



Voter

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January Calendar

- January 3, 2013 – 7 pm - Date Change**
LWV SLP Board Meeting
Location: Aggie Leitheiser’s home
- January 9, 2013 – 12:30 pm**
Unit 2 Meeting
Topic: Echo Video
Location: Parkshore Card Room
- January 19, 2013 – 10 am**
CMAL
Topic: “Communities for a Lifetime”
Location: Richfield City Hall
- January 26, 2013 – 10 am**
Legislative Interviews & Chili Lunch
Location: Union Congregational Church

Upcoming Events

- February 5, 2013 – 7 pm**
LWV SLP Board Meeting
Location: Barb Person’s home
- February 13 , 2013 – 12:30 pm**
Unit 2 Meeting
Topic: tbd
Location: Parkshore Card Room
- February 21, 2013 – 7 pm**
Unit 3 Meeting
Topic: Echo Video
Location: St. Louis Park City Hall

Gift Wrapping

Thanks to all Leaguers who signed up to wrap gifts at Barnes and Noble: Barbara Downey, Judy Cook, Barb Person, Eilseen Knisely, Shirley Simmons, Dorothy Karlson, Deb Brinkman, Debbie Blake, Bonnie Skelton, and Rosemary Ruffenach. The Dollars for Scholars fund grew by \$281.01! What a great boost to our Dollars for Scholars fund.

It’s also a great way to connect to the community. We received several comments from customers who recognize and support LWV.

Legislative Interviews

Senator Ron Latz, Representative Steve Simon and Representative Ryan Winkler have been invited to join us for a chili lunch and Legislative Interview.

LWV Golden Valley and LWV Hopkins have also been invited to attend.

If you have a question you would like to ask, contact Eilseen Knisely, eilgeo@aol.com or Carlota Medus, cmedus@gmail.com.

President's Message

Very best wishes for a very happy and blessed new year! May 2013 bring you adventures and opportunities to explore new ideas, develop new friendships, and cherish ongoing relationships.

LWV St. Louis Park is doing that with our programs for the next few months. We'll be starting in January with our visit with legislators to talk about current issues and the upcoming legislative session. Please join us for conversation and a chili lunch – details are elsewhere in this issue of the Voter. In February we'll explore what's happening with health reform, in March we'll review and discuss the Briefing Paper on Missing and Exploited Children and our Annual Meeting in April will be a visit with the local Friends of the Arts organization. I hope to see you at these events.

Thanks to everyone who participated in the 2013 Program review (also known as Lively Issues). Both units had discussions about current issues and some areas that might deserve attention. The Board will be discussing the results at upcoming meetings and we will make some choices at our Annual meeting.

Special thanks to Dorothy Karlson for organizing the event and the "wrappers" who helped in the fundraiser for the LWV SLP scholarship project. The dedicated participants at the Ridgedale Barnes and Noble were Barbara Downey, Judy Cook, Barb Person, Eilseen Knisely, Shirley Simmons, Dorothy Karlson, Deb Brinkman, Debbie Blake, Bonnie Skelton, and Rosemary Ruffenach. The Dollars for Scholars fund grew by \$281!

Special condolences to Dorothy Karlson, whose husband Alden passed away in December. You are in our thoughts.

—Aggie Leitheiser, LWV SLP President, 952-938-6255

Highlights from the December 2012 LWV SLP Board Meeting:

- Finalized details for the Barnes and Nobles Gift Wrapping and Unit meetings in December
- Reviewed plans for legislative interviews in January and the meeting about the Affordable Care Act in February
- Noted that the CMAL meeting on January 19 is on "Communities for a Lifetime" at Richfield City Hall
- Enjoyed a variety of holiday treats and shared views about current events



Worth Noting

Important Links

www.vote411.org/

Find your polling place

View your ballot

<http://www.lwvmn.org/page.aspx>

League of Women Voters Minnesota

<http://www.lwv.org/>

League of Women Voters United States

<http://www.lwvslp.org>

League of Women Voters St. Louis Park

Recommended Viewing

<http://electoraldysfunction.org/>

Electoral Dysfunction is a feature-length documentary shot in HD, uses humor and wit to take an irreverent—but nonpartisan—look at voting in America.

Children First Asset #4 Caring Neighborhood

Did you know 40% of St. Louis Park young people report they experience caring neighbors? Do you know the youth in your neighborhood? Do you know their names, where they live, what they like to do? It simply starts with a hello and a smile. Invite youth of all ages to be involved in planning and attending neighborhood activities.

Call Your Senator to Fix the Filibuster

In January, the U.S. Senate will have a chance to pass rules to curb the endless filibustering that has brought the chamber to a halt. The vote will be close. Urge your Senator to support Senate Rules Reform and call 1-866-937-5062 or text FIXTHESENATE to 69866.

More details on page 17.



The Board celebrates the holidays during the December Board meeting. In back: Carlota Medus, Judy Cook, Dorothy Karlson, Allyson Hammer. In Front: Aggie Leitheiser, Barb Person, Deb Brinkman

Recycle your printer cartridges and other technical extras. Bring them to any Unit or Board meeting. We can send them in for money. Proceeds will go to support the Dollars for Scholars Scholarship.

Why I Joined the League of Women Voters

Eilseen Knisely

I went to a few League meetings back in the mid-seventies but then life happened and I didn't return until we moved to St. Louis Park in 1987. Now as before I am a member because it keeps me informed about my city, state, and country. I trust the work of the League and am proud to be a small part of all that it represents.

