



Voter

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December Calendar

- December 7, 2011 7 pm** (*Note Date Change*)
 LWV SLP Board Meeting
 Host: Barb Person, 2049 Utah Ave. S.
- December 14, 2011 12:30 pm**
 LWVSLP Unit 2 Meeting
 Topic: Lively Issues
 Location: Parkshore Card Room
 3663 Parkshore Place
- December 15, 2011 7 pm**
 LWVSLP Unit 3 Meeting
 Topic: Lively Issues
 Host: Aggie Leitheiser, 7614 Edgebrook Dr

Upcoming Events

- January 3, 2012 7 pm**
 LWVSLP Board Meeting
 Host: Eilseen Kniesley, 8725 W. 35th St.
- January 14, 2012 12:30 pm**
 LWVSLP Unit 2 Meeting
 Topic: tbd
 Location: Parkshore Card Room
- January 21, 2012 11 am**
 Legislative Interviews
 Location: Union Congregational Church
 3700 Alabama Ave. S.

2012 Membership Dues

It’s that time of year again! You will be receiving your invoice for your LWV SLP 2012 membership dues. Remember, the annual dues are on a calendar year now, from January 1 through December 31, 2012.

First Year Introduction Special \$25
 Single: \$45
 Household: \$70
 Support/member-at-large: \$50
 Voter Newsletter only: \$10

Questions? Contact Judy Cook, Membership Chair, 952-928-9846 or jcook42@comcast.net.

Efficiency tip: Pay your dues at the next Unit meeting. The LWV SLP Invoice is on page 18.



WRAP UP SOME GIFTS To Help Students Go To College!

LWV SLP has been assigned Thursday, December 15 from 10 am to 2 pm and Friday, December 16th, from 10 am to 6 pm at the Ridgedale Barnes and Noble Book Store to wrap gifts as a fundraiser for Dollars for Scholars. Leaguers are asked to commit to a shift of 2 hours. The store provides the paper, but we will bring some ribbons to make the gifts more beautiful. Tips for happy shoppers will provide the funds for scholarships for local students. Call (952-935-4051) or email (djkarlso@ties2.net) if you can volunteer.

President's Message

Thanks to everyone who participated this month in the Education Consensus discussion. Barb Person and Dorothy Karlson provided excellent materials and great discussion facilitation. As you know, consensus is the system used by the League of Women Voters across the country to study an issue and come to agreement LWV by LWV. This long-standing process has made our positions taken seriously by policy makers over the years. We'll keep tracking this issue to make sure you know what happens at the national level and what our overall consensus statement turns out to be.

The December program meetings will include a review of past state and Council of Metropolitan Area Leagues (CMAL) position statements. (For those of you who have been LWV members for a while, this meeting is often called "Lively Issues". I hope you are able to participate in one of these meetings to refresh your understanding of what our LWV Minnesota and metro area LWVs have built using the consensus model to promote our positions and beliefs. There will also be a brief introduction to the topic of homeless youth in the western suburbs by LWV member and City Council Member Anne Mavity. Please join us for an interesting evening.

There's been considerable local press on the Voter Suppression/Voter ID issue lately. Please use your personal holiday events to encourage discussion and understanding about the challenges such a proposal would bring to Minnesota.

Speaking of voting, unofficially, there were 3,651 voters for the November 8 election. That's an increase of 434 voters over the last city/school board election. Still very disappointing but we're heading in the right direction.

Finally, during this season of giving thanks, my heartfelt thanks to all of you for your participation, interest, energy, and thoughtfulness in your many contributions to LWV St. Louis Park. We are a stronger community because of your support for citizen participation in our government.

Aggie Leitheiser, President

Highlights from LWV St. Louis Park Board meeting:

- Discussed completing final report for the LWV Minnesota Voter Service Grant which helped financially support our candidate forums. We will receive a little over \$300 for our expenses.
- Discussed the National Study on Education consensus meetings and managing the report due on November 30. If there are any differences between Unit 2 and 3, the Board will review the information and determine what to submit.
- Finalized plans for the Phonathon on November 29. This event will raise money for the Dollars for Scholars program.
- Discussed Program Planning/Lively Issues meetings for December. Meetings will include a short presentation on homeless youth.
- Changed the Board meeting location for December to Barb Person and January date and location to January 6 at Eilseen Knisely.
- Made initial plans for January legislative forum on January 21
- Reviewed and finalized Board Policies.
- Discussed fund raising options for Dollars for Scholars and decided to add gift wrapping and explore option for electronic gadget recycling.



