may feel secure and great men will acknowledge the worthiness of the American Republic to lead." A major effort to register new women voters and educate them in the political process was prominent on the newly formed League of Women Voters' agenda.

In 1924, existing state Leagues were challenged to increase voter turnout by 25 percent. In September of that year, the LWV of Alabama sent in this report: "As you know it is a very difficult matter to qualify for the vote in Alabama, the registration books are only open three months during the even years and ten days during the uneven years, and the poll tax books are open only four months every year. Hence after February 1st of any year, it is a practical impossibility to increase mate-

rially the number of qualified voters in Alabama."

In the Deep South of the early 20th century, this scheme was doubtless intended to limit qualified voters. Today, early in this 21st century, states are taking steps that will impact the number of qualified voters in the 2012 Presidential Election. Requiring voter ID, limits on third party voter registration drives, eliminating election day registration and curtailing early voting are all measures that have been proposed or passed in a disturbing number of states this year. Coupled with dramatic budget cuts which are closing driver's license offices, democracy is growing increasingly unsafe for the nation.

Cash-strapped agencies can make seemingly innocuous decisions that impact the right of some Americans to vote. For instance, the U.S. Postal Service is proposing to close offices all across the country, including the reservation in South Dakota where Wounded Knee is located. That post office is a lifeline to the

community, including vital voter services such as voter registration and requesting and returning absentee ballots. No one can accuse the USPS of deliberately impinging on voting rights, but regardless of the intent, the result is the same.

A complacent public may feel that democracy is safe for the nation because many live comfortable lives and have a wallet full of cards, but the League was founded to remove the "remaining legal discriminations ...in the codes and constitutions of the several states" that offered stumbling blocks to the "feet of coming women" voters.

We owe the nation our best effort to make democracy safe for every eligible voter!

Editor's Note: HB 194, which is Ohio's revision of voting laws laying out many new restrictions for voters, poll workers, and communities, will be voted on via referendum in the November 2012 general election.

Did You Know —? More about "Silent Cal" — Calvin Coolidge by Maureen Sullivan



President Coolidge was considered very frugal, especially with words. No words are wasted in explanation. He liked to play a mild practical joke but only when he could see the effect of it. For example, one time his wife, Grace, purchased a book on home remedies from a door-to-door salesman and left it on the table for Calvin to see when he came home. Calvin saw it and wrote these words on the flyleaf for Grace to see when she came in. "I don't see any cure in here for suckers."

In 1930 the former president wrote:

"When we carefully examine it the wonder grows that, under the political practice we have developed, our government is so good. We do not give enough attention to nominations nor elections. We let our choice turn on some immaterial personal characteristic that has nothing to do with the qualifications for the office. We heap so much abuse on public servants that many with every capacity for office will not subject themselves to the ordeal. Conspicuous success in private life is often considered a bar to public recognition. In response to some whim we support candidates who can only succeed in office by disregarding the reason for which they were elected.

"All of these practices put our government at a disadvantage. We are only saved from a complete disaster because the average person rises somewhat to responsibility. With our increasingly intricate system of government and business we must give more attention to the capacity of candidates. Their decisions affect our whole national life. Public service is a most exacting profession. Honest and good intentions are almost useless unless they are supplemented by ability. When we vote for anything but the best we cheat ourselves, our families and our country."



The deadline for the December Akron Voter is November 15. Please send any materials you may have to Akron Voter Editor Erica Greer at erica@greerzone.com, or via mail to 408 Ott Dr. Clinton, OH 44216



Member Spotlight onAmy Mitch

When did you join the League?

I think it was around 1958, when my husband and I returned from living in New Zealand for six years.

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

I joined when a neighbor invited me to a meeting, and that was it. I have stayed in League because of all the other things I have gotten involved in because of being a League member. For example, I was a League Observer at the Board of Elections, and that got me interested in being a poll worker, which I still am. I helped out the League treasurer at one point, and that got me interested in doing taxes. I still assist people with their taxes (as a volunteer). I got involved with the Friends of MetroParks because founder Christine Freitag wanted a League member to be on the board, and I am still involved with that.

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

I have been a League Observer, Treasurer, Co-President and then President. I have also been involved with various studies, including one involving the Voting Rights Act. I was a board member for many years, but I don't even remember all the positions I've held!

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

I think it's what I mentioned before — my membership in League has led to my involvement in so many other activities, all of which I also find rewarding.

What do you think is the biggest issue voters face?

I think it's knowing what to believe — separating the facts from the spin.

Are you involved in any other commun-

ity organizations?

I'm a member of the board of Friends of MetroParks, and I'm also a volunteer with MetroParks. I was also active in the formation of LWVAA Education Fund and served on their board for awhile. I then came back to the Ed Fund board as treasurer a number of years ago.



What interests do you have outside of the League?

My husband and I are avid hikers. We have done every Fall Hiking Spree — this is the 48th year. We also do the National Parks Hiking Challenge and the Ohio and Erie Canal Towpath Trek.

Observing the Observer Corps

by Helen Humphrys

When I was asked to be on the Observer Corps I thought, easy task — monitoring public meetings and reporting on activities of the governmental bodies. Let's be clear, the art of unbiased observation is not an easy task. It would be no problem sitting in a public meeting and recording pertinent information. However, there is concern when one hears public officials shutter a meeting from the audience members with agenda legislation passing without explanation.

That is why the Observer Corps is so important. By attending meetings and making it known that a League member is in the audience, perhaps open meetings would become more of a reality.

To that end, League Members are needed to cover Summit County Council, Akron City Council, and Akron Board of Education meetings. Please review the meeting dates and times listed below for the rest of this year and contact Helen Humphrys at 330-472-5013 or email to

humphrys@copley.oh.us if you have the time to observe a meeting.

Summit County Council's regular meetings are on Mondays at 5:00 p.m. on:

November 7, 2011 ~ November 21, 2011
December 5, 2011 ~ December 12, 2011

A 5:00 p.m. caucus precedes Council Meetings. All meetings are held in Council Chambers on the 7th floor in the Ohio Building, 175 South Main Street, Akron, Ohio.

Summit County Council's committee meetings are on Mondays at 4:30 p.m. on:

November 14, 2011 ~ November 28, 2011 - December 12, 2011

In addition, the Council is regularly scheduled to meet the third Saturday of each month at 8:00 a.m. at the Akron Family Restaurant. The council discusses pending legislation, short and long term goals, general matters of interest and concern, and constituent issues.

Akron City Council meetings are at 7 p.m. every Monday in Council Chambers, 166 S. High St., 3rd Floor, with the exception of federal holidays and designated summer and winter recesses.

Akron City Council Committee meetings are held every Monday at 2:00 p.m. at 166 S. High St., 3rd floor.

November 7, 2011 ~ November 14, 2011 ~ November 21, 2011 ~ November 28, 2011

Akron Board of Education meets at 5 p.m. on the second and fourth Monday of each month at 70 N. Broadway in Akron unless otherwise noted:

November 7, 2011 ~ November 28, 2011 ~ December 12, 2011

Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.

Helen Keller





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IMPORTANT DATES

November 3: LWVAA Board Meeting, 5:30 PM
Christ United Methodist Church
380 Mineola Ave., Akron

November 8: Election Day

November 11: Veterans' Day commemorating the
armistice which ended WWI in 1918

November 24: Thanksgiving Day

December 2: Holiday Gathering
(Location to be announced)



**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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**Vote for civility in
civic discourse —**

**Join the League
Today!**

**Make checks payable to LWVAA and send with this completed form to:
LWVAA, 380 Mineola Ave., Akron, OH 44320
or join online on our website: www.lwvaa.org**