Editor's Note:

Why did you join the League? Send in a paragraph to me, deb.brinkman@gmail.com. I'll publish a story a month. It will be great information for the profile of our League members.

CMAL

**League of Women Voters
Council of Metropolitan Area Leagues (CMAL)
Winter Quarterly Meeting - Saturday January 19, 2013**

9:30 - 10:00am Coffee and treats

10:00 - 11:45am Speakers and Q & A

11:45 - 12:00pm Announcements

Location: Richfield High School District Office, 7001 Harriet Ave. S

Topic: Communities for a Lifetime

Certain projects have been designed, funded and implemented to improve the lives of designated groups of people. We learned at our last meeting the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area is experiencing a shift in demographics to the graying of the area. By 2030, one in four Minnesotans will be over age 65.

Our speakers will be:

Beth Wiggins who has worked with the DARTS Program in Dakota County which provided “Outdoor Chore and Home Maintenance for Seniors” and how it fit into Communities for a Lifetime.

Julius Smith, who served on the Met Council for over 15 years, will talk about the first “planned town” in MN developed with Federal funds and the McKnight Foundation. The town of Jonathan in Carver County was designed to meet the needs of new residents for housing and access options for shopping, working, etc. Mr. Smith will share lessons learned and future possibilities.

The Public Is Welcome.

Contact: Geneva MacMillan, 952-934-3000

Metro Blast

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR CITIZENSHIP CEREMONIES

In 2012, League members registered over 9,000 new citizens to vote. In addition, after the deadline for early registration, we helped an additional over 800 to fill out their forms to take with them to their polling place on Election Day (and sign and date it in front of an Election Judge).

One of the reasons we are able to do this activity is because we are there, as volunteers, even when it is not a big election year. So, make plans to join us on any of the dates below:

Thursday, Jan. 24th 11 AM (10 AM) Minneapolis Convention Center 1,500 expected

Tuesday, Feb. 19th 11 AM (10 AM) Macalester College John B. Davis Lecture Hall

Thursday, Feb. 28th 10 AM (9 AM) & 2 PM (1 PM) Fitzgerald Theater

The official schedule has not been finalized, but more ceremonies will be added when it is!

At a recent small ceremony at St. Paul Academy, the guest speaker was a student's parent who had become a new citizen in September. She told us that she and her husband, both of whom were from Brazil, knew they wanted to vote in the November election. "As we were going to the ceremony, I was thinking that the next thing I needed to do was register to vote. I wasn't sure where to go...but there YOU were (that's us, LWV members!) and we registered and were able to vote. We were very happy."

Our efforts are worth it!

Please let me know when you might be able to help...the large ceremony on Jan. 24th will call for quite a few volunteers.

Thank you,
Judy Stuthman
651-644-8588

LWV Minnesota



Educate. Advocate. Reform.

Responding to a Tragedy

In recent days there have been strong indications from both the majority and minority caucuses that access to firearms will be an issue at the Minnesota Legislature in the months ahead. LWV Minnesota has a strong position on this issue that states that LWV Minnesota supports "restrictions on the sale, possession and use of firearms by private parties in the state of Minnesota." Our volunteer lobbyist, Mary Lewis Grow, works closely with [Protect Minnesota](#) and will keep members informed of needed action on any proposed legislation.

In the meantime, Mary Lewis asked that we share the information with members who would like to take action more immediately on this issue. These suggestions include:

- Get current on this issue. Protect Minnesota is active on the state level. Federally, the Brady Campaign and Coalition to Stop Gun Violence are effective organizations for getting information about legislative and congressional proposals and what you can do to help.
- Contact Senators Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken as well as [your congressional representative](#) and your [state legislators](#). Tell them that you expect them to stand up to the gun lobby and enact sensible gun laws. If you are a hunter and/or gun owner, be sure to tell them that. FYI: On the websites of both MN senators is a statement expressing shock and sadness, as well as "thoughts and prayers." Encourage them also to take action to strengthen our laws!
- Senator Klobuchar: www.klobuchar.senate.gov. Washington office phone: (202) 224-3244. Metro office phone: (612) 727-5220. For email, go to "Contact Amy," and select the "Email Amy" option.
- Senator Franken: www.franken.senate.gov. Washington office phone: (202) 224-5641. St. Paul office phone: (651) 221-1016. For email, go to "Contact Al" and then "Email Al."
- Write letters to the editor of newspapers. The websites of the above organizations will provide you with details about proposed legislation.
- Go on-line and sign a petition. States United Against Gun Violence has a petition calling on lawmakers to pass stricter laws, as does MoveOn.org. In the coming days, other organizations will likely have similar efforts on their websites.
- Bear witness. Talk to your friends and family about the importance of meaningful regulations. Urge the organizations you belong to – and their individual members – to speak out. Try to think of ways to join your voice with the voices of others in order to amplify our message.

The LWV staff wishes you a safe and happy holiday season.



LWV United States



2012 was a busy year.

Not only did League volunteers, members, and staff work tirelessly to ensure all eligible citizens were registered and prepared to vote in the November elections, we also worked at the local, state, and national levels on a host of other important issues. [Check out what the League accomplished in 2012 with our month-by-month album.](#)

Together we fought attempts to limit voting rights, we petitioned the Environmental Protection Agency to make our air cleaner, we pressured Congress to address the influence of secret money in politics, and we worked to make our organization stronger from the grassroots up. [These and the other highlights shown here](#) represent just *some* of the incredible work done by our members across the country and here in Washington.