Worth Noting

Lively Issues

Please join your unit this month for a lively discussion!

We'll be reviewing our local legislative program as well as the national issues. Every year we look at our program to make sure it's still current and to see if we want to add any issues. Please review both of these documents, included in this newsletter on pages 4 - 8, prior to coming to the meeting so that we can focus on what's still important and what we need to change.

Every two years state and local LWVs participate in the LWV US Program Planning process by making recommendations concerning program issues – this is how we remain a grassroots organization. The Program Planning process is an important LWV tool for identifying issues for study. It gives members and LWVs the opportunity to balance the pros and cons, assess possible support, and consider the viability of issues. During the process, members have the opportunity - especially with email and discussion lists - to organize support based on factual materials."

In addition to the discussion of our policy positions, Anne Mavity SLP City Council Member and LWV SLP member will join us to discuss current issues of youth homelessness. There are about 47 homeless youth documented at SLP high school - and about 150-250 homeless youth in the western suburbs, possibly more. These are youth who are "unaccompanied" - i.e., without their families. A number of service organizations have joined together to work on helping these youth. In particular, they are launching the Suburban Host Home program modeled after a successful Host Home program for homeless youth here in the Twin Cities, but with the goal of finding families here in our community who will open their homes to these youth (with all kinds of services and supports, of course) so they don't have to leave their schools, friends, jobs, etc in order to find housing.

Questions - contact Aggie Leitheiser at 952-938-6255.

Give the Gift of League

To mark the upcoming holidays or a birthday, or to send best wishes for any occasion, consider giving the gift of LWV to your friends and loved ones. You can give the gift of membership or a one-time donation in honor of a friend or relative.

The LWV Minnesota E-Newsletter Needs a Name!

We can't keep calling it the e-newsletter forever. Please help us think of a good name for our new monthly update of all things LWV. Submit your ideas to info@lwvmn.org with the subject line 'e-newsletter name contest.' The winner will be announced in our December newsletter and will receive a gift membership to the League of Women Voters to give to that friend that you have always been meaning to invite to a LWV meeting! Winners may specify if they would like the membership to be at the state or local level.

November 17, 1800 – 2nd session of the Sixth Congress convenes for the first time in Washington, DC

Democracy for All? The Barriers of Voter ID – New Tools for Local Leagues

Watch the Video

<http://www.lwvmn.org/Page.aspx?pid=1121>

You will see many familiar faces.

LWV Minnesota's short documentary, Democracy for All? The Barriers of Voter ID, is available for viewing on our website, along with short clips highlighting the issues. The film frames voter ID in the context of the suffrage and civil rights movements and tells how this proposal is both unnecessary and harmful to many eligible voters.

Lively Issues

Please review to prepare for the December unit meetings

GOVERNMENT

Diversity

- Support the city of St. Louis Park in developing a long-range plan for hiring and promoting qualified persons of diversity at all levels of city government services. (1993)
- Support St. Louis Park elected officials, civic groups and community leaders in collaborating to develop a long range plan for the city to use in solving problems related to communication between diverse groups, public safety, racism, violence, and maintaining neighborhoods. (1993)

Initiative and Referendum

- Support of the continuation of legislative initiative and compulsory voter referendum on constitutional amendment; opposition to most forms of voter initiative and referendum on statutes.
- Opposition to recall by voters of members of the Legislature and state constitutional officers.
- Support of strict procedural limits on any process of initiative.

Details

Support of:

1. The continued initiation of constitutional amendments by the legislative branch; opposition to all forms of voter initiative of such amendments (direct, indirect or advisory).
2. The continuation of compulsory voter referendum on constitutional amendments.
3. Strict procedural limits on any form of initiative, referendum or recall considered or adopted in Minnesota, including restrictions on:
 - a. Time span for collecting signatures.
 - b. Eligibility requirements for persons signing and collecting petitions.
 - c. Percentage of signatures required, geographic distribution of signers, and verification of signatures.
 - d. Size of vote required for passage.
 - e. Procedure for repeal or amendment of a successful initiative or referendum.
 - f. Contributions to and spending for ballot issue campaigns.

Opposition to:

1. Direct initiative and advisory initiative on statutes, no agreement on indirect initiative on statutes.
2. Optional and compulsory referendum on statutes; no agreement on petition referendum statutes.
3. Voter recall of members of the Legislature and state constitutional officers; no agreement on voter recall of judges or appointed officials. (2002)

Lively Issues, continued ...

