November 2015

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Presidents’ Message
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Maybe you care about what the county and city are doing about homelessness. Perhaps you are concerned about equity in your local school district. Maybe you think the county should investigate regional transit.

Whatever your particular area of interest is, you could follow that issue at the local level and learn what your local elected officials are doing.

For the City of Madison, you can sign up to get notice of meetings by going to cityofmadison.com and selecting “email lists” just underneath the picture. For Dane County, go to countyofdane.com and select “Minutes and Agendas” from the right side of the home page. You should contact your local school district to learn how to be notified of upcoming meeting agendas.

Through your involvement, you might find a specific topic on which you would want to contact your alderperson, county board supervisor, or school board member as an individual. Also, the League has positions on many issues. Those are listed on our website, the LWVWI website and the LWVUS website. If you believe the LWVDC might want to send a letter, testify, or ask our members to contact their local elected officials on a particular issue, contact the office and Elaine can direct you to the appropriate board member.

Wednesday, November 4, 2015
Issues Forum 7:00 pm

Recycling: An Urban Policy to Love

George Dreckman, (Coordinator, City of Madison Recycling)
Paul Abramson, (Paolo Verde Consulting)
Steve Hanrahan, (Director, Habitat for Humanity of Dane County ReStore)

The Capitol Lakes Grand Hall, 333 West Main St., Madison
(Free parking in the ramp across the street)

Encouraging informed and active participation in government.
Protecting Voter Rights

Katie Mulligan

The October Issues Forum offered unsettling depictions of the impact of Wisconsin’s Voter ID law and tools and methods to meet its challenges.

Marian Matthews, a Special Registration Deputy who has trained hundreds of people about voter registration, said even she had trouble “keeping the stuff straight,” when trying to understand the new requirements for a Voter ID. Confusion comes about because requirements are different for registering to vote and obtaining a Voter ID. In addition, there is variation of acceptable expiration and issuance dates on documents that are used as voter photo IDs and numerous other specific items.

Matthews worked with others to produce Making it Clear, a document that offers side-by-side comparisons of pertinent requirements. The 10-page document provides basic information along with detail that clarifies many of the ambiguities surrounding proof of residence and voter photo IDs. Making It Clear is available at lwvdanecounty.org by selecting Voting, then SRD Central to locate the document.

Scott McDonell, Dane County Clerk, warned of problems the new Voter ID law poses for students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He said, “Thousands of students likely will not vote in the 2016 presidential election who would have voted but for the lack of ID or exceptionally long lines at the polls.”

A number of factors contribute to this disenfranchisement scenario. Primary among them is that the current student ID does not conform to the criteria specified in the Voter ID law. The issue date of the ID must be two years or less before the expiration date. UW-Madison’s ID cards show an expiration date five years from the issue date.

The problem likely will affect in-state students without drivers’ licenses and out-of-state students most severely. Those students must get an ID exclusively for the purpose of voting. Many likely will discover the problem on Election Day, resulting in lines to obtain the new ID. They could vote provisionally, but each provisional ballot takes an average of five minutes to process, adding to the wait of those in line.

University of Wisconsin-Green Bay and other UW campuses have changed their student ID cards to conform to the law. UW-Madison Chancellor Rebecca Blank, however, has so far refused to do so. McDonell urged LWVDC members to contact her requesting this change. He also noted the need for resources to inform students about the impact of the Voter ID law.

Even without the special problems posed for students, the Voter ID law likely will increase waiting time for voters. A special election in Waukesha County requiring poll workers to verify voter IDs showed an average doubling of the time it takes a voter to get a ballot from a poll worker.

Speaking about changes to voting laws throughout the country, Will Jones, member of the Dane County NAACP Executive Committee and Co-Chair of the Dane County Voter Photo ID Coalition, said, “This is the biggest threat to democratic participation we’ve seen in a long time.”

Thirty-four states have passed some form of Voter ID law. Eight states, including Wisconsin, are among the most restrictive. Other restrictions, such as the decrease in opportunities for early voting, affect African-Americans and other minority groups disproportionately.

Jones said that pushback to these new threats is occurring in three ways. The LWWWI challenged the Voter ID law in state court. Other organizations in Wisconsin and elsewhere have challenged the laws in federal court and some of these lawsuits have made their way to the US Supreme Court. Since its passage in 1965, the Voting Rights Act has helped ensure the right to vote for many disenfranchised people and has survived numerous challenges and succumbed to others. That struggle continues.

Finally, organizations such as the Dane County Voter Photo ID Coalition are working to ensure the right to vote. Ingrid Rothe, LWVDC Vice President, is co-chair of the Coalition, along with Will Jones. Other organizations have joined, including the Urban League of Greater Madison and the Madison YWCA. Information about the Coalition’s work is available in the October newsletter. Those who are interested in working with the Coalition are encouraged to contact Ingrid at Ingrid.Rothe@att.net.