Thank you for your hard work and dedication to the League of Women Voters. Without your help and support, we would not have so many accomplishments to share.

Wishing you and yours a very happy and healthy holiday season.

Sincerely,

Elisabeth MacNamara
President, League of Women Voters

Let's Put An End To Gun Violence

Leroy Duncan

Protect Minnesota

The December Unit Meeting topic was Gun Control. Our guest speaker was Leroy Duncan from Protect Minnesota.

They have launched the Recreate Peace campaign that includes youth violence prevention. Rather than speak about gun control, Protect Minnesota suggests that we need to be talking about Gun Violence Prevention.

The Youth Violence Prevention is a 10-week program to teach skills and how to handle conflict. It translates into a conversation about quality of life.

Imagine if you lived in a neighborhood with 20 murders a year. This exposure should qualify all the kids in the neighborhood for PTSD.

Additional measures launched for Gun Violence Prevention include the support of four bills.

1. Assault weapons ban (which expired in 2004)
2. Augmentation of background checks
3. Stop easy access to felons that re-instate gun rights
4. Conceal and carry permits should be forfeited when individuals are violent

They are currently looking for authors and sponsors for the bills.

2.4% of all guns sales have no background checks. These sales include the internet, individual sales and gun shows. All of these sales are legal.

There are several challenges:

Assault weapons needs better definition, but has to do with how many rounds can be fired. Fully automatic weapons were banned in 1934. Current laws allow less than 10 rounds of ammunition. Protect Minnesota is proposing anything more than three rounds be illegal.

Successful solution:

A suggested solution is to emulate how Australia solved the problem: they banned all semi-automatic weapons when the government launched a gun buy-back program. Australia went 5 years without a mass shooting.

Other organizations that support gun violence prevention:

MADDADS <http://maddads.com>

From Death to Life www.fromdeathtolife.org.us

Out Front Minnesota www.outfront.org



PROTECT
Minnesota

WORKING TO END GUN VIOLENCE

WWW.PROTECTMN.ORG

The Problem:

In Minnesota from 1989 to 2010, over 7,000 Minnesotans died from gunshot wounds. Nearly 9,000 have been injured, many severely, since 1998. In 2010 alone, 353 Minnesotans died from gunshot wounds. (For some perspective, 131 Minnesotans died that year in alcohol-related traffic crashes.)

Although these are high numbers, Minnesota has one of the lower rates of gun death in the United States. This is attributable in part to a state background check law that requires buyers of pistols and assault weapons from licensed sellers to pass a background check.

We have a shared responsibility to keep guns out of the wrong hands. Despite similar rates of violent crime, the United States has a seven times higher rate of homicide than 22 other wealthy nations combined, and that rate is driven by a firearm homicide rate 20 times higher. The United States' vastly higher murder rate is a result of easy access to guns by people who should not have them.

The Solutions:

Join the PROTECT Minnesota campaign. We support:

- requiring more consistent background checks for gun sales and transfers - not just when the seller is federally licensed. Did you know that Minnesotans can legally buy guns without background checks in many places, such as gun shows?
[Learn more about background checks.](#)
- getting assault weapons and high-capacity magazines out of circulation.
- storing firearms securely to prevent theft, injury, and suicide.
Learn [more about safe storage](#) and [suicide risks](#).
- stopping illegal gun trafficking.
[More about illegal gun trafficking.](#)

What can you do to help?

- Advocate.
- Bring the resolution to a community, group, local official, church, or city council to sign.
- Donate.
- Did you hear about us on the radio? [Donate here to help us spread the word](#). As little as \$12 can buy a radio spot.
- Educate.
- Safe gun storage saves lives. Distribute our booklet, [Kids and Guns](#).
- Request a speaker or materials for your group meeting.

Is it possible to make change?

Yes. There are already efforts underway to change policy. To learn more about our work and how you can help, [sign up for our email newsletter](#).

For more information on how to get involved at the national level in preventing gun deaths and injuries, and for more information about research, go to:

[Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence](#)

Ending Gun Violence, continued....

Visit the ProtectMN site and sign the resolution.

[Sign the Protect Minnesota Resolution here.](#)

Read the resolution and then submit your information at the bottom of the page to show your support.

Resolution:

Because: All Minnesotans adults, children and teenagers -- have the right to be safe at home, at school, and in their communities,

Because: Those who own or sell guns have a responsibility to make them inaccessible to those who would not or cannot use them responsibly,

Because: Loopholes in current Minnesota laws have made it too easy for prohibited buyers, including teens, to illegally obtain handguns on the street, through ads in the newspaper or on the Internet, and at gun shows from unlicensed sellers.

We, as organizations and individuals, support:

*** EDUCATION ON PREVENTION OF GUN INJURIES AND DEATHS**

Promoting measures that Minnesotans can take to stop gun injuries and deaths, especially among children and teenagers;

Encouraging Minnesotans, especially households with children, to store firearms safely.

*** WORK TO PREVENT ILLEGAL ACCESS TO GUNS**

Requiring background checks for all gun sales and transfers.

Identifying the sources of crime guns and stopping the illegal trafficking of guns in our communities.

Ending Gun Violence, continued...

A brief overview of what we know about guns in Minnesota — and what we don't know.



Minnesota's gun law ranking, according to the Brady Scorecard, which concludes the state has "weak gun laws that help feed the illegal gun market and allows the sale of guns without background checks and put children at risk."