EDUCATION

ESL Programs

Support the ESL (English as a Second Language) program. Support additional funding for the ESL program. Support increases in the following if additional funding becomes available: Books, workbooks, reference materials, computer discs, teachers, and paraprofessionals.

- Support adequate space for the ESL program. The League does not support cutbacks in the funding for the ESL program. (1990)

Diversity

- Support St. Louis Park School District 283 in being pro-active in working to ensure that students and school personnel understand the increasing diversity of the students. (1993)
- Support the teaching of history, culture, literature and arts of African-Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic- Americans and Native-Americans on an ongoing and comprehensive basis. (1993).
- Support the development of a long range, pro-active plan to hire qualified persons of diversity, and that it uses the assistance of its present minority personnel in doing this. (1993)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Recycling

- Support the expansion of recycling of solid waste, including plastics. (1987).
- Support policies that promote and protect environmental quality. (1973) (1979).

SOCIAL POLICY

Domestic Abuse

- Support mandatory arrest of the offender as part of the stated policy and guidelines that police must follow. (1988)
- Support the handling of domestic abuse cases in criminal court. (1988)
- Support an intervention/advocacy program in St. Louis Park. (1988)
- Support funding of advocacy and intervention programs through a combination of private and public funds. (1988)

Prevention of Violence

1. Support for violence prevention programs in our community.
2. Educational programs that emphasize self-esteem, healthy sexuality, problem solving, positive expression of emotions, nonviolent conflict resolution, and respect for others to prevent violent behavior. This would include support for:
 - a. Government-sponsored parenting and early childhood classes.
 - b. Local or state government mandating or encouraging such education programs in school curricula.
 - c. Use of public money to train teachers and administrators to use nonviolence curricula.
 - d. Training for childcare providers.
3. A requirement that adult educators, including coaches, participate in prevention of sexual harassment and violence education programs and that public money is provided for adequate training.

Lively Issues, continued ...

2. The use of public money for a stateside public information and communication campaign designed to prevent violent and sexually violent behavior; i.e. to promote healthy sexuality, nonviolent conflict resolution, and gender and race equality.
3. Efforts by state and local government to develop and coordinate programs dealing with primary prevention of violence.
4. Allocation of public monies in governmental programs to combat violence through reducing substance abuse and poverty, and by identifying and responding to individuals who have been violent or are at risk for violent behavior.
5. The following social institutions taking an active role in preventing violent behavior:
 - a. Religious community
 - b. Business community
 - c. Legal community
 - d. Medical community
 - e. Media, civic and recreation community
6. Efforts to encourage the media industry to exercise self-restraint in the promotion of violence.
7. Efforts to encourage the pornography industry to exercise self-restraint in the promotion of sexually violent pornography. (1991).

Family Services

- Support a one-stop-shop office for coordinating family services. (1995)
- Support computerization of the services to simplify distribution of information and to eliminate duplication. (1995)
- Support a program to supplement the public bus system. (1995)

CONTINUING STUDIES

- Study revisions of the St. Louis Park City Charter.
- Study revisions of the St. Louis Park Comprehensive Plan.
- Study housing opportunities in St. Louis Park to meet future needs of the community.

TRANSLATING LOCAL LEAGUE POSITIONS INTO ACTION

Informal action begins with every member spreading interest and information in an ever-widening circle, starting with family, friends and neighbors. In addition, we can take action by carrying this information into the community through other organizations to which we belong. Supporting legislation, which furthers League's Program, by contacting our legislators is another important action to take. No one should speak or write letters for the League without first checking with the President.

Lively Issues, continued ...

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC POLICY POSITIONS

League of Women Voters of the United States

REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

Promote an open governmental system that is representative, accountable and responsive.

Voting Rights

Citizen's Right to Vote. Protect the right of all citizens to vote; encourage all citizens to vote.

DC Self-Government and Full Voting Representation. Secure for the citizens of the District of Columbia the rights of self-government and full voting representation in both houses of Congress.

Election Process

Apportionment. Support apportionment of congressional districts and elected legislative bodies at all levels of government based substantially on population.

Campaign Finance. Improve methods of financing political campaigns in order to ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office and promote citizen participation in the political process.

Selection of the President. Promote the election of the President and Vice-President by direct-popular-vote. Support uniform national voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. Support efforts to provide voters with sufficient information about candidates.

Citizen Rights

Citizen's Right to Know/Citizen Participation. Protect the citizen's right to know and facilitate citizen participation in government decision-making.

Individual Liberties. Oppose major threats to basic constitutional rights.

Public Policy on Reproductive Choices. Protect the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.

