



Voter

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February Calendar

- February 1 7:00 pm LWVSLP Board Meeting at Nancy Klaber’s

- February 9 12:30 pm LWVSLP Unit 2 meeting Parkshore Card Room
Topic: Ranked Choice Voting

- February 17 7:00 pm LWVSLP Unit 3 Unit 3 Meeting at Deb Brinkman’s
Topic: Ranked Choice Voting

Upcoming Events

- March 1 7:00 pm LWVSLP Board Meeting at tbd

- March 9 12:30 pm LWVSLP Unit 2 meeting Parkshore
Topic: Light Rail and Freight Update

- March 17 7:00 pm LWVSLP Unit 3 Unit 3 Meeting at Judy Cook’s
Topic: Light Rail and Freight Update



**Empty Bowls
March 3
St. Louis Park Rec Center**

Mark your calendars for Empty Bowls!

It will be held on Thursday, March 3rd, for both lunch and dinner. The place will be, as always, the Rec Center. **Volunteer** to help at the donations table by calling Dorothy Karlson ([952-935-4051](tel:952-935-4051)). Support STEP by attending this exciting community event.

Voter Service Board Training and Policy Review Workshop

Join LWV members from throughout the state for the 2011 Voter Service Board and Chair Workshop

Topics include:

- Organizing the work
- Finding a chair/volunteers
- Empty Chair Policy
- Available Grants
- Resources
- Promoting membership
- And many more!

March 12, 2011 - 1:15 pm - 4:00 pm
To register contact amoen@lwvmn.org .
All LWV Members Welcome To Attend

President's Message

Thanks to everyone who participated in the Legislative Interview on January 22. We had a good discussion of today's issues and concerns and shared our traditional chili lunch. Special thanks to Representative Steve Simon who shared his perspectives and ideas for the 2011 session and beyond. Senator Latz and Representative Winkler were unable to join us because of unexpected family issues so we'll look forward to visiting with them in the future. We are fortunate to have such ready access to our elected officials. Representative Simon urged us to stay in touch and share our ideas and interests. Here's the email addresses for District 44:

Senator Ron Latz: sen.ron.latz@senate.mn

Representative Steve Simon: rep.steve.simon@house.mn

Representative Ryan Winkler: rep.ryan.winkler@house.mn

Do you know a young woman who is an emerging professional seeking her degree or a high school senior who would benefit from attending the Leaders of Today and Tomorrow (LOTT) conference? The conference is Saturday May 21, 2011 in conjunction with the state convention. Scholarships are available. Let me know if you have someone to recommend.

The February Unit meetings will give us more information about Ranked Choice Voting – I hope you are able to attend to become more informed about this emerging alternative voting option.

A special thanks to everyone who has renewed their membership in our local League. We value your participation and contributions.

—Aggie Leitheiser, LWVSLP President, 952-938-6255

January Board Meeting Highlights

Highlights of the January Board meeting

- Approved a new membership category of \$25 for the first year of membership starting this year.
- Reviewed input from the Lively Issues discussion and will finalize the report at the next meeting.
- Finalized planning and questions for the January legislative interview meeting and distributed assignments.
- Reviewed plans for February (Ranked Choice Voting) and March (Light Rail) Unit meetings.
- Started planning for Annual meeting on April 16.



Worth Noting

New Introductory Membership Category Announced

Joining the LWV of St. Louis Park for the first time is now at a special dues rate of \$25 for the first year of membership. This lower price is to encourage those who have been thinking of joining to be able to do so at an introductory one-time rate. We think we'll be able to show these new members how the League works and why active participation is important.

Please share this information with your friends and neighbors.

Volunteer Opportunity

**LWV 2011 – 2013 Board of Directors
Open Positions: Program Chair, Action Chair,
Development Chair, And Others**

The board meets nine times a year at the MN Women's Building in St Paul. The term runs for two years beginning after the election at the 2011 Convention in May.

Serving on the board involves two roles:

1. Set policy for LWVMN activities, represent and promote LWVMN in communities across Minnesota. It is essential that board members safeguard LWV's reputation for non-partisanship.
2. Board members also have a specific role, such as chairing a committee such as Program, Voter Service and Action.

Past chairs are available for knowledge transfer and to answer questions. In addition, LWVMN has paid staff that provides extensive support. They are a great group of professionals who are very dedicated to the LWV and its mission.

For more information, volunteer or suggest someone, please contact:
Joan Niemiec at 612-822-7171 or joan.niemiec@gmail.com.