Source [Brady Scorecard](#)

91,221

Active permits to carry as of Dec. 31, 2011 ¹

Source [MN Dept of Public Safety](#)

337,534

Background checks in 2011

Source [National Instant Criminal Background Checks System](#).

7 days

Maximum waiting period before issuance of a permit to purchase handguns or assault weapons ³

Source [MN Revisor of Statutes](#)

\$76,795

NRA campaign contributions to and outside spending on behalf of Minnesota congressional candidates in 2012 ²

Source [Open Secrets \[1\]](#) and [\[2\]](#)

495

Criminal forfeitures of firearms in 2011

Source [MN State Auditor](#)

What we don't know about guns in Minnesota:

1. The total number of guns in the state.
2. The amount of ammunition sold or owned.
3. The number of gun owners.
4. A breakdown of the types of guns sold in Minnesota.
5. The number of guns sold at gun shows.
6. The number of guns trafficked and sold illegally.

Visit <http://www.minnpost.com/data/2012/12/firearms-minnesota-numbers> for more information.

Bioethicist: We need to treat violence as public health issue

By Art Caplan, Ph.D.

The mass murder of 20 children and six adults Friday in Newtown, Conn., has provoked yet another round of recrimination, finger pointing and breast-beating. Was the shooter mentally deranged? If there was more gun control, would this have happened? Did violent video games play any role? What we fervently want as we continue to reel from a story whose misery seems to know no bounds is to find a clear cause - a reason why this happened - so that we can fix it.

We hope to see something in all the stories, analyses, commentaries, Facebook postings and Twitter speculation that gives us the reason behind what happened and thus a guarantee that if we understand and act on it then no 6 year old or her parent need to worry ever again what might happen at their school. We hope that no college, hospital or mall will ever again have a reason to practice drills for "shooters" and no play or movie-goer grow anxious over who has snuck into the theater with evil intent.

But, there is no simple answer. We have ourselves to blame for where we find ourselves in terms of mass shootings. Our culture is too far down the road of tolerating and even extolling violence. We do so in our popular entertainment, we permit the mass marketing of violence to young kids, and we thrill to it in too many of our sports. A lot of people make a lot of money selling violence. I doubt that will change.

Nor will the easy availability of guns. We have been well aware of the cost of easily obtained high-powered guns for a long time. Even if we move toward tighter gun control laws and seek to reduce access to automatic weapons and ammo, which I favor, we have so many guns in circulation that these efforts are too little, too late. Will deaths fall if killers are not armed as if for combat with automatic weapons and full body armor? Yes. But, will ready access to automated weapons, guns and this kind of equipment disappear any time soon in America? I am afraid not.

So what are we left with as a way to construct a response to Newtown and all the Newtowns before it? I think we need to rethink how we think about violence in the situation in which we find ourselves — armed to the teeth in a very violent society that is nervous and full of fear. The only way to reduce risk in such a tinderbox is to give up a bit of liberty.

First, make the discussion of violence a public health priority. Ask health care workers to talk about the threat of violence in all its forms as a huge public health problem — from suicide to domestic abuse to mass murder. Insist that doctors and nurses talk about guns and weapons with their patients noting their risks and the need for safety handling and storage when they are present.

Violence as Public Health Issue, continued...

Ditch efforts, such as Florida's, to prohibit these discussions. Take the stigma out of talking about the possibility that someone you know will may be prone to violence and offer clear directions about what to do about that. Let prying in the name of health into what is now deemed private be the accepted norm.

Second, fix the broken mental health system. Not all who are violent are mentally ill. And mental illness is not always a reason not to hold someone responsible for their actions. Still, no one with a kid who has a mental health problem, and I mean no one, has ready access to competent mental health assistance. Ask parents who have a kid with anorexia, compulsions, a personality disorder or schizophrenia how easy it is to get services and you will quickly get an unhappy earful.

If you have a heart attack in any American town or city you can expect an ambulance within minutes. If you or someone you knows has a mental breakdown or ongoing drug abuse why cant we expect the same rapid response and treatment capability? We also need more incentives for doctors, nurses and social workers to specialize in mental health. The nation needs fewer dermatologists and allergists and a lot more psychiatrists and psychologists.

Third, start to screen kids in school — all schools -- for signs of problems involving violence be it bullying, domestic abuse or social isolation. We screen kids for hearing and vision problems but looking for early signs of mental illness is somehow off-limits. A kid can be labeled as at risk of diabetes but not suicide or violence. A bit of screening and some early counseling for those found to be at risk of violence is not going to lead to the thought police controlling the next generation of Americans.

As much as we want it there is no quick fix for Aurora, Columbine, Newtown, Virginia Tech, West Nickel Mines and the scores of other school, mall and public building massacres America has seen over the past two decades. Given where we find ourselves, the fix means giving up a smidgeon of liberty to better protect safety. It means seeing violence as a public health problem that is just as real as swine flu or obesity. It means committing to a hard societal slog from a very bad place to something a bit better.



HealthCare

The Affordable Care Act -- What's Next

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act was signed into law by President Obama on March 23rd of 2010. Whether you call it "the new health care reform law," "Obamacare," or "the ACA," it is a big law, with big implications for health care as we know it.

It's also still very much in progress. Many of its provisions don't go into effect until 2014, and many of the decisions about just how it will work and what it will mean for you and me are still being made, either through rules and regulations issued by federal agencies, through ongoing budget battles in Congress, or state by state. Click here to read our guide on what you need to know about the state of the ACA.

What is an exchange?