Congress and the Presidency

Congress. Support responsive legislative processes characterized by accountability, representativeness, decision making capability and effective performance.

The Presidency. Promote a dynamic balance of power between the executive and legislative branches within the framework set by the Constitution.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Promote peace in an interdependent world by working cooperatively with other nations and strengthening international organizations.

United Nations

Support a strong, effective United Nations to promote international peace and security and to address the social, economic and humanitarian needs of all people.

Trade

Support U.S. trade policies that reduce trade barriers, expand international trade and advance the achievement of humanitarian, environmental and social goals.

U.S. Relations with Developing Countries

Promote U.S. policies that meet long-term social and economic needs of developing countries.

Arms Control

Reduce the risk of war through support of arms control measures.

Military Policy and Defense Spending

Work to limit reliance on military force. Examine defense spending in the context of total national needs.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Promote an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest.

Lively Issues, continued...

Housing Supply. Support policies to provide a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family.

Child Care

Support programs and policies to expand the supply of affordable, quality child care for all who need it.

Early Intervention for Children at Risk

Support policies and programs that promote the well-being, development and safety of all children.

Violence Prevention

Support violence prevention programs in communities.

Gun Control

Protect the health and safety of citizens through limiting the accessibility and regulating the ownership of handguns and semi-automatic weapons. Support regulation of firearms for consumer safety.

Urban Policy

Promote the economic health of cities and improve the quality of urban life.

Death Penalty

The LWVUS supports abolition of the death penalty.

Whatever the issue, the League believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibilities, adequate financing, coordination among levels of government, effective enforcement and well defined channels for citizen input and review.

LWV Minnesota

Allied Partners – Minnesotans United for All Families

At national convention in 2010, LWV members adopted the following concurrence position:

The League of Women Voters of the United States supports equal rights for all under state and federal law. LWV US supports legislation to equalize the legal rights, obligations, and benefits available to same-gender couples with those available to heterosexual couples. LWV US supports legislation to permit same-gender couples to marry under civil law. The LWV believes that the civil status of marriage is already clearly distinguished from the religious institution of marriage and that religious rights will be preserved.

In Minnesota, a campaign to write marriage discrimination into our constitution is underway. While LWV Minnesota has not yet formally joined the coalition of organizations opposing this amendment, we know that many LWV members have begun asking how they can get involved in defeating this amendment. Minnesotans **United for All Families** is the organization that has come together to lead the campaign against this amendment and they have a growing email list that will keep you informed of their news and events.



Educate. Advocate. Reform.

LWV United States

The national LWV is proud to announce the launch of our new website, www.lwv.org

We've built and designed the website as part of our plans to modernize the way we inform and interact with the public. One of our goals in creating this new site was to grow the community connected with the LWV and to raise more resources to do our work that is critical for the health of our democracy. It is our hope, as we head into an important election year, that the new site will assist us in better showcasing the collective and vital work done by the LWV at local, state and national levels to serve the voters and defend our democracy. The new website has a member's area that provides LWVs and members with tools and templates to help you more easily do your work in running the LWV. Over the last eighteen months, LWV US listened to member views about the website: at small group sessions held at the last national convention, through an online survey, and through comments shared over time about what you wanted from a member section of the LWV US website. Please be sure to visit the site next week and help us spread the word!

In League,
Elisabeth MacNamara

Our Priorities

- Clean Air Defense
- Health Care Defense
- Money In Elections
- Voter Registration and Election Administration
- Fair Judiciary
- Promoting Global Democracy



Common Cause Minnesota is a nonprofit, nonpartisan citizen's lobby dedicated to improving the way state government operates. We have helped pass Minnesota's most important ethics and campaign finance reforms. With your help, we intend to advance a new round of initiatives that will once again make Minnesota a national model for government reform, increasing accountability to citizens and limiting the power of special interests.

Common Cause Asks Court to Allow Public to Weigh in on Redistricting Maps

**By: Mike Dean
November 9, 2011**

Today, Common Cause Minnesota filed a request with the Minnesota Special Redistricting Panel to submit an amicus brief in response to the proposed redistricting maps. This would end the political parties' monopoly over the process by giving the public an opportunity to respond to the proposed redistricting maps that will be submitted by the parties.

"Common Cause seeks to provide the court with an informed, nonpartisan perspective on the redistricting maps. We feel that the current process lacks such a voice," said Mike Dean, Executive Director of Common Cause Minnesota. "For too long the redistricting process has been dominated by the political parties. Our brief would give the public a real voice at this critical stage in the process."