Missed a Forum?

Find the links to videos and/or podcasts for our past events on our website at lwvdanecounty.org. Select the Forums link under the For Members menu. Links relevant for each event are located on that event’s detail page.
Rebuilding Our Infrastructure
**Ingrid Rothe, Vice President**

Dane County League members, UW engineering students, members of the American Society of Civil Engineers, and others were treated to a special program, “Rebuild America’s Infrastructure and Economy,” presented by The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin, American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) - Wisconsin Section, the UW-Madison Civil and Environmental Engineering Department, and the Leagues of Women Voters of Dane and Milwaukee Counties. Andrea Kaminski moderated the program, presented by John Lindert, P.E., Past President, ASCE – Wisconsin Section, and Scott Adams, Chair, Department of Economics, UW-Milwaukee and former Senior Economist with the President’s Council of Economic Advisors under the Bush and Obama administrations.

Both speakers provided an astounding amount of information about the current disrepair of our country’s infrastructure and how maintaining the infrastructure would not only save lives but benefit the economy. For national data on the state of our country’s infrastructure, see ASCE’s website at infrastructurereportcard.org which details the 2013 Report Card on America’s Infrastructure.

Some highlights include:

- The report card provides an overall grade for the U.S., and grades for the infrastructure components: aviation, bridges, dams, drinking water, energy, hazardous waste, inland waterways, levees, ports, public parks and recreation, rail, roads, schools, solid waste, transit, and wastewater.
- Our country’s overall grade in 2009 was a D; by 2013 (the most recent year), our grade had risen to a D+. To get the country’s infrastructure up to a grade of B overall would require an expenditure of $3.6 trillion. In 2009, our estimated five-year investment need was $2.2 trillion, so in four years our inflation-adjusted five-year investment need has increased by $1.4 trillion.
- The national grade for roads in 2013 was a D. In Wisconsin, our grade was a D+. Wisconsin’s D+ likely costs each motorist an extra $281/year in additional auto maintenance. Seventy-one percent of our roads are in poor or mediocre condition and our gasoline tax has remained unchanged at 32.9 cents/gallon for six years. The National Highway Trust Fund is expected to be insolvent by November 20, 2015. Wisconsin relies on this federal source of funds for more than half of our total road expenditures.

The full reports, available on-line, provide similar data for the other components of infrastructure, and describe the methodology used to generate the grades and the estimated five-year investment need.

Scott Adams discussed whether it would be possible to increase our funding on infrastructure, starting with a graph of employment rates over recent years. In 2015, seven years after the 2008 financial collapse and recession, we still have slack in the labor market, so we have the workers available to put to work on infrastructure projects. He noted that the Recovery Act did spend more on roads and that President Obama proposed the American Jobs Act in 2011 calling for considerable infrastructure spending, but this bill never passed.

Adams noted that recently a common political argument has been that the government can never spend money as efficiently as the private market. But many economists believe that the private market cannot handle every aspect of resource allocation efficiently because there are instances when private market incentives cannot operate to produce optimal results. For instance, unless the private owner of a road can exclude all non-toll payers from the road, it doesn’t make sense for the private owner to construct and maintain a road. However, it is generally not acceptable to exclude all non-toll payers from using the road or street. The better option is to have the government build and maintain most roads. In order to determine which roads (or other projects) to undertake, the government can rely on cost/benefit analysis whereas the private market would rely on profit calculations.

Scott noted that infrastructure spending represents a clear-cut case for government spending. He suggested that auto owners could avoid maintenance costs of $300 to $1000 over the life of the car, by an increased expenditure on road maintenance that amounts to a five to ten percent surcharge per gallon of gas. The benefits of infrastructure investment are larger the bigger the investment, and once we undertake the investment, we have a tangible asset that we wouldn’t have otherwise had. We can all cite instances of the importance of having infrastructure in place to facilitate the smooth function of trade, travel, shipping, manufacturing, research and development, and other aspects of a modern economy.

(Continued on page 4.)
In addition, investments in infrastructure create jobs for the workers on the projects and for the suppliers to the projects. Because interest rates are currently at historic lows, there has never in recent history been a better time to borrow to undertake infrastructure investment. According to the figures on increased five-year investment needs from the ASCE, failure to maintain our infrastructure results in costs that rise at the rate of 13%/year, but our borrowing costs, at approximately 2.5%/year, are substantially smaller. And if we were to undertake such infrastructure borrowing and investment, this is the type of spending that will ultimately reduce our overall debt by leading to an expanding economy with higher employment.