In Minnesota, some of the biggest decisions ahead of us are about our state Health Benefits Exchange. What's that you say? An Exchange is a new foundation for better health. It's a tool to help individuals and small businesses get access to health care. On the surface, it's a website, but behind the screen are improved rules and regulations to make health insurance better and more affordable, and to make it easier to figure out what you are really getting, and what help you qualify for. It's those "behind-the-screen" decisions that are the next big battle-ground between the public interest and the corporate interest in health care. Click here to read or download our handy overview about what an Exchange could mean for you.

The first challenge to winning a people-friendly Exchange for Minnesota is to make sure we, and our friends and neighbors, know what we have to gain, and what we have to lose, in the decisions being made in our state right now. The next step is to join together with others to take action!

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act: What You Need to Know What is it?

You may have heard it called the Affordable Care Act, "Obamacare," or "the new health care reform law." We'll call it the ACA for short. The ACA is the health care reform passed by Congress and signed into law by President Obama on March 23rd of 2010.

The ACA makes changes to our broken health care system so that more of us can get good health care. Because of the ACA, insurance companies can no longer refuse to cover kids who have a "pre-existing condition." In Minnesota, 32,000 people now have insurance because the ACA lets them stay on their parents' plan until they are 26 years old. 95,000 more Minnesotans were able to get Medicaid in 2011 because of the ACA. But we're just getting started – many more of the ACA's benefits start on January 1st, 2014.

Healthcare, continued....

How will it help you and your community?

- About 32 Million more Americans will be able to get health care
- Insurance companies won't be able to refuse to sell you insurance, limit your coverage, or charge you more because of past illness or "pre-existing conditions"
- Millions will get tax credits and subsidies to make good health insurance affordable
- You won't pay a "co-pay" or "deductible" (a fee per visit) for preventive care such as: blood pressure and cholesterol tests, colorectal screenings, and birth control.
- Insurers won't be able to put a life-time limit or annual dollar limit on your benefits
- Insurers will have to tell you how they spend your money, and they'll have to spend more on health care and less on administrative expenses like CEO salaries
- Young adults can stay on their parents plans until 26
- Individuals and small businesses will be able to buy better, more affordable health insurance through new Health Benefits Exchanges
- Health insurance plans have to be explained in plain English (and other languages) so you can understand them and compare apples to apples
- \$11 billion in funding is planned for community clinics to provide quality preventative care regardless of insurance status or ability to pay

Are we there yet?

Between now and 2014, each state has many choices about how to implement the ACA. Here are some of the choices Minnesota will make in the coming months:

- Will Minnesota design our own Exchange – a new way to improve and purchase health insurance – or leave it the Federal Government to set one up for us?
- Should Insurance Companies be allowed to run our Exchange or is that a conflict of interest?
- What standards should Insurance Companies have to meet to sell health insurance in Minnesota, and how should they be held accountable?
- Should Minnesota offer a Basic Health Plan – similar to our current MinnesotaCare program – or should those families have to buy insurance in the private market?
- How will we measure the success of our Exchange and other reforms in Minnesota? Will we look at quality improvements and reduction in health disparities, or just lower costs?

These and other decisions will determine whether the ACA helps a few Minnesotans or many, and whether the biggest winners are our communities or the insurance industry.

Healthcare, continued...

What can I *do* about it?

The Affordable Care Act is a big law with big implications for health care in America, but the big decisions for Minnesota aren't that hard to understand. It's about who's in charge and who benefits – people or corporations, our health or their profits. Here are a few simple ways you can help make sure that you and your community benefit from the ACA the way you should:

1. **Share your story.** Why does health care reform matter to you? Personal stories are the best way to make our choices clear to decision makers.
2. **Connect and Educate.** Find ways to get people together, start the discussion, and learn what's in the ACA for all of you
3. **Take Action Together.** Join an organization, write a letter to the editor, or attend a meeting or action to support health care reforms that benefit our communities.

For specific opportunities to make a quick difference, learn more, or share your story, please call or email Elizabeth@TakeActionMinnesota.org, 651-379-0744.

BRENNAN CENTER
FOR JUSTICE

at New York University School of Law

Call Your Senator to Fix the Filibuster!
Press Releases

- 12/19/12

Call Your Senator to Fix the Filibuster!

Early in January, the U.S. Senate has a chance to pass rules to curb the endless filibustering that has brought the chamber to a halt. The vote will be close — and we would appreciate it if you would lend your voice to reform.

In recent years, the use of the filibuster has grown exponentially, paralyzing lawmaking in Congress. Over the past two years, more motions were made to prevent bills from being openly debated than during any other Congressional session in history.

This abuse of the rules is undermining basic democratic processes.

We hope you will urge your Senator to support Senate Rules Reform. Call 1-866-937-5062 or text FIXTHESENATE to 69866. We hope you will stress, in particular, the importance of the "talking filibuster." That key provision would require lawmakers who want to filibuster to actually go to the Senate floor and do it. Remarkably, today those senators merely have to announce their intention to obstruct, and they have induced paralysis.

Unless the Senate fixes the filibuster, crucial solutions will continue to languish in a chamber where little gets done. It marks the first step in revitalizing Congress so members of all parties can work together to overcome the nation's challenges.

Thanks for doing your part!

For additional resources, see:

[Curbing Filibuster Abuse](#) (Brennan Center, November 2012), which details the sharp rise of legislative obstruction in the Senate and offers a blueprint for reform.