Shortly after the maps are submitted, Common Cause Minnesota will engage the public in a conversation about the maps submitted by the political parties. This would be the only way that the public could have a voice in the process because the political parties are only focused on protecting the interests of incumbent legislators.

In a filing to the court, Common Cause said our goal is "to assist the Panel in reaching a result that gives voice to all Minnesotans, regardless of political persuasion."

Read the complete filing here:

http://www.mncourts.gov/Documents/0/Public/Court_Information_Office/2011Redistricting/47_-_Amicus_request_-_Common_Cause.pdf

This effort is part of a multi-year plan to make redistricting more transparent and better engage citizens in how the new lines are drawn. Common Cause Minnesota believes that reforming our democracy begins with reforming the way that political lines are drawn in this country.



Take Action

The League's Most Recent Actions

In January, the LWV Board of Directors will be selecting and setting the LWV Advocacy Priorities for the upcoming year. Setting advocacy priorities is an annual responsibility for the LWV Board.

According to the LWV Impact on Issues, the goals for setting priorities to guide the LWV advocacy work are to:

- Enhance the LWV's effectiveness by concentrating resources on priority issues;
- Build the LWV's credibility and visibility by projecting a focused and consistent image;
- Ensure that the LWV has sufficient issue and political expertise to act knowledgeably; and
- Enable the LWV to manage resources effectively.

In setting legislative priorities, the Board considers the following: Opportunities for the LWV to make an impact; Program decisions made at Convention and/or Council; Member interest; and Resources available to manage effectively.

Once again, the Board is soliciting suggestions for advocacy priorities from members. If you are interested in making suggestions to the Board, please consider the goals and criteria as listed above. While the LWV has numerous positions under which we might take action, the Board must prioritize and consider those issues where we might be able to make a difference.

If you would like to make suggestions for advocacy priorities, please email Judy Duffy, Chair of the Advocacy Committee at: jduffy@lww.com . Suggestions must be received by January 15.

LWV's Most Recent Actions

National Organizations Opposing The Balanced Budget Amendment - Nov 16, 2011

The League of Women Voters joined with 277 other organizations in a letter to members of the House of Representatives and Senate opposing passage of a so-called Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution. LWV has long opposed the balanced budget amendment as a danger to the economy and the balance of powers between the three branches of government.

Statement of President MacNamara before House Judiciary Committee Forum on Voting Laws Changes. - Nov 14, 2011 (See page __)

LWV Urges Senate to Oppose Termination of EAC - Nov 03, 2011

LWV sent a letter to Senators today urging them to oppose the termination of the Election Assistance Commission, the only federal agency that devotes its full resources to improving American elections.

LWV Calls on President to Make Nominations to the FEC - Nov 03, 2011

In a letter and press conference, the League and coalition partners called for changes in the dysfunctional Federal Election Commission.

EXCLUDED FROM DEMOCRACY: THE IMPACT OF RECENT STATE VOTING CHANGES

STATEMENT BY ELISABETH MACNAMARA, PRESIDENT
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE UNITED STATES
AT A FORUM ENTITLED
"EXCLUDED FROM DEMOCRACY: THE IMPACT OF RECENT STATE VOTING CHANGES"
HOSTED BY REPRESENTATIVE JOHN CONYERS, RANKING MEMBER
THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

November 14, 2011

Thank you Mr. Conyers and member of the committee for holding this discussion which will help focus our nation's attention on voter suppression legislation that is sweeping this country. The right to vote and have your vote counted is the very foundation of our democracy and today it is under attack.

My name is Elisabeth MacNamara and I am president of the League of Women Voters of the United States. We have over 140,000 members and supporters nationwide, with Leagues in all 50 states and in more than 700 communities across the country. LWV has been fighting for equal access to the polls since our inception 91 years ago, when our organization was formed by those who successfully fought to gain the right to vote for women. This year the League actively opposed voter suppression legislation in 21 states – we were successful in protecting the vote in 13 of those states but the remaining states did create new and in some cases insurmountable barriers to the polls.

Today we are experiencing an unprecedented attack on voting rights. This assault on voters is sweeping across the country, state by state, and is one of the greatest self-inflicted threats to our democracy – our way of governing – in our lifetimes. These new laws threaten to silence the voices of those least heard and rarely listened to in this country – the poor, the elderly, racial and ethnic minorities, the young and the differently abled. These new laws require photo ID and or proof of citizenship in order to vote, they restrict third party voter registration drives, decrease early voting and eliminate Election Day registration.

