Presidents’ Message

Kathy Fullin, kathyfullin@gmail.com, 238-9465
Brook Soltvedt, soltvedtbrook@gmail.com, 274-5184

“What can I do?”
“I want to volunteer.”
“I moved here ten years ago, and I decided it’s about time I joined the League again.”

Alarmed by events in Washington and Madison, Dane County residents are turning to grassroots activism in unprecedented numbers. The Madison Women’s March on January 21st drew more than 75,000 marchers. Because of the League’s longstanding reputation for nonpartisan action to ensure clean government and participatory democracy, many in our community have turned to us for leadership.

We hope that our recommended exercise of attending a local government meeting and discussing what you learned in a unit meeting has started some of you on the path to closer engagement with government. You may be inspired to share information with friends and family members, write letters to your representatives or to your local newspaper or neighborhood newsletter, or organize some other activity. Remember, though, never speak for the League without Executive Committee approval!

Many of you are also hungry to take action at the state or national level. Ingrid Rothe, LWVDC Vice President, and a member of the state league legislative committee, will chair a team of interested members to organize action in accordance with League positions at the national, state, or local level. Where this team goes depends on the degree of member interest.

The first step is to familiarize yourself with how the league works by reading “About” on our website (lwvdanecounty.org/landing)

Next, join the action team. On our website, look for the Take Action button or go to lwvdanecounty.org/action. Complete the simple form. We’ll get started in March!

Wednesday, March 1, 2017
Issues Forum 7:00 – 8:30 p.m.

Successes and Challenges in High School Education

Speakers:
Keith Nerby, Principal, Sun Prairie High School
Steve Plank, Principal, Middleton High School
Sean Storch, Principal, La Follette High School, Madison

Capitol Lakes Grand Hall
333 West Main Street in downtown Madison
(Free visitor parking is available.)

Encouraging informed and active participation in government.
Challenges and Solutions for Homelessness

Katie Mulligan

More than 130 people turned out for the Lively Issues Luncheon about Homelessness in January. WSJ reporters Doug Erickson, Dean Mosiman and photographer Steve Apps told how they put together their series Homelessness in Madison—A City Challenged and what they learned during the multi-year effort.

The team had two goals: tell the stories of people who are homeless and bring about systemic change. They set themselves the task of moving beyond the stereotypic picture of the “homeless” as a white male panhandling on State Street. To succeed the reporters had to develop trust with the people whose stories they told and follow their lives over several months.

Their care paid off with new insights for themselves and their readers. “About half of the homeless are employed,” said Erickson. He looks at people serving him at a fast food restaurant with that thought in mind. Children are another segment of the invisible homeless population. About 2,400 people in Madison are homeless and half of them are children.

The series appeared over five months and covers topics ranging from model programs to life in a crowded motel room. It is available on the website of the LWVDC.

Heidi Wegleitner, the final speaker, can empathize with those who view homelessness as a possibility for themselves. When she was a child, her family’s rent was subsidized through the federal Section 8 program. Wegleitner became a lawyer, advocating for low-income people with housing problems, and a member of the Dane County Board of Supervisors.

Wegleitner offered a practical analysis of the problems associated with homelessness. “We need more affordable housing,” she said. A person would need to make $15/hour in order to afford a one-bedroom apartment in Madison. Wisconsin’s minimum wage is $7.25/hour, one of the lowest in the country. It will be raised to $12.25/hour for employees of Dane County this year.

Low wages also affect those who provide services to the homeless. They often are at risk of homelessness themselves. The availability of mental health services has not kept up with the need. The state legislature eliminated some legal protections for renters, and the federal government enacted regulations that make evictions easier from public housing.

“Homelessness is becoming a top priority in Madison and Dane County,” Wegleitner said. Both governments are making new investments in affordable housing, and the city and county launched their first joint project. Housing Initiatives, an agency that provides housing for people with mental illness, is creating new units. The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin is a member of a coalition advocating for an alternative budget that would help low-income workers. (See companion piece.)

More Money for Wisconsin Workers and Families

(Adapted from Katie Mulligan’s blog https://mentalhealthmoneymatters.org)

A coalition of health, welfare, and labor organizations is pushing back on the idea that the state cannot afford to spend money to improve the lives of its middle-income and poor residents.

“For too long we’ve been told that there’s not enough money in the budget to help our communities thrive. That is not true,” a spokesperson claimed.

Where did they find the money? In two tax loopholes that benefit those in high-income tax brackets. Elimination of a tax break that greatly reduces the state income tax for certain manufacturers and agricultural producers would yield about $284 million annually. Nearly 80 percent of the credit goes to people earning over $1 million. Treating capital gains like ordinary income would yield about $164 annually. The top 2 percent of earners receive almost half of the capital gains tax breaks. The analysis assumes a two-year legislative budget.