See also [this letter](#) that leading academics and scholars sent last week to members of the Senate explaining why filibuster reform is constitutional and appropriate.

Brennan Center For Justice, continued

http://brennan.3cdn.net/2107c7a5414040a002_kcm6bswog.pdf

Read the full article

Curbing Filibuster Abuse
Publications

By Mimi Marziani, Jonathan Backer, and Diana Kasdan
- 11/16/12

In 2010, the Brennan Center first issued a report on the causes and harms of current Senate dysfunction, Filibuster Abuse, and put forth a call for sensible reforms. Building on those recommendations, this update provides empirical evidence of how rampant filibuster abuse continues to cause an unprecedented lack of legislative productivity. This analysis also considers, and counters, the frequent assumption that it is divided party control of Congress that has caused a plunge in legislative output. These findings confirm that the Senate must act decisively, at the start of the 113th Congress, to put its house in order.

Introduction

How can we make American government work better?

It is plain that this nation's problems can only be solved by parties working together through effective public institutions. But Congress has increasingly lost the capacity to make that happen. Over the past decade, time and again, the Senate failed to vote, or even deliberate, on bills that could address the serious issues facing our country. This must change. Ending the dysfunction that has gripped the United States Senate is a necessary first step. If Congress is to fulfill the people's mandate, the Senate must amend the rules that have become its tools for legislative dysfunction.

In 2010, the Brennan Center first issued a report on the causes and harms of current Senate dysfunction, Filibuster Abuse, and put forth a call for sensible reforms. Building on those recommendations, this update provides empirical evidence of how rampant filibuster abuse continues to cause an unprecedented lack of legislative productivity. Of course, since 2010, Congress has been marked by a division of party control between the House and Senate. Does that account for the gridlock? Emphatically, no. A close study of the Senate's productivity shows that its paralysis stems from reasons well beyond divided government. The Senate continues to face an unprecedented, effectively permanent filibuster, which affects matters entirely within its own purview. These findings confirm that the Senate must act decisively, at the start of the 113th Congress, to put its house in order.

Why rules reform?

As findings in this update confirm, longstanding rules have become tools for legislative minorities to paralyze the Senate as a lawmaking institution. Under current rules, a minority of lawmakers has effective veto power over bills and nominees, derailing the legislative process. As a consequence, little happens. Even routine legislative matters and governmental appointments are frozen. As a matter of practice, a de facto 60-vote "supermajority" requirement applies to all legislation. This is not what America's founders had in mind. As Alexander Hamilton noted, requiring a supermajority substitutes "the pleasure, caprice, or artifices of an insignificant, turbulent, or corrupt [faction for] the regular deliberations and decisions of a respectable majority."

Brennan Center For Justice

As described in Filibuster Abuse, both constitutional structure and Senate history confirm that majority rule “binds both chambers with equal force.” Indeed — except for extraordinary and explicitly designated situations such as expelling members — the Framers specifically rejected supermajority voting requirements after experiencing the consequences of legislative paralysis under the Articles of Confederation. But contrary to this constitutional design, the current Senate Rules impose an untenable supermajority requirement.

Reform of these rules is necessary for overcoming the current state of Senate dysfunction and congressional gridlock. Filibuster abuse devalues the Senate as an institution, cripples Congress, and undermines the proper operation of government — which was meant to function with three branches, not two. For instance, the government cannot properly fund operations when the Senate fails to pass a single appropriations bill, as it has this year. Similarly, courts are left without adequate resources when the Senate ignores its constitutional responsibility to approve or reject judicial nominees.

Filibuster Abuse is Rampant:

As of October 2012, the current Congress has enacted 196 public laws, the lowest output of any Congress since at least World War II. This is not purely the result of divided party control of chambers. Control of the House and Senate was also divided from 1981 to 1987 and 2001 to 2003. The current Senate passed a record-low 2.8 percent of bills introduced in that chamber, a 66 percent decrease from 2005-2006, and a 90 percent decrease from the high in 1955-1956.

Cloture motions — the only way to forcibly end a filibuster — have skyrocketed since 2006, creating a de facto 60-vote requirement for all Senate business.

In the last three Congresses, the percentage of Senate floor activity devoted to cloture votes has been more than 50 percent greater than any other time since at least World War II, leaving less time for consideration of substantive measures.