Just Around the Corner

February Unit Meeting Topic

- How does ranked choice voting really work?
- What is the history of ranked choice voting?
- What are the chances of getting SLP Charter Commission to approve ranked choice voting?



**Convention
May 21 & 22, 2010
Rochester**



Ranked Choice Voting

Submitted By Barbara Aslakson

League of Women Voters of Minnesota support position on Alternative Voting Systems

* LWV Minnesota supports the option to use Instant Runoff Voting to elect State or Local Officials in single seat elections. LWV Minnesota also supports the continued use of the plurality voting system in our elections. The LWV Minnesota Board reserves the right to decide the appropriateness of legislation proposing to replace the plurality voting system with the Instant Runoff System at the state level.

* LWV Minnesota supports the right of local governments and municipalities to choose Instant Runoff Voting for their own local elections. Voters need to understand how votes in an election are tabulated and how a candidate actually wins an election. If a change in elections systems occurs, LWV Minnesota supports adequate voter education. LWV Minnesota does not support Approval, Borda Count, or Condorcet as alternative voting systems. (2005)

RCV in SLP for LWV

By Jeanne Massey, Executive Director of FairVoterMN.org

An inspired, forward-thinking community with a proud tradition of civic engagement, St. Louis Park has the chance to lead the way on a key 21st century issue: electoral reform. The single most important and far-reaching improvement we could make to our democratic process is to enact Ranked Choice Voting at both the city and state levels. It's a historic opportunity.

Implementing RCV would bring local democracy into the 21st century by helping foster elections that are fairer, smarter, more civil and more representative. In St. Louis Park, a move to RCV would relieve us of expensive, low-turnout municipal primaries. And what's more, it's doable: Look no further than our next-door neighbor, Minneapolis, where thanks to careful planning and effective voter education, RCV's highly successful 2009 rollout exceeded even supporters' optimistic expectations.

Under RCV, voters choose the candidate they prefer -- as is done on a traditional ballot -- but can also designate a second choice, third choice and additional choices if they wish. In single-seat elections, if a candidate receives a majority of

votes in the first counting, that candidate wins. If not, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and his or her ballots are divided among the remaining candidates based on those voters' second choices. The process repeats, if necessary, until one candidate gains a majority of support.

In races with more than two candidates, RCV eliminates the "spoiler" dynamic and the need for tactical voting: settling for one's second-favorite candidate in order to prevent one's least-favorite candidate from winning, which voters commonly experience in state level elections. RCV also promotes consensus-building, campaigning on substantive issues, and better policymaking. Unlike the winner-take-all plurality system, which often empowers a small slice of the electorate at one end of the political spectrum and invites bitter opposition from the other, RCV encourages candidates to reach beyond the "base" and find common ground with other candidates. Campaigning becomes more about policy positions, not partisan warfare.

From St. Paul (which will begin using RCV this year) to San Francisco (as well as Berkeley, Oakland, and San Leandro, in the Bay Area), RCV is meeting with widespread voter enthusiasm

RCV in SLP, continued...

and, in many cases, giving greater voice to historically underrepresented communities. By eliminating low turnout municipal primaries (about four times lower than general election turnout in St. Louis Park), RCV maximizes the participation of voters in the decisive November election. As shown in the Bay Area, RCV boosts participation among previously underrepresented voters and gives greater voice to communities of color. RCV will lead to government that is worthy of the 21st century, more inclusive and more broadly representative.

The unanimous ruling by the Minnesota Supreme Court that RCV upholds the constitutional principle of one person, one vote helped buttress the successful efforts in Minneapolis and St. Paul – and their positive experience could be replicated in St. Louis Park. In the next few years, Hennepin County cities will have the opportunity to replace their voting equipment with RCV-capable machines that can tally results even faster than current machines tally plurality election results.

As innovative, civic-minded communities like St. Louis Park embrace RCV and improve the electoral process for municipal voters, the goal of statewide reform becomes increasingly attainable. At the state level, RCV could be used in both the primary and general elections to ensure majority winners -- and to both broaden and civilize the political conversation. Minnesota voters do want more choices: Two-party elections are increasingly rare in our state. Polling shows that more than 70 percent of Minnesotans would consider voting for an independent or third-party candidate.