Scott pondered the question of why there seems to be so much misunderstanding about the role that infrastructure development and maintenance plays in maintaining a healthy economy. He thought that perhaps the line of thought from collecting taxes to increasing jobs and economic development was too long to become clear in a sound bite, which tends to stop at the notion of requiring increased taxes. He recommended that somehow we need to have longer conversations about this subject so that citizens can better understand the implications of their decisions.

**LWVWI Urban Policy Position Survey**

*Edith Sullivan, Program Chair*

The November unit meetings will prepare responses to the Urban Policy survey that the LWVWI is conducting. Materials related to that survey are included with the study materials for the November Issue Forum.

The LWVWI plans to send its proposed revised Urban Policy Position to the local leagues in early January, 2016. We will then need to meet to review the proposed revised position and report our comments back to the LWVWI by February 29, 2016. Since we do not have an Issues Forum scheduled for February, we'll hold a special meeting with representation from each unit to discuss the proposed policy and prepare comments for submission. At least one person from each unit should plan to attend.

The LWVWI will then propose a revision for consensus and adoption at the 2016 Annual Meeting. If you are interested in participating in this special February meeting, please let me know by the end of November (etsesq@aol.com or 608-230-5881). After we know how many are interested, we'll be able to find a place and decide on a date and time.

**Membership Report**

*Mary Anglim, Membership Chair*

Our Dane County chapter has welcomed 17 new members since July 1, and about 85% of our 2014-15 members have renewed for this year. If you are among the few who have not yet renewed, please take a moment to respond on-line at lwvdanecounty.org or using the paper form sent to you last June. Not sure whether you are a current member? Contact our office at lwvdc@chorus.net or 608-232-9447. Renewing by mid-November will ensure that you are included in our member directory and our state and national reports.

Membership in the League empowers you with information, a network of like-minded people, and some worthwhile work to do in the community. Introduce someone to the work of the League. Bring a friend to the November 4 Recycling Forum or to the January 16 Lively Issues Luncheon focusing on money in politics. If you haven't joined one of the unit meetings, try one out in November. Make sure your friends and relatives have a voter photo ID. Share Candidates' Answers from our website before the February primary and April general election. Your contributions of time and ideas are the heart of the League.

**New Members**

The following members joined our League from September 2 through October 5. Welcome!

- Kathy Brown
- Kathleen Hoppe
- Ellen Rosborough
- Ruth Yarborough
- Beth Cox
- Dorothy Krause
- Eric Sundquist

**Thank You, Volunteers!**

Our League would not be able to do all that it does without many hours from our volunteers. Along with the volunteers noted in other articles in this bulletin, we'd like to thank the following volunteers:

Office Volunteers:

- Fran Bicknell
- Joan Lundin
- Kathy Shurts
- Eileen Hanneman
- Clare McArdle
- Jan Van Vleck
Fundraising Report
Sue Ann Larson, Fundraising Chair

In her book, Middle Class Philanthropist, How Anyone Can Leave a Legacy, Madison attorney Melinda Gustafson Gervasi suggests that each person identify what organizations have played a key role in their life and make it a priority to give support to the ones that reinforce the values they hold. For many of us, the League of Women Voters is the non-profit organization that best fits this description and it is where we commit both time and resources.

A reason we strongly affirm the League’s mission is the determination that a democratic government depends on the informed and active participation of its citizens and that every citizen should be protected in the right to vote. To ensure that this can happen, the League of Women Voters of Dane County, election year after election year, provides fact-based information about issues and the positions that candidates hold.

The coming year poses a financial challenge due to the costs of publishing both a spring and fall Candidates’ Answers, which will be longer with the inclusion of new voter photo ID information. There also are new expenses as the LWVDC continues to provide leadership in challenging the barriers to the right to vote created by Voter ID. We will need additional support to continue the important work of education and advocacy.

For that reason, as the calendar year comes to a close, please consider including the LWVDC in your end of year giving. November is the month when Americans remember with gratitude the gifts of many kinds that are bestowed upon us. With gifts of gratitude, we will continue to uphold the core values that make LWVDC a priority for each of us.

Your contribution will allow us to approach 2016 with the financial grounding to do the work that is so vital to us all. Thank you!

In Memoriam
Kathy Fullin, Co-President

Marjorie Harris, a 50 year member of the League, passed away in August. She moved to Madison in 1947, where she raised her children. In the 1960’s she was asked by Prof. Phil Curtin to become an administrator in the African Studies Program at the UW, where she worked until her retirement in 1990 at the age of 70. Her obituary mentioned her involvement with the Dane County League.

Contributions
Between September 2 and October 5, the following people contributed to our League. Thank you to all of our generous donors.