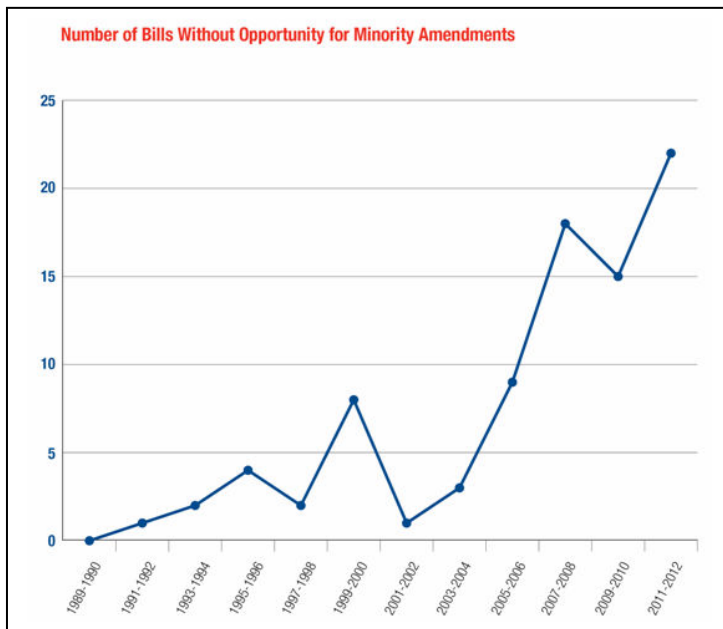
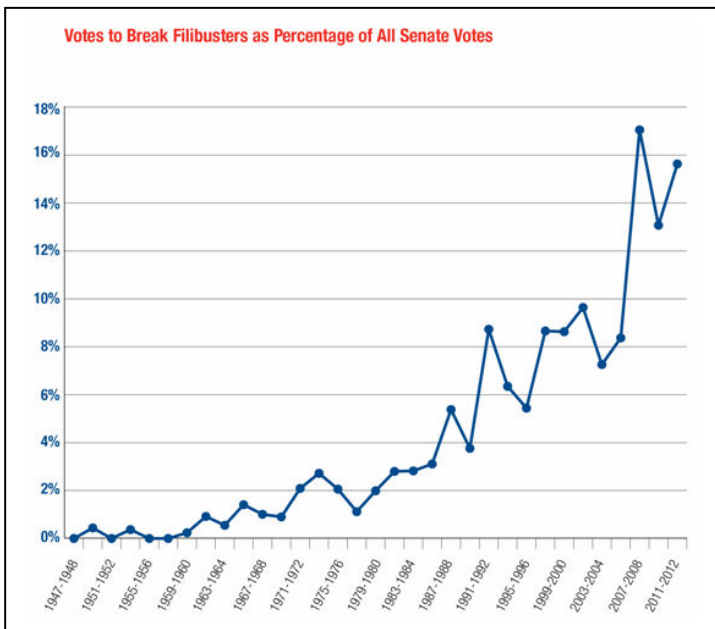
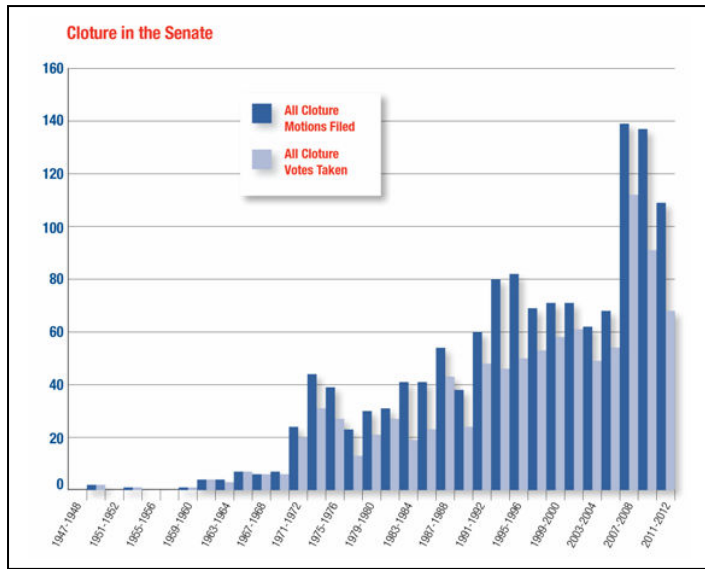
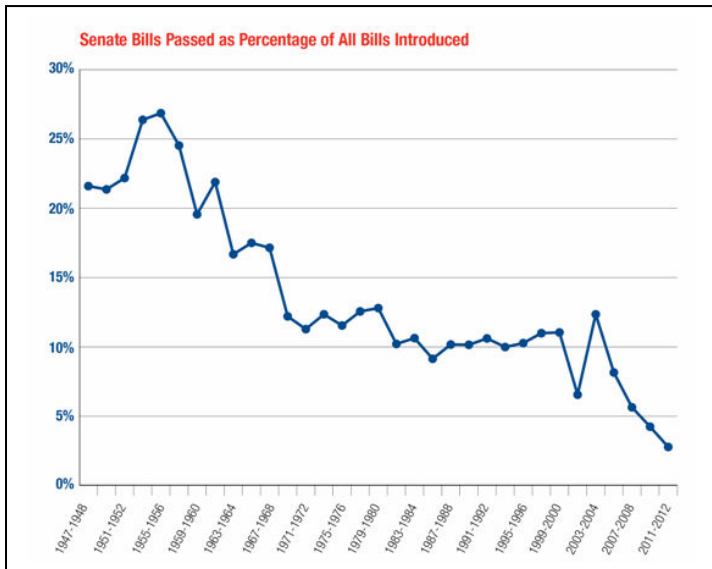
On average, it has taken 188 days to confirm a judicial nominee during the current Congress, creating 32 “judicial emergencies,” as designated by the Office of U.S. Courts. Only at the end of the congressional term in 1992 and 2010 have there been more judicial emergencies.

The start of the 113th Congress offers a rare opportunity to set the foundation for reform. On the first day of the legislative session, senators can enact changes in the Standing Rules of the Senate with a simple majority vote, instead of the 67-vote threshold normally required to change the rules. A group of newly-elected, reform-minded senators, joining with an increasing number of like-minded veteran senators, bring reform of Senate Rules within reach.

At the start of the current session two years ago, Senate leaders attempted to bring a modicum of efficiency through an informal understanding. But this “gentleman’s agreement,” which in part was supposed to reduce filibusters, had no discernible impact. Pledges of comity alone cannot rein in procedural abuse. Obstructionist tactics by the minority — and retaliatory measures by the majority — cannot be curbed until the rules permitting these tactics are modified.

