



## Calendar Highlights

### February and March Unit Meetings:

- **Racial Discrimination in Our Criminal Justice System**

Thursday, February 16, 7:00pm

St. Louis Park City Hall

Preparation: read *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander or *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson (Reading - Optional)

- **Racial Discrimination in Our Schools**

Thursday, March 16, 7:00pm

St. Louis Park City Hall

Guest – Karen Waters, St. Louis Park School Board

# VOTER

## What's Inside...

- President's Message
- Legislative Interview Notes
- Intro to unit meeting on 2-16-17
- *The New Jim Crow; Just Mercy* – book reviews – for meeting preparation
- Take Action – Tips from LWV MN
- Observer Reports
- Calendar
- Join LWV SLP!



Picture on left: Observation of January 23, 2017 St. Louis Park School Board. LWV SLP observes most of the St. Louis Park School Board and St. Louis Park Council Meetings. Some of the highlights will appear in the Voter.

### LWV Mission Statement

LWV, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy

[www.lwvslp.org](http://www.lwvslp.org)



Hello Fellow Leaguers

**After learning League of Women Voters supported the Women's March last weekend, I attended my first protest.** I went with my friend from church, who is a seasoned activist. **I didn't carry a sign, but I did wear my LWV button.** Several people stopped me to show me their LWV button. I heard a lot of people comment, **'Look, LWV, they're the best.' Or 'Oh, League. They are good.'** And it did feel good. There was definitely an abundance of Good Energy.

If you are a newbie protestor, here are a couple of tips: 1. Carry a bright clever sign. 2. Dress in layers, 3. Buddy up with someone tall. 4. Enjoy democracy in action.

We had a wonderful turnout for our Legislative Interview and chili lunch. Thank you to our Board Members for the coordination. Peggy and Cheryl were able to join us and provided insight to many issues. **Our Legislator's priorities align nicely with LWV values, so we are very fortunate.**

Our February Unit meeting will be on racial discrimination in our criminal justice system. **I'm confident we will have a lively discussion.** I hope you will be able to join us. Bring your friends and neighbors!

Kind Regards,

Deb Brinkman

## Highlights from the January Board Meeting

- \*Discussed plans for the February Unit Meeting
- \*Discussed plans for the March Unit Meeting
- \*Volunteer needed to track Money In Politics and Other Issues during the session
- \*Updated the LWV SLP Calendar
- \*Noted CMAL Meeting March 18
- \*Discussed supporting SLP Seeds events
- \*Discussed LWV Minnesota Take Action Graphic, Legacy Lunch and Convention

Deb Brinkman  
President, LWV St. Louis Park  
[www.lwvslp.org](http://www.lwvslp.org)



Educate. Advocate. Reform.

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## Legislative Interview – 2017 Session – January, 14, 2017

With Representative Peggy Flanagan, 46A and Representative Cheryl Youakim, 46B  
Senator Ron Latz was not able to attend, but I did follow up with him to get his top 3 priorities:

- Budget priorities that maintain the sound fiscal position we are now in, while targeting key areas for investment including pre-K-12 education, higher education, and our public safety/judicial system (with a particular emphasis on funding crime prevention programs).
- A long-term, sustainable public transportation system funding structure.
- Developing a robust consumer protection agenda for the next decade in the new era of social media, false news, online marketing and electronic data harvesting.

What will be your top three priorities for the 2017 legislative session?

Peggy:

Priorities: Healthcare insurance. I'm the lead on childcare and I want to make sure everyone has access to affordable childcare. I want to be sure we have increased quality. Also paid family leave and transportation bill. I want to make sure we do everything in the lens of racial equity. We have the most diverse RED (racial and economic disparities) work.

Cheryl:

Priorities: Urgency on healthcare relief. A lot of people are small business owners. There is a lot of reform we need to do in the system – but we need to do this second. We want to hear from you. Southwest light rail. We need a comprehensive transportation bill, too. There was a Legionnaires outbreak – the source was the cooling tower. You get Legionnaires when you breathe the water vapor. The Department of Health doesn't know where all the cooling towers are. My bill creates a registry so if someone gets sick we can find the source quickly. I'm still working on my missing person's bill to beef up the missing person network. A freedom of the press bill that allows schools secondary and higher to be able to publish information without School Board approval. Transportation and Education action anticipated. There are a lot of new members so hopefully the new members create a better balance. There's hope. I'm still working on This Old House, too. Overall in session there are 48% women. First bi-partisan women happy hour. I've been working on this for 2 years, too.