The push for reform transcends ideology. The movement for RCV is led by a broad coalition that includes the Independence Party, the DFL, the Green Party, the Libertarian Party, and many high-profile Republicans. RCV doesn't favor one party over the other; it's simply a cost-effective approach to ensuring majority rule and safeguarding against a winner who is not the choice of most of the voters.

No electoral system, including Ranked Choice Voting, is perfect – but enacting RCV in communities like St. Louis Park will lead to major improvements in both our politics and

policymaking and help set the stage for statewide reform. A move to RCV – here and, eventually, across Minnesota – would bring Minnesota a few steps closer to fulfilling the promise of democracy.

Council of Metropolitan Area Leagues (CMAL)

Submitted By Dorothy Karlson

CMAL SPEAKER SAYS THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO END HOMELESSNESS!

The quarterly Council of Metropolitan Area Leagues (CMAL) meeting was held at the Richfield Library on January 15th. The speaker was Cathy ten Broeke, Project coordinator for the Office to End Homelessness in Hennepin County. Because of Gail Dorfman's involvement in this program, local leaguers are pretty well informed about this program to end homelessness by 2016.

Broeke presented some fascinating facts to remind us of why this needs to be done and how it can be done:

- 13,100 people are homeless on any given night in Minnesota.
- There was a 20% increase in homelessness between 2006 and 2009.

- 1/3 of homeless people in Minnesota are in Hennepin County.
- Half of the homeless are 21 or younger.
- 19% are veterans.
- 29% are victims of domestic abuse.
- 20% have jobs.

One goal of the program is **prevention** which can be done by keeping people in the homes they already have and by helping people leaving institutions to find a place to live. **Outreach** is the second goal. An outreach team now takes over situations that used to be handled by police. Five thousand new **housing** opportunities are needed. Landlords and agencies will work together to make this happen. **Service delivery** connects people to services they need to escape homelessness, and **self support** works to provide employment.

Broeke said that homelessness is expensive and can be ended if government and community agencies work together.

Redistricting

Bettie Reuther, Chair, State of Democracy

Redrawing the Boundaries, our redistricting workshop held at the Hubert Humphrey Institute, drew in over 100 attendees representing over 30 different community organizations, government agencies, academic institutions, political action groups, and of course, many local league members. Co-sponsored along with common Cause, Mason University, the day-long workshop covered such timely topics as: redistricting criteria; background and demographic shifts; redistricting and the Voting Rights Act; proposed reforms for Minnesota; engaging underrepresented communities; the MN legislature and possible reform; and more.

Along with an array of local speakers, to include our own Keesha Gaskins, we were also fortunate to hear representatives from the Brennan Center for Justice and George Mason University. Those who had their laptops could learn the mapping software used at George Mason University. Zip drives containing all the documents used in the presentations were distributed to attendees. There was even time for informal networking and continued discussions afterward at the Town Hall Brewery.

For more information visit: <http://www.lwvmn.org/Page.aspx?pid=431>

Legislative Interview
With Representative Steve Simon
 Submitted By Deb Brinkman



Representative Steve Simon

Legislative Interview:
Representative Steve Simon

Saturday, January 22, 2011

Representative Steve Simon grew up in St. Louis Park and is a member of the league. He appreciates the league because they are creditable.

In our state government, we will see a reverse of what we have had the last few years. We'll have the same issues, just in different dynamics.

Budget

Steve questions every group he meets about how they would solve the budget crises:

- Using only tax increases
- Only through spending cuts
- Using some blend

The majority prefer a blended approach. Forty-five other states are in the same situation. A few energy producing states make revenue.

He is open to some gaming expansion or gambling options to generate revenue. He is not necessarily in favor of increasing corporate income tax because the cost is often passed down to consumers. Some out-of-the-box ideas: extending clothing or soda pop tax or taxing services.

South Dakota has \$0 income tax – but they don't have any fortune 500 companies or big privately held taxes.

We have 22 fortune 500 companies and 16 top privately held companies.

Job Stimulation

We pass a bonding bill every 2 years. It is used for public works projects. A tax credit for restorations created a lot of jobs.

The state payroll is a very small percentage of the budget. While we are trimming, but we find the best suggestions come from people working for the state. One area where we need more people is for tax compliance.

Redistricting

A Proposal was made to use a non-partisan panel to get the politics out of it. He speculates: Outlying suburbs and metro areas are growing. The Iron range population has been reducing and District 44 will push west.