After detailing the growth in obstruction over the past six years, this report offers a blueprint for mitigating the worst abuses, while preserving a role for minority input. Commonsense reform is necessary for the Senate to effectively address the challenges the country faces in the 21st century.

Brennan Center For Justice, continued



Children First



Deb Brinkman, LWV SLP, attended the St. Louis Park Children First Asset Champion Training in 2012 and commits to including asset information in the monthly newsletter.

“We all interact with St. Louis Park youth on a regular basis. Asset Training has showed me that communication with youth shouldn’t be simply incidental ... it should be intentional. I will look for ways to intentionally recognize St. Louis Park youth and engage them in communication or a relationship.”

Thanks to Children First, St. Louis Park has earned another award, 2012 100 Best Communities.



Observer Reports

Observer Coordinator: Dorothy Karlson 952-935-4051

Dorothy Karlson is coordinating the 2012 – 2013 Observer Reports. If you can attend a City Council Meeting or School Board meeting and type up a brief review of the meeting, please contact Dorothy at 952-935-4051. Remember to wear your pin at the meetings – our presence at the meetings is noted and appreciated.

December 3, 2012 City Council, Aggie Leitheiser, Observer

Meeting called to order with Jeff Jacobs, Mayor absent. Meeting was chaired by Mayor Pro Tem Sanger. Minutes and consent calendar were approved with some corrections.

Public Hearings:

1. 2013 Proposed Budget, Tax Levy and Truth in Taxation Public Hearing

Presentation by Brian Swanson, Controller. Proposed budget is a 2.1% increase in General Fund and Park and Recreation. Tax levy is total increase of 4%. Remainder of increase goes to debt service, capitol expenses, etc. In 2013, 74% of property owners and 38% of business owners will see a decrease. There were no comments from those present. Formal adoption will be at the December 17 meeting.

2. First Reading of Ordinance Vacating a Portion of Natchez Avenue South, North of Morningside Road

Eight St. Louis Park residents on Ottawa Avenue petitioned to vacate a portion of the 4200 block of Natchez Avenue South north of Morningside Road. The City of Edina is proposing to subdivide the property into eight single family lots with five lots backing up to Natchez Avenue South. A 20 foot grade change allows for the preservation of the mature trees along the Natchez Ave right-of-way. One area resident spoke in favor of the proposal and Frank Seidel, the developer confirmed that he has no plans to use the Natchez Avenue right-of-way. First reading was approved with second reading set for December 17.

3. Zoning Appeal for 2917 Quentin Avenue South

The Board of Zoning Appeals denied Sara and Henry Stokman's application for a variance to the side yard setback to remove a garage and replace with living space. The Stokmans explained that they have decided to request what was recommended for the setback. The council directed staff to prepare the proposal for a 2-foot variance for approval at the December 17 meeting.

Resolutions, Ordinances, Motions and Discussion Items

1. First Reading of Water Access Charge Ordinance.

A Water Access Charge helps mitigate existing customers from subsidizing the impact of new developments, adds predictability to the rate structure and also reduces the need to bond for water infrastructure improvements. The proposed rate is \$750 for permits issued after January 11, 2013. Letters were sent to developers, and one responded with concerns. Staff will discuss this prior to the Second Reading. The Council discussed recent events in White Bear Lake and requested more information for second reading. First reading approved with second reading scheduled for December 17.

Observer report, continued...

2. Second Reading – Zoning Ordinance Amendment Regulating Outdoor Lighting.

The Ordinance requires existing lighting facilities to come into compliance with glare requirements when fixtures are replaced or a facility is expanded and increases the landscape measures for light screening and these measures must be submitted with a lighting plan. Mayor Pro Tem Sanger stated she did not agree with the requirement to install glare packages only when new light fixtures are installed and it does not seem that the City is balancing the property rights of neighbors with the rights of those using the fields. The motion passed 5-1 (Sanger opposed).

3. Consider Municipal Consent Request for the Highway 100 Reconstruction Project.

Discussion of widening the bike lanes on Minnetonka Blvd to 6 feet wide striped shoulders which would cost the city an additional \$45,000. Motion passed.

4. Project Report: Highway 7 / Louisiana Avenue Interchange

The project is to construct a grade-separated interchange with a new bridge over Louisiana Avenue and a diamond style interchange with roundabouts as well as two 10' trails on either side of the road. Total cost of the project is \$26.3 million with \$7.6 million in committed Federal STP funds, \$6.4 million in committed State funds, and \$12.3 million in committed local funds. Construction is to begin in April 2013.

Nancy Newcomb owner of furniture store across from Sam's Club expressed concern about traffic backing up and problems with congestion at Blake and Texas. She is also concerned about impact of construction on business. Rachel O'Brien, owner of Reddy Rents stated she and several businesses formed the "Highway 7 and Louisiana Coalition" which wants the area to be thriving, they want to work with the City and MN/DOT to have access during construction, and they want to promote their businesses before, during, and after construction. She was concerned there are no economic programs available to the businesses. Phil Weber, Park Tavern, felt this project will help the City but provides nothing for the businesses in this corridor. The motion to accept the project report and authorizing advertisement for bids for improvement was approved. The council discussed holding a study session discussion regarding how to support businesses in the area.

The meeting adjourned at 9:56 p.m.

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Membership Dues (Dues and subscriptions are not tax deductible.)

- First Year Introduction Special \$25.00
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Single Active Attending Member \$45.00
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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Your source for voting information: http://vote411.org/