1. Elections and voting rights:

- a. During the seven days prior to the last Election Day, some counties adopted the option of allowing in-person early voters to insert their ballots directly into the ballot box. What is your position on expanding the in-person early voting option to 14 days prior to the election?

Peggy: we need to make voting as accessible as possible. When I think about my own family, the flexibility really helps me.

Cheryl: with my family it is important. One day 70,000 people did online registration.

- b. Would you support a bipartisan commission to carry out redistricting?

Peggy and Cheryl: yes. Cheryl said she just signed onto the bill yesterday. It's pretty bi-partisan. Peggy thinks the republican's may keep this from passing. We will be losing a congressional district in the next redistricting and we would lose the involvement of a lot of communities.

- c. Political action committees and other independent spenders are playing a stronger role in election campaigns since the Citizens United decision. Do you believe changes in Minnesota campaign finance laws and practices are warranted in light of this trend?

2. State Budget: What should be Minnesota's spending priorities in this session?

Cheryl: Education and transportation.

Peggy: waking up after the election was hard. For me to draw a circle of protection around the vulnerable is very important. We know we will be the last line of defense for many. We need a transportation bill. We need a bonding bill. It may be that projects just aren't done. And a comprehensive transportation bill. We have been working with a lights on budget. All the work you are seeing now was funded in 2013. Everyone agrees on the amount, 6 billion. I have a lot of hope with the new coalition that is coming together. They know they are not getting the gas tax. May take taxes on the auto parts. Early education. Schools are paying to fill the gap. The finance chair said tell me what would you do if there is no increase and what would you do if there was a 10% cut. This signals what they may do. This would affect many of our public service employees. Right now less than 10% is agencies. Those cuts won't make a dent in anything.

Cheryl: I learned that 80% of the cost of any transportation cost is materials. These costs are completely affected by the price of gasoline. It's always better to look at percentages instead of numbers to maintain perspective.

Peggy: Who's worried about hacking? The generals from around the state said we need 3 million. Representative Anderson's budget gave them \$300,000.

3. We would also like talk specifically about the issues that LWV Minnesota or our local LWV are working on this session which are of particular concern to our local members. Others issues may come up during the discussion

- a. Healthcare

What if ACA gets repealed?

Peggy: we have not covered it yet. They want to create an entire new system. Pretty similar to MNSURE, which they don't like, and may take over a year. Then relief wouldn't come until March, 2018.

Cheryl: The governor has already negotiated with the insurance companies so they will take 25% off the premiums.

Peggy: They want to cut the CHIP program – which would not be good. It sounds like the move from Washington will to give us a big block grant. In Minnesota, we would be OK. In other states, low income people may not. People blame MNSURE – but the insurance companies raised the rates. We had to get rid of our High Risk program. We have a very small pool of individual plans that were expected to cover the costs. 'Good public policy doesn't fit on a bumper sticker'. There is a bill that allows insurance companies to be a for profit company – Peggy believes the governor will veto the bill. And will not let it include any re-insurance because it would hike up the price.

- b. Bonding bill, infrastructure, transportation

- c. Education

- d. Environmental issues, public health

Climate change –

Cheryl: I will be introducing some bills for pipelines. A big obstacle is that so many people don't believe climate change is a man-made thing. They already put a bill in to roll back the governors buffer zone bill. The governor is having a water summit. I anticipate that he would veto any changes. A lot of folks are worried about what Trump will do about the energy policy. They want to bypass the PUC altogether – which is not good.

Peggy: met with fresh energy. They are a coalition of several organizations. They are data nerds. What we see is that solar and wind energy are some of the most affordable forms of energy.

The existing utilities lose the control and profitability and have to purchase from other utilities.

e. Campaign finance –

We both support campaign finance reform. I don't think there will be any change this year. This is a budget year, so I don't know how much time they will have for policy. Campaign Finance board is looking at what is the proper relationship.

Why is Real ID taking so long?