Elections

He would like to reduce the threshold to reduce the number of recounts. He is opposed to requiring photo id. While it sounds like a logical idea, it is not practical because:

- We don't have a large problem in MN
- 38 of the last convictions were felons -A photo id won't solve that problem.
- Our error rate = .0001%
- It will negatively impact many senior citizens
- It will negatively impact many college students who have just moved to MN

He is the author of ranked choice voting. He favors giving cities the power for ranked choice voting.

How you can help: Educate the community on the impact of requiring a photo ID "have you thought about ..."

“did you know that it won’t solve the one problem that has been identified...”

The Dome and The Vikings

He skeptical – but is willing to listen. There might be some state money available.

He voted for the twins, but did not give them any revenue. The Twins play 81 games at home vs. 10 Viking home games. The Vikings received the revenue from the suites, etc.

The most controversial issue he has ever experienced: The Twins Stadium. There was a lot of passion and anger around the issue.

Do you have any ideas?

Call Steve. Write Steve.

He responds to all correspondence.



**Aggie introduced Steve Simon.
Note the use of our new banner.**



Facts About Ineligible Voting and Voter Fraud in Minnesota

Submitted by Barb Person

Authors of **Facts About Ineligible Voting and Voter Fraud in Minnesota** spoke at an **Action Committee** meeting last week. The publication is published by the Citizens for Election Integrity and Minnesota and Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance (MUUSJA).

This is important because the photo ID bill is being introduced at the legislature this year, and even if Governor Dayton vetoes the bill, it may come back in a constitutional amendment.

Listed below are some highlights:

Of the 3 million voters in Minnesota

- **7 voters were investigated for voter impersonation, 0 were found guilty.**
- **165 voters were investigated for double voting, 0 were convicted.**
- **9 non-citizen voters were investigated for voting, 0 were convicted.**
- **1 voter was investigated for under-age voting, 0 were convicted.**
- **56 voters were investigated for voting outside of their jurisdiction, 0 were convicted.**
- **1,179 voters were investigated for felon voting. 26 were convicted (0.0404% of 2008 voters).**

Did you know that if you live in Kentucky or Virginia, felons are never allowed to vote again?

If you live in Vermont or Maine, you can always vote, felony or not.

In Minnesota, 1% of white citizens can't vote because of felony conviction, and 10% of black citizens can't vote for the same reason.

For More information...

West Metro will be hosting a meeting on Voter Photo ID at St. Louis Park City Hall on Saturday, March 26th. We are trying to get one of the authors of the bill to be on a panel with one of our legislators and a representative from the Secretary of State's office. Stay tuned for more details in the March Voter.



**Continue the Office of
Congressional Ethics**
Submitted by
Deb Brinkman

Citizen and Reform Groups Call on Speaker-designee Boehner and Majority Leader-designee Cantor to Announce Their Support for Office Of Congressional Ethics and Their Opposition to any Efforts to Weaken or Undermine the Office

Joint Statement of Groups

December 2, 2010

Our organizations today call on House Speaker-designee John Boehner and House Majority Leader-designee Eric Cantor to announce their support for continuing the Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE) and their opposition to any efforts to weaken or undermine the Office in the next Congress.

We also urge House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who provided the leadership in the last Congress to establish the OCE, and House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer to continue their support for the Office.

The organizations include the Campaign Legal Center, Common Cause, CREW, Democracy 21, Judicial Watch, League of Women Voters, Public Citizen, Taxpayers for Common Sense and U.S.PIRG

The creation of the Office of Congressional Ethics in 2008 was the most important improvement in the House ethics enforcement process since the House Ethics Committee was established in 1966. The independent OCE has done precisely what it was set up to do: help ensure that potential ethics violations are reviewed by the House Ethics Committee and provide transparency for the House ethics enforcement process. The OCE has performed its job credibly and effectively.

Congressional ethics is not a partisan issue. Over the years, individual House Democrats and Republicans alike have been involved in serious ethics problems.

The OCE was established following the complete breakdown of ethics enforcement in the House in 2005 and 2006, symbolized by the failure of the House Ethics Committee to take any action regarding the Jack Abramoff scandals, the worst House lobbying and ethics scandals in decades. The OCE also followed the 10 year ethics truce between House Democrats and Republicans that all but eliminated effective enforcement of the House ethics rules during that period.

There is nothing in the recent election to indicate that citizens have any interest in going back to this failed ethics enforcement process.

The OCE must continue with its authority and powers intact and without any weakening or undermining changes. The House resolution introduced by Representative Marcia Fudge (D-OH) in this Congress, for example, would for all practical purposes put the OCE out of business and must be rejected.