The savings could buy a lot. “A Wisconsin Budget for All” proponents proposed a list that includes an increase in living wages for caregivers, an expansion of the earned income tax credit that would help low-income workers, free tuition at technical colleges for seniors and some older workers, a new funding stream to hire and retain teachers, and other programs that would improve the life of Wisconsin residents.

LWVWI is one of 18 organizations in the coalition.
League Takes Positions on Important Community Issues

On January 23rd, League member Caryl Terrell spoke before the Sustainable Madison Committee in favor of an amendment offered by our partner organization CRANES (Capital Region Advocacy Network for Environmental Sustainability) to a resolution to be offered to the Madison Common Council.

The League followed up with a written statement, which members can read on our website at lwvdanecounty.org/natural-resources.

The following letter to the editor was published in the Wisconsin State Journal on 1/29/17.

Last summer, the Wisconsin State Journal ran a series of articles called "Homelessness in Madison | A City Challenged."

The League of Women Voters of Dane County invited Doug Erickson and Dean Mosiman, the reporters who researched and wrote this story over nine months, to speak in January to our members and the public about the work they and their team of photographers did to put this series together. They were joined by photography editor Steve Apps.

Eviction rights attorney and Dane County Sup. Heidi Wegleitner also provided her perspective on this pressing problem that extends throughout our county. The panel answered questions for more than 30 minutes. Our group commends the State Journal for devoting extensive resources to developing this series, and for supporting the work of these fine reporters and photographers, who showed great sensitivity to preserving the dignity of their subjects.

We encourage readers to revisit this series to learn how they can help to address homelessness and the lack of affordable housing in their community. Our website (lwvdanecounty.org) has a link to the series, video and audio recordings of the panel presentation and other resources.

Brook Chase Soltvedt, Madison, co-president, League of Women Voters of Dane County

New Members

The following members joined our League over the past three months. Welcome!

Janet Berger          Max Berlow
Elijah Berlow         Michelle Bolstad
Vivian (Vicki) Brigham Betty Cohen
Kathleen Cooper       Rachel Davidson
Angela Deutsch        Helen Marks Dicks
Judy Dilks            Sharon Duro
David Schwalbe Gartzke Mara Schwalbe Gartzke
Julie Gocey           Leslie Grant
Marianne Griffin      Jane Grinde
Ashley Harris         Pamela Hennessey
Georgia Kaftan        Anna Koob
Kimberly A. Langley   Julie Leser
Megan Maguire         Margaret McEntire
Margaret Merdler      Charlotte Meyer
Paige Millburg        Martha Moye
Aimee B. Ogden        A. Paul Olsen
Joan B. Peterson      Leanne Puglielli
Rita M. Reese         Grace Riedle
Victoria Robertson    Mary Roestel
Leslie Ross           Peter Sammataro
Joan Schilling        Marjorie Schuett
Caitlin Schulze       Gail Snowden
Megan L. Sprecher     Laurie Stockmeier
Robert Topel          Atsuko Trieloff
Christina Updike      Sarah Warner
Kimber L. Wilkenson

Donations

The following members and non-members made donations to our League over the past three months. Thank you very much!

General Donations

Michael Kane          Peggy Garties
Cara Lee Mahany Braithwait James K. Knutson
Janet Kane            W. Em Gartzke
Jean E. Espenshade    Ruth M. Saecker
Edith T. Sullivan     Judith K. Munger
Peggy A. LeMahieu     Willis F. Long
Jesse W. Kehres       Madelyn D. Leopold
John Kingsbury        Carol T. Toussaint
Ann M. Niedermeier    Susan S. Lloyd
Georgia Kaftan        Randi Christensen
Sue Larson            Clare McArdle
EPIC

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**Candidates’ Answers Donations**

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**Memorial Donations**

Pamela Abel & Zvettler Household - In Honor of Alicia Ashman
Doug Knudson - In Honor of Lyn Knudson
**Carol Carstensen** - In Honor of Pam Rewey

**Special Event Donations**

Jesse W. Kehres  
Edith T. Sullivan
Carol T. Toussaint

**Thank you to our Voter Registration Volunteers!**

Over the summer and fall 43 members and 41 non-member volunteers assisted in registering voters and providing information. Due to the implementation of online voter registration and the end of Special Registration Deputies, we will have major changes in the way we help with voter registration in the future.