It came out in 2005. Disallows undocumented workers from getting driver's license. Real ID will include more information. We didn't want to host the extra data. Many states have a compliant id and a non-compliant id. The non-compliant id would only let you drive. Tim Pawlenty wanted to put something on our driver's license showing proof of citizenship. We want to have people drive with their tribal id. There are a lot of folks that want undocumented people to be able to drive and get insurance. The house is rushing it through. Kurt Daudt has a sense of urgency for what he wants to do because he will be running for governor. He wants to show he can do something. We realize no one intends to do any harm – but it's important to hear about un-intended consequences.

What is the best way to contact you?

A handwritten letter – something that can't be deleted. My priority is to look at communication from my district. But likely won't reply to a form response. Email Kurt Daudt or the Chairman committee and CC one of us.

Put your message in the subject line 'vote yes for '

If you make the email personal: say Dear Peggy....

Even if you use a form letter – change the first paragraph of the form letter.

Peggy: We may never agree on reproductive choice issues, but we can agree that kids need to be safe – so we have been able to find some common ground. And develop friendships.

National popular vote – Cheryl thinking about it – Peggy would support it.

Private prison:

Peggy sat through the hearings. It is outrageous to consider that we should profit off of the incarcerated. It would be like warehousing people. The governor would veto anything like this. MN only had one, but it closed. We have a rehabilitative model. 85% of the folks that are in prison get back into society. We work very hard to keep them connected with their family.

Disabilities issue:

How cost effective it is to help educate kids with learning disabilities. Some of the geniuses in the world are dyslexic. If we don't provide disability education in our schools, we will lose the best of the best. People just see disabilities as irritating to the teachers.

Peggy will introduce a bill to help homeless kids get caught up before preschool. I would say early childhood is the best place to focus our efforts. We need funding for people who work with children, funding for parents to have support and development.

## **Racial Discrimination in Our Criminal Justice System Unit Program, Thursday, January 16th**

At all levels of the LWV – national, state, and local, there is a concern for equity and inclusion for all. Though LWV is nonpartisan and never supports particular candidates or parties, LWV has taken a stand on many important issues. Systemic discrimination in any area leads to diminishing of the vote. There is a much higher percentage of nonwhites that are in trouble or are treated unjustly within the law. One of the big themes of recent strategic planning by LWV is how equity and inclusion for all affects our community. Those that are white have been born into a society that has assumed that what is normal to them is universal and that other races and ethnicities need to be helped and learn how to better exist in this society. This system is white privilege. When we understand that, we can then identify actions that can be taken to increase the participation of all in our communities and in LWV. In February our unit meeting will focus on the criminal justice system. In March the unit meeting will look at equity and inclusion as it applies to education.

### **The program will start with a Ted Talk.**

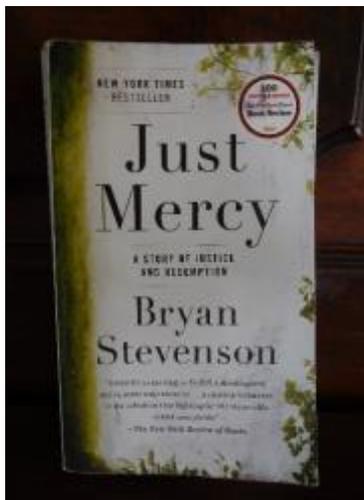
In order to guide the discussion, we suggest that you read either:

*Just Mercy, A Story of Justice and Redemption* by Bryan Stephenson c. 2014  
Spiegel & Grau NY

*The New Jim Crow, Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander c. 2012, The New Press NY

However, one does not need to have read either of the books to participate. It would be more interesting and helpful if as many could read one or the other. They are both just over 300 pages long.

Shelley Colvin wrote a review of *Just Mercy* in the October edition of the *Voter*. Here is the reprint from the October 2016 *Voter*.



### Equity and Inclusion

***Just Mercy, A Story of Justice and Redemption* by Bryan Stevenson.** C. 2015 Spiegel & Grau New York

The book has received many very notable awards and praises. For example, “Searing, Moving....Bryon Stevenson may, indeed, be America’s Mandela.” Nicholas Kristin, The New York Times.