EXCLUDED FROM DEMOCRACY, continued ...

**The League of Women Voters opposes these new laws and legislation because:
They risk disenfranchising millions of eligible voters
They will cost millions of dollars to implement
There is no evidence that there is a need for such draconian measures**

In 2011 alone we have seen an exponential increase in the number of new voter suppression laws being implemented at the state level:

Eight states (AL, KS, MS, RI, SC, TN, TX and WI) have passed new restrictive photo ID laws. Three states (AL, KS and TX) passed laws requiring proof of citizenship as a prerequisite to voting.

Two states (FL, TX) have made it more difficult for groups like the League of Women Voters to register voters.

Five states (FL, GA, OH, TN and WV) have passed legislation that would eliminate or shorten the period of early voting.

In addition, we could see new suppression laws passed in Michigan, Ohio, Minnesota, Virginia and Pennsylvania before the 2012 elections.

These laws have added new bricks to the wall of obstacles some face on their way to the ballot box. These laws are confusing, time consuming and cost-prohibitive for many citizens, including some who have been exercising their legal right to vote for decades and are now unsure if they can "jump high enough" to get to the ballot box.

One example comes from Tennessee where Ms. Virginia Lasater, 91 years old, had voted and worked on campaigns for the past 70 years, but when she went to the Tennessee department of motor vehicles to get a photo ID so she could continue to exercise her right to vote, she saw a line of 100 people in front of her, no place to sit, and no assistance from the state workers to accommodate her needs (even after asking for help). She was physically unable to wait that long in line without sitting down and thus, left with no other options; she departed without getting her photo ID.

Women in general and elderly women in particular are being disproportionately harmed by the new laws. In some instances citizens who have been voting for decades are being required to obtain birth certificates (which some elderly people do not have since they were born at home) and their wedding certificates in order to prove who they are. In some states they are faced with a catch 22 – you must have a photo ID in order to obtain a birth certificate and you can't get a birth certificate without a photo ID. In most cases there are costs associated with getting a birth certificate and marriage license. This becomes more complicated if you were born or married in a state in which you are not currently living. Birth certificates cost between \$7 and \$30 dollars, depending on the state, and can take up to eight weeks to obtain.

EXCLUDED FROM DEMOCRACY, continued ...

An example of this conundrum is 96-year-old Dorothy Cooper from Chattanooga Tennessee. She was born before women had the right to vote in the U.S. Armed with a plethora of documents including a rent receipt, a copy of her lease, her voter registration card and her birth certificate, Ms. Cooper attempted to obtain a photo ID. However, her birth certificate had her maiden name on it and thus the clerk denied her request for a photo ID. Ms. Cooper, an African American, later stated on MSNBC that she didn't have any problems voting under the Jim Crow laws.

In Wisconsin, a memo from top Department of Transportation officials came to light showing that although the state will provide photo IDs for free, the individual must specifically ask for the free ID or they will be charged, thus creating yet another barrier for low income individuals.

These new laws do not only target the elderly but young people as well. For example, South Carolina and Texas do not accept student photo IDs issued by state-run universities as valid photo IDs at the polls. It is interesting to note that in Texas they will accept a concealed carry permit for a firearm.

A non-legislative attack on student voting has occurred in Maine. The Secretary of State, Charles Summers, Jr., recently targeted legally registered voters by sending them threatening letters which appeared to be constructed in a way that would dissuade the students from exercising their right to vote. After conducting an investigation that found no instance of illegal voting or registration, Mr. Summers sent a letter to 191 college students warning them that they may be violating Maine's motor vehicle and election laws by not having their vehicle registered in the state of Maine and/or having a Maine driver's license. He attached a form to the letter which would allow the students to cancel their voter registration in Maine. He did not include any forms to register their vehicles or apply for a driver's license. Several voting rights groups have sent a letter to Mr. Summers and have asked for an investigation by the Voting Section and the Criminal Section of the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice on possible criminal and civil violations.

A recent study by the Brennan Center for Justice entitled "Voting Law Changes in 2012" shows that as many as five million eligible voters could be disenfranchised by new laws passed in states this past year alone. Photo ID requirements are the most widespread of these restrictive laws and, in conjunction with the other voter suppression laws, represent one of the most serious threats in decades to our efforts to ensure the right of every eligible American to vote.