The OCE must be able to function independently and effectively in the next Congress as it has been able to do in this Congress.

The OCE has served citizens, the country and the House as an institution well and it is an essential element of the House ethics enforcement process. It would be a grave mistake for the new House, with more than 100 new members, to backtrack on congressional ethics.

We urge the House Republican leadership to make publicly clear that they will continue the Office of Congressional Ethics in the next Congress and will oppose any efforts to weaken or undermine the Office.



Protect Presidential Public Financing Submitted by Deb Brinkman

ACTION ALERT: Protect Presidential Public Financing

The House of Representatives is expected to vote this week on legislation to eliminate the presidential public financing system which has served America well since 1976. No hearings or committee meetings are scheduled in advance of the vote.

Public financing has allowed candidates to raise the funds needed to wage competitive campaigns. The system has not only promoted competition in elections and provided more meaningful choices to voters but has also helped to ensure that more candidates have the opportunity to share their views with the electorate.

Take action now to tell your Representative to oppose the elimination of the presidential public financing system. Feel free to use the communication below as a template.

Subject: Oppose elimination of presidential public financing

I urge you to oppose legislation that will eliminate the presidential public financing system. Public financing has allowed candidates to raise the funds needed to wage competitive campaigns.

While the system is in need of repair, it is not acceptable for House leaders to destroy the system without one minute of hearings or a single committee meeting. Repair legislation is expected soon that takes into account the changes that have occurred in presidential campaigns in recent years. It is this legislation that the House should be focusing on.

Rep. Keith Ellison



District: **FH-MN05**

MN

Phone: **(202) 225-4755**

Fax: **(202) 225-4886**

1. Contact your Representative now. Tell him or her to oppose the elimination of the presidential public financing system. You can also call your Representative at 202-225-3121.

2. Send this alert to other concerned citizens - your grassroots network, your friends and coworkers. Encourage them to contact their elected leaders.



Pay Equity Act

Submitted by Barbara Aslakson

On December 10, 2010 The Minnesota Chamber of Commerce (www.mnchamber.com) released its findings regarding public employee compensation. One of their many recommendations is:

"State pay equity/comparable worth law should be repealed. Its purpose is outdated, and requiring governments to correct perceived "errors" in labor markets based on bureaucratic and subjective assessments of the relative value of government jobs is an unnecessary and costly mandate."
(compstudy.highlights.final.12.9.10.pdf, p.7.)

We, of course, do not agree. The purpose of the state pay equity/comparable worth law is to eliminate "discrimination against women who are paid less than men for jobs requiring comparable levels of expertise."

(<http://www.mmb.state.mn.us/comp-pay-equity>) It is very likely there will be legislation introduced this legislative session, which begins January 3, 2010, in response to the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce and NAIOP Minnesota's recommendations. The Chamber of Commerce is the state's largest business advocacy organization.

The State Government Pay Equity Act and the Local Government Pay Equity Act were passed in 1982 and 1984 respectively. The Pay Equity Coalition of Minnesota is dedicated to defending the laws and ensuring they are not weakened or repealed.

Both pieces of legislation have been very successful in putting more money into the

pockets of hard working women in the public sector. These laws go far beyond the concept of equal pay for equal work – which we know has been largely ineffective in terms of decreasing the wage gap between fulltime working women and men. According to a report released in June, 2010 by the Women's Foundation of Minnesota and the Humphrey Institute: "White, African American and Latina women earn \$0.76, \$0.61 and \$0.56 on the dollar, respectively, compared to white men". (<http://www.wfmn.org/research/?51>).

The State Government Pay Equity Act has helped to eliminate this gap for state employees -- except for \$.03 of it!

We can use your help! It is important that our side is represented at the State Capitol this winter. As much as we look to our volunteers for help, it is important that paid professionals come to our aid as well, and that requires money.

If you or your organization can help, please send your check donations to our fiscal agent:

Minnesota Women's Consortium
550 Rice St.
St. Paul, MN 55103
Check tagline: Pay Equity Coalition of Minnesota

Please contact me any time if you have any questions about the efforts of the Pay Equity Coalition of Minnesota. We are also available to speak at your events.

Sincerely,

Patty Tanji
Pay Equity Coalition of Minnesota
www.womenpayequity.blogspot.com
ptanji@aol.com
[651-271-1462](tel:651-271-1462)

Observer Reports

Observer