The book begins with Stevenson doing an internship from Harvard Law School in Jackson, Alabama where he feels really out of his element. Working with poverty and race issues is what prompted him to go on this internship, but when he gets to Alabama he is really scared. On page 5, he points out that before law school he never even met a lawyer. One of his first assignments was to go to the federal prison to meet with a prisoner on death row. This prisoner has been on death row for months without a lawyer even being appointed for him. Stevenson follows this gentleman throughout the book. The book is filled with stories that are so extreme that they are almost unbelievable, even for someone who knows there is gross injustice for black people in the prison system.

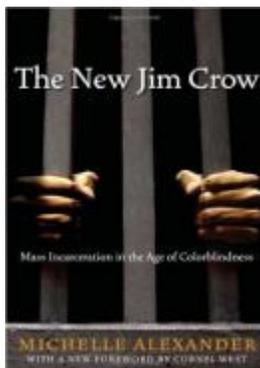
On Page 4 of the introduction Stevenson sums up what the book is about.

This book is about getting closer to mass incarceration and extreme punishment in America. It is about how easily we condemn people in this country and the injustice that we create when we allow fear, anger, and distance to shape the way that we treat the most vulnerable among us. It's also about a dramatic period in our recent history, a period that indelibly marked the lives of millions of Americans – of all races, ages, and sexes – and the American psyche as a whole.

This is not required reading, but it comes pretty close to that.

*Submitted by Shelley Colvin*

Betty Shaw wrote a review of *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander. This reprint of this review from the January 2017 Voter follows:



*The New Jim Crow* is arguably the most important and influential book on race relations since C. Vann Woodward's 1955 book, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*.

The well documented thesis of this book is "We have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it." When Alexander became director of the Racial Justice Project for the ACLU, she "assumed that the criminal justice system had problems of racial bias...associated with conscious and unconscious bias." While working for the ACLU she came to see that mass incarceration, beginning with Reagan's War on Drugs, which was a stunningly comprehensive and well disguised system of radicalized social control that functions in a manner strikingly similar to Jim Crow.

Reagan declared a War on Drugs in 1982 before crack cocaine had become an issue in black communities. A few years later crack began to spread in poor communities. In 1985 Reagan hired staff to publicize the emergence of crack cocaine to support his War on Drugs. This media campaign was very effective in raising fear of 'crack babies' and crime ridden black communities full of people hooked on crack.

From the outset stories circulated that the CIA was bringing cocaine and other drugs into black neighborhoods. In 1988 the CIA admitted that it had blocked law enforcement efforts to investigate illegal drug networks. That was because they were helping to fund the covert war against the Contras in Nicaragua.

The War on Drugs began at a time when illegal use was in decline, but arrests and convictions skyrocketed, especially among people of color. The War on Drugs turned into a war on crime, fought primarily in poor communities of color, despite the fact that the rate of drug use and the sellers of drugs were remarkably similar for people of all colors. The US imprisons a larger percentage of its black population than South Africa did in the height of apartheid. In some states black men have been imprisoned on drug charges at rates 20 to 50 times greater than those of white men. In major cities as many as 80% of young African American men have criminal records and are thus subject to legalized discrimination for the rest of their lives.

*Submitted by Betty Shaw*

## Take Action!

LWV advocacy is only as effective as the volunteers who are willing to contact their legislators and speak in a clear voice urging elected officials to support league positions. Social media will be used to post Action Alerts. Visit LWV MN's Facebook page and The Voter – Virtual Edition, a Facebook group for LWV members and friends.

### Take Action with LWV Minnesota

Subscribe to Action Alerts [here](#).

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**Local Leagues = Grass Roots Power**

Subscribe to Action Alerts so you can take action when a bill is in committee or going to the floor. The Capitol Letter keeps you informed about legislative activity. Email, phone, write your legislators, attend Town Hall meetings and speak up. Legislators listen to their constituents.

## Observer Reports

School Board Meeting January 9, 2017 - Deb Brinkman, Observer

The meeting was called to order at 7 pm. All members were present. The Spotlight included recognition for Joe Tatalovich and discussion of Rob Metz's Resignation. June will be Rob's last meeting. Also noted is the Kindergarten Information Night.