EXCLUDED FROM DEMOCRACY, continued

New photo ID requirements potentially disenfranchise millions of registered voters due to disability, age, illness, transportation, or financial issues. As many as 11 percent of United States citizens, more than 21 million individuals, do not have government-issued photo identification, according to the Brennan Center study. The increased burden will be greatest for citizens for whom the financial cost is prohibitive or who are not able to take off from work, get transportation, or stand in line to apply for documentation. Often these individuals don't have the underlying documentation that is needed to get an ID. Thus, these requirements, whether by design or happenstance, disenfranchise the very people who currently must work the hardest to vote.

While LWV worries most about those who will be disenfranchised by these new restrictive laws, we are also concerned about the fiscal impact of these new government programs on the cash-strapped states. Photo ID requirements are a prime example of wasteful use of taxpayers' money. For example, new voter ID laws in Missouri and South Carolina could cost their citizens \$6 million and \$1.3 million respectively, in the first year of implementation alone.

At a time when states are in the midst of an ongoing fiscal crisis, it seems irresponsible to use taxpayer's money to address an issue that doesn't exist – voter impersonation at the polls. Our state governments should be in the business of making it easier for citizens to vote, not adding costly restrictions and hassles that will negatively impact voter turnout.

In addition to voter suppression from photo ID requirements, we are also seeing an assault on another front – third party voter registration drives. Just two years ago, the League of Women Voters of Florida, along with other groups, won a lawsuit to overturn an unfair law aimed at penalizing citizens who participate in voter registration drives, including the League's own members. This year the Florida legislature passed a new registration suppression law that requires volunteers to go down to local Supervisors' offices, register by providing detailed personal information, take an oath and be held personally and financially liable if they do not deliver the completed forms back to the Supervisor within 48 hours. Fines will be levied up to \$1,000 per person.

LWV cannot ask volunteers to take on this significant financial risk if they are late in returning registration forms. Through this law, Florida's politicians have taken aim at voters and the legions of volunteers who have over the past 91 years volunteered their time to register new voters, in the belief that active and informed citizens strengthen our democracy. This law brings back Jim Crow-style tactics to intimidate all Florida voters and volunteers who believe in the democratic process. The League of Women Voters of Florida has suspended their voter registration drives in the state due because of the financial risks associated with the new law.

Organizations such as LWV are crucial to assuring that voter registration is available to EVERY voter, but the facts also show conclusively that we are key to assuring that minority voters have access to registration. In 2004, approximately 8.5 percent of registrants had been registered by the efforts of third party organizations, according to the Bureau of the Census. The data also make clear who is impacted by restrictions on third-party voter registration efforts. In 2004, 15 percent of African-American and Hispanic registrants had been registered to vote as a result of an organized drive – a rate much higher than the 8.9 percent rate for Whites.

A third tactic being implemented to suppress voting comes in the form of cutting back early voting period. Thus far, we have seen this in five states (FL, GA, OH, TN and WV).

EXCLUDED FROM DEMOCRACY, continued

Early voting has become very popular in the United States. In 2010 over 19 million citizens utilized early voting in their states. Now, Florida and Ohio have specifically targeted their cutback on early voting on Sundays. The greatest impact of this step may be on people of color and Hispanics who tend to vote in proportionately larger numbers on Sundays. Florida has eliminated early voting on the last Sunday before an election and Ohio has eliminated early voting on any Sunday. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, "in the 2008 general election in Florida, 33.2 percent of those who voted early on the last Sunday before Election Day were African American and 23.6 percent were Hispanic, whereas African Americans constituted just 13.4 percent of all early voters for all early voting days, and Hispanics just 11.6 percent."

The League of Women Voters of the United States calls on state legislatures to repeal and reject the whole range of voter suppression measures. They are costly, unnecessary and undemocratic. If the states are unable or unwilling to protect the rights of every eligible citizen to vote the federal government must step in to ensure these rights are protected.

We call on the Congress and all Americans to join LWV in applying pressure on the Department of Justice urging them to deny pre-clearance of these new voter suppression laws in states covered by the Voting Rights Act.

We call on this committee and other members of Congress to join Senator Nelson of Florida in asking the Justice Department to investigate whether these new suppressive voting laws were passed as part of a concerted effort to discourage millions of people from voting in the 2012 presidential election.

We ask for your support in our ongoing efforts to fight back voter suppression legislation and to repeal existing voter suppression laws in the states.