In a report for the LWVWI, we counted

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<td>1065</td>
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<td>April – July 13</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>441</td>
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<td>Aug 10 to Sept 27</td>
<td>2235</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>1154</td>
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<td>Sept 27 – Oct 19</td>
<td>1339</td>
<td>208</td>
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<td>Grand Total 2016</td>
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<td>384</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>395</td>
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* For a 12-month total of 5,225 voters registered.
Thank You to Those Who Help Make the League’s Office Work

Joan Lundin  Jan Van Vleck
Myrna McNatt  Jesse Kehres
Margy Walker  Eileen Hanneman
Gail Bliss  Pat Kippert
Mary Conroy  Barb Mortensen
Pat Levin  Joann Elder

Voter Education for High School Students

Susan Fulks

In past years League members (as SRDs) have worked with Madison and Dane County high schools to register new voters. With Wisconsin’s new online registration system, the LWVDC Board anticipates a need for expanded outreach and trainings to address the unique voter registration challenges faced by high school students. Requests for additional voter information curriculum resources have also been received.

The Board has recommended that a committee be established to research Wisconsin-specific resources created by the Milwaukee LWV and other state organizations and to develop recommendations for resources and collaborative pilot projects with interested civics/social studies teachers.

If you are interested in the discussions and perhaps resource development or collaboration with a teacher and students in your local high school, please volunteer for this committee by emailing Susan Fulks (susanfulks@sbcglobal.net).

The committee will meet in early March at times and locations most convenient to committee members.

New 50-year/Life Member Nominees Sought

If you joined the League in 1967 or before and have not yet been recognized as a 50-year/life member, please let the office know by email office@lwvdanecounty.org or call (608) 232-9447 by March 15th so we can honor you at our Annual Meeting in May.

Support Your League Financially

Sue Ann Larson

Your League of Women Voters of Dane County is the only organization in the county to publish and distribute free to the public 55,000 issues of Candidates’ Answers prior to spring and general elections. The League spent $3,680 for the 2016 spring issue of Candidates’ Answers and approximately $2,000 for the fall issue. Since 2014, the League has conducted a fall non-member appeal to raise funds for the fall issue of Candidates’ Answers. This year’s appeal brought in $2,025. We deeply value the support of everyone, member or non-member, who contributes to assist in continuing to offer this vital resource to the Dane County community.

Our winter fund appeal focuses on the League of Women Voters of Dane County’s 97th birthday on February 14. We are just three years short of our 100-year anniversary when, in 1920, the US adopted the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution. Your gift of $97, $197 or an amount of your choice influences our ability to act to continue our mission to support the social and democratic well-being of Dane County. If you have not yet responded to the February fund appeal, please consider doing so now by either mailing your gift in the return address envelope you received or contributing online at the LWVDC website, www.lwvdanecounty.org.

Thank you for sharing whatever amount you can provide to support the essential work of the League of Women Voters of Dane County!
Unit Meeting Reports

Diane Martin Liebert

For the October Unit meetings on Money in Politics, three units reported and 20 members attended. Everyone agreed that the State Legislature changed the Government Accountability Board system for their own self-interests and they don’t think that the new system will be as effective as the GAB was. Some of the suggestions for an ideal campaign system are: Limit campaign cycles, establish a campaign finance system with an emphasis on public financing, set up an agreement with the press to better manage political campaign news and ads and look into the California system of running the two top vote getters in the primaries. The difference between Wisconsin and Minnesota’s election systems is public financing. 85% of the Minnesota candidates used it.

Our November topic was Climate Change. 21 members and one guest, met in the three units that reported. Question #1 was about the possibility of increasing the tax or fees on carbon and returning any net revenues as a dividend to all households. Almost all unit participants liked the idea in general, but identified some problems: Receiving this dividend, though may help but does not guarantee economic growth, some of the revenue may be taken out for R&D purposes. Question 2 regarding the acceptance of the above mentioned plan, all agreed that the public would probably accept it, however to pass Congress if would have to be revenue neutral and used for that specific purpose. Everyone agreed to the third question about the current Clean Power Plan, however one participant mentioned the concern that this plan may not survive due to the results of the current election. And the overall response to question 4 was “how would this work?”

Upcoming Events Calendar

- Mar 01    Forum, Capitol Lakes, 7:00 pm
- Mar 08    LWVDC Board Meeting, 2:00 pm
- Apr 05    Forum, Capitol Lakes, 7:00 pm
- Apr 12    LWVDC Board Meeting, 2:00 pm
- May 10    LWVDC Board Meeting, 2:00 pm
- May 17    Annual Meeting, Capitol Lakes
- Jun 14    LWVDC Board Meeting, 2:00 pm

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