The Agenda was approved. Study Session Topics included International Travel Requests for Canada, Germany, and Italy-Switzerland. Each Program travels every other year. A draft of the 2017 - 2018 was reviewed. The Director of Human Resources, Richard Kreyer presented the Comparable Worth Study. The goal is to have a system that is Fair, Equitable and Legally Defensible. The Facilities Update plan was presented by Rob Metz. There is a projected enrollment increase. Classes will be needed at the High School and Middle School. The School Board Compensation increase was discussed. Karen Waters indicated that she is not interested in the additional compensation. School Board Appointments to City Commissions dates were requested to be adjusted to coincide with the City appointment expiration dates. The NEW 721 Uniform Grant Regarding Federal Revenue was reviewed. The consent agenda was approved unanimously.

Action Agenda: The NEW 721 Uniform Grant Regarding Federal Reserve was approved unanimously.

The Employee Agreements Directors for 2016 - 2017 and 2017 - 2018 was approved unanimously.

The School Board motioned to leave their compensation unchanged and was approved unanimously.

The School Board re-appointments to City Commissions was approved unanimously.

The expiration dates for the appointments to City Commissions was approved to be changed.

The Travel Request to Canada for French students was approved unanimously.

The Travel Request to Germany was approved unanimously.

The Travel Request to Italy and Switzerland was approved unanimously.

The School Board approved Rob Metz's Resignation - approved unanimously.

In closing, there were several comments regarding Rob's contributions to the School District.

Communications:

Karen noted Punchbowl Social, Children First Asset Training and the Theater Production Anatomy of Gray

Bruce expressed recognition to those who contributed to the Foundation.

Nancy recognized the process to select the next Superintendent. There is a plan for public input.

The Meeting adjourned at 9:44 pm.

*Submitted by Deb Brinkman*

## **Observer, School Board: 1-23- 17**

**Two Spotlights:** The meeting opened with 2 Spotlights. (These are special recognitions of people and/or programs.

1. Joe Tatalovich was recognized for his work as chair of the Board for the last year. Superintendent Metz identified several traits and times of special assistance such as acquiring the Hennepin County grant this past year.
2. Para professionals are being recognized on a state level for their important work. Governor Dayton made a proclamation that 1-23- 17 through 1-27- 17 will be an official recognition of this profession.

## **Open Forum**

No one presented.

## **Superintendent report:**

1. There will be a facilities report at every Board meeting until mid-spring when there will be a proposal. This proposal will result in a possible bond referendum in the fall (2017) Some times already noted are

**Facilities Report:**

Most of the meeting was taken by the facilities report. This update on facilities came from the strategic plan that was formed last year with the input from the community. One thing that was emphasized at the beginning and during the presentation is that a facility influences and provides the context of learning. Technology and project work along with other innovative and creative approaches to learning are replacing the model of traditional classrooms with desks in a row.

Besides the referendum, the school will continue to develop relationships with business and outside groups (particularly with Park grads!) to help with such things as acquiring equipment. The architects presented 3 levels of renovations or plans that are than reflected in 3 levels of funding. The middle level had 2 alternate renovation possibilities. The lowest would be at the \$40 million dollar level; the second would be at the \$75 million dollar level; the third would be at the \$125 million dollar level. Most of the renovations and remodeling would be at the Middle School and the High School. Kari Ross, the Director of Teaching and Learning, spoke to the educational possibilities, given facilities renovation. One given included in each level of spending is the moving of the District offices from the High School. This would give needed space to the growth of the high school. The media centers in both the High School and the Middle School would be enlarged and reconfigured very differently to accommodate more project and group centered learning. An auditorium could be added to the Middle School. Many slides were presented with various ideas and configurations.

**Calendar, 2016-2017 school year:**

A mistake was found on the calendar that had been approved several months ago. It was short one required student attendance day and short one required teacher work/education day. February 12 had been a vacation day for all. If the vacation day was canceled, then the students had enough days. June 12, 2017 was added as a professional work day. This calendar was passed.

**Superintendent Search Update:**

A tentative timeline would have the superintendent hired by May 22, 2017. They would then start on 7-1- 2017. The Board's first task is to hire a search firm.