June Blanchard
Kathy Fullin
Sue Ann & Terry Larson
Rita Lloyd
Leigh Mollenhoff
Mary Power
Connie Palmer Smalley
Ruth Yarborough

Catherine Briggs
Arlan & Lori Kay
Nancy Lersch
Christine Milligan-Ciha
Frederic A. Ogg Trust
Ingrid Rothe
Deborah Turski

Voting Information on our Website
Gail Bliss, Voter Service Chair

There are many useful articles about voting on the LWVDC website at lwvdanecounty.org. Select the Voting link on top of our main page.

In September we noted that Marian Matthews was working on a detailed list of information and issues on voter ID requirements, focusing on areas which are confusing to volunteers who are assisting voters who need to obtain an ID. This Making It Clear document is now available in SRD Central.

SRD Central also provides opportunities to sign up to volunteer at various locations and a link to a spreadsheet to record the number of voters registered and questions answered while serving as an SRD.

The website also has information for voters. This section is similar to the introductory section in Candidates’ Answers. There is information about voter ID, voter registration, absentee ballots, when and where to vote, and what to do if in the hospital on Election Day. The website provides links to the Department of Transportation and Government Accountability Board websites with additional information on these issues.

Lively Issues Forum

Save the date! Dane County League’s Lively Issues Luncheon Forum will be held on January 16, 2016 at Capitol Lakes.

Eleanor Neff Powell, UW-Madison Assistant Professor of Political Science will discuss Money in Politics.

Immediately following the program, we’ll discuss the Money in Politics consensus questions for LWVUS.

Stay tuned for more information.
Voter Service Report

Gail Bliss, Voter Service Chair

In July and August, we registered 30 people at the Black and Latino Unity Picnic and at the farmers’ markets on the Capitol Square and at Hill Farms. We also answered over 50 questions about registration.

In September, registration picked up substantially, with 76 registrations at the above locations plus St. Vincent de Paul food pantry and other community events. Over 175 people had questions about voter registration, but could not be registered on-site due to lack of proof of residence or living in a municipality not represented by the Special Registration Deputies volunteering at the site. About 60 people asked questions about voter photo ID and over a dozen people requested information on absentee voting.

Thank you to all who have been assisting with voter registration.

Keep Us in the Loop

If your contact information changes (address, email, phone), let us know so we can update our records. We want to keep in contact with you!

Please contact the office (lwvdc@chorus.net or 608-232-9447) regarding your changes.

Receive LWVWI News Online

Brief, informative emails are sent by the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin (LWVWI). Topics include legislative highlights, updates on the League’s Voter ID legal actions, and key policy initiatives.

If LWVDC has your current email address, you should already be receiving the LWVWI news. But if you aren’t receiving it, it is very easy to subscribe. Just go to the LWVWI website at www.lwvwi.org and fill in your name and email at the bottom of their home page.

Bulletin Feedback

If you have suggestions for articles that you would like to see included in the bulletin, any other comments about the bulletin or if you’d like to write for the bulletin, please contact the Bulletin Editor, Karen Gunderson, at jokarjen@gmail.com or 608-249-1366.

Did You Know?

We bold the names of our LWVDC members in our bulletins to highlight and recognize their contributions within our League and throughout our community.

Upcoming Events Calendar

- Nov 4 – Issues Forum, 7:00 pm
  Recycling: An Urban Policy to Love
- Nov 11 – LWVDC Board Meeting, 1:00 pm
- Dec 9 – LWVDC Board Meeting, 1:00 pm
- Jan 16 – Lively Issues Luncheon/Forum
  Money in Politics
- Jan 20 – LWVDC Board Meeting, 1:00 pm
- Mar 2 – Issues Forum, 7:00 pm
- Apr 6 – Issues Forum, 7:00 pm

November Unit Locations

League members meet monthly in one of four units to discuss the topic of that month’s Issues Forum, using study materials provided by the program planners. The discussion concludes with recommendations for further study or action. Please let the host know that you plan to attend.

If any of the units have questions or issues, please contact the Unit Coordinator, Diane Martin Liebert, at dwliebert@gmail.com or 608-698-4143.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2015

Monday Evening West/Middleton - 5:30 pm
Panera, 3416 University Ave.
Barbara Mortensen, 233-7563, morten21@att.net
Priscilla Thain, 233-5578, priscillathain@gmail.com

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2015

Tuesday Afternoon - 12:45 pm
Oakwood, A-4 (Marie McCabe’s apartment)
Parking on grounds or in Pt Heritage Oaks Parking Ramp
Nancy Simonsen, 230-3014, njsimonsen@gmail.com

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2015

Northeastside - 3:30 pm
Lakeview Public Library
2845 N. Sherman Ave.
Dorothy Wheeler, 244-4711, dorothywheeler@tds.net

Downtown Dinner Group - 5:15 pm
Capitol Lakes Retirement Center
Restaurant “The Seasons”
333 West Main St. - Free parking across street
Sally Phelps, 251-4834, phelpssa@charter.net

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