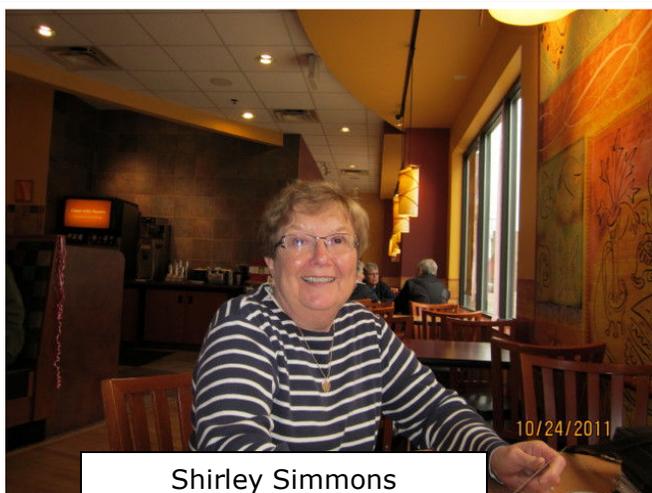
We ask that you continue to conduct investigations into the real-life impact these laws have on citizens and their right to vote.

These new laws threaten to silence the voices of those least heard and rarely listened to in this country – the poor, the elderly, racial and ethnic minorities, the young and the differently abled. Now is the time to act. We must work together to repeal these unjust and prejudicial laws and implement new laws that will lower the barriers to voting and ensure that every eligible citizen will have the ability to vote and have their votes counted.

Thank you.



New Members
Shirley Simmons and Barbara Downey
 Submitted by Judy Cook



Shirley Simmons



Barbara Downey

The League of Women Voters St. Louis Park has 2 new members this program year; Shirley Simmons and Barbara Downey. Both of these women are wonderful additions to the Parkshore's unit of LWV SLP.

Over smoothies at Panera, Shirley told me that she decided to join our LWV when she saw our table at Parktacular. She talked about the voter suppression (Voter ID) movement afoot in the MN legislature. She realized that such a law or constitutional amendment would have had a negative impact on her father, who was in a nursing home. She is currently interested in supporting any LWV activities surrounding that issue.

Shirley has lived and worked in St. Louis Park for 35 years. She recently retired from her position at Methodist Hospital as a surgical nurse. She is involved in a cycling club that meets weekly (weather permitting) and cycles 20-25 miles each outing. She volunteers at the Westwood Nature Center, working with four and five-year olds on school outings. She is also busy with her four grandchildren (the oldest is 15) and her church." I'm glad Shirley has time for LWV and I'm sure you will be, too.

Many of you have already met Barbara Downey, a new resident at Parkshore as she has attended a forum and the West Metro Alliance meeting on National Education as well as LWV meetings held at Parkshore. Barbara is a transfer from a Dallas, LWV TX. She was the editor of the *Dallas Voter* for 15 years. She moved from Dallas to be near her daughter and granddaughter (a very accomplished 11 year old) also residents of St. Louis Park. She moved in on Monday and on Tuesday attended a meeting at Parkshore. Barbara is proof that with a membership in LWV, one can find like minded friends all over the U.S. Friends! Barbara met her husband in LWV!!

Barbara's has a teaching degree in history, which led to a Master's Degree in English, which led to Master's in Library Science and an almost PhD in Medical Library Science. She said that she moved about with her husband and family, got different jobs and then went to school to get the credentials the jobs required.

Barbara is excited to be learning about the Twin Cities (including St. Louis Park) and all the area has to offer in the way of culture, food and other activities. She is going to limit her involvement in LWV for the time being, but has expressed an interest in being an Observer now and then. Yeah, Barbara.

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Observer Reports

Observer Coordinator: Judith Cook 952-928-9846

There were no observer reports submitted in November.

Judy Cook is coordinating the 2011 – 2012 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 Judy at 952-928-9846. Remember to wear your pin at the meetings – our presence at the meetings is noted and appreciated.

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2012 MEMBERSHIP DUES STATEMENT Due Date: January 1, 2012

Category	Amount
Active Member, Unit _____	\$45.00
Supporting Member, Unit 1	\$50.00
Family Membership	\$70.00
Total Enclosed	\$_____

Please make checks payable to LWV SLP

Send to: Judy Cook, Membership Chair
4010 Highwood Road
St. Louis Park, MN 55416



LWV SLP OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS FOR 2011-2012

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Vice President: Debbie Blake
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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

- First Year Introduction Special \$25.00**
 - Voter Subscription Only \$10.00
 - Single Active Attending Member \$45.00
 - Supporting/Member-at-Large \$50.00
 - Family Membership (household) \$70.00
- (Dues and subscriptions are not tax deductible.)

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

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

LWV Mission Statement

The League of Women Voters, 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. <http://www.lwvmn.org/local/Leagues/SLP>