*Submitted by Shelley Colvin*

## LWVSLP Calendar



August 4<sup>th</sup>: planning our calendar for next year

**Thu Feb 2, 2017**

**7pm - 8pm Board Meeting - at Deb's**

**Calendar:** LWV St. Louis Park  
**Created by:** deb brinkman

**Thu Feb 16, 2017**

**7pm - 8pm**

**Gathering facts to study racial disparities in our criminal justice system - Just Mercy**

**Calendar:** LWV St. Louis Park  
**Created by:** deb brinkman

**Description:**

Judy will see if she can find someone to interview Just Mercy Book Discussion - Shelley is willing to lead a book discussion

**Wed Mar 1, 2017**

**All day Women's History Month in March**

Wed Mar 1, 2017 - Thu Mar 2, 2017

**Calendar:** LWV St. Louis Park

**Created by:** deb brinkman

**Thu Mar 2, 2017**

**7pm - 8pm Board Meeting - at Elaine Savick's**

**Calendar:** LWV St. Louis Park

**Created by:** deb brinkman

**Thu Mar 16, 2017**

**7pm - 8pm Racial Disparity in education**

**Where:** SLP City Hall

**Calendar:** LWV St. Louis Park

**Created by:** deb brinkman

**Description:**

Eilseen and Shelley Karen Waters will come speak to tell us what they are doing at the high school.

**Sat Mar 18, 2017**

**10am - 11am CMAL Topic: Man Made Disasters**

**Video call:** Join video call

**Calendar:** LWV St. Louis Park

**Created by:** deb brinkman

**Sat Apr 1, 2017**

**All day LWVSLP Birthday 63**

Sat Apr 1, 2017 - Sun Apr 2, 2017

**Calendar:** LWV St. Louis Park

**Created by:** deb brinkman

**Thu Apr 6, 2017**

**7pm - 8pm Board Meeting - need a host**

**Calendar:** LWV St. Louis Park

**Created by:** deb brinkman

**Thu Apr 20, 2017**

**7pm - 8pm LWV Unit 3 Meeting - topic tbd**

**Video call:** Join video call

**Calendar:** LWV St. Louis Park

**Created by:** deb brinkman

**Fri Apr 28, 2017**

**12pm - 1pm Legacy Luncheon**

**Video call:** Join video call  
**Where:** Normandale College  
**Calendar:** LWV St. Louis Park  
**Created by:** deb brinkman

**6pm - 7pm Social Event**

**Video call:** Join video call  
**Calendar:** LWV St. Louis Park  
**Created by:** deb brinkman

**Sat Apr 29, 2017**

**12pm - 1pm LWVMN State Convention**

**Video call:** Join video call  
**Where:** Normandale College  
**Calendar:** LWV St. Louis Park  
**Created by:** deb brinkman

**Mon May 1, 2017**

**All day Celebrate SLP Kids in May**

Mon May 1, 2017 - Tue May 2, 2017  
**Calendar:** LWV St. Louis Park  
**Created by:** deb brinkman

**Thu May 4, 2017**

**7pm - 8pm Board Meeting - need host**

**Video call:** Join video call  
**Calendar:** LWV St. Louis Park  
**Created by:** deb brinkman

**Sat May 20, 2017**

**12pm - 1pm Annual Meeting**

**Calendar:** LWV St. Louis Park  
**Created by:** deb brinkman  
**Description:** Host at Dorothy's again Sandwiches and Salads



<p><b>OFFICERS:</b>                  President: Deb Brinkman                  Vice President: Debbie Blake                  Secretary: Open                  Treasurer: Judy Cook  <b>Board of Directors:</b>                  Betty Shaw: Observer Reports</p>	<p>Social Media: Heidi Stulberg                  Voter Service: Eilseen Knisley                  Public Relations: Judy Cook                  Membership: Barb Person                  West Metro Liaison: Barb Person                  CMAL Liaison: Shelley Colvin                  Voter Editor: Shelley Colvin</p>
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**YES! I WOULD LIKE TO JOIN THE  
 LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ST. LOUIS PARK**

Name (Family Member #1): \_\_\_\_\_

Name (Family Member #2): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Dues  
 (a portion of dues are now tax deductible)**

- Single active Attending Member      \$55.00
- Supporting/Member-at-Large              \$60.00
- Family Membership                              \$70.00  
     (2 or more in single household)

**Make checks payable to LWV SLP  
 and send check & this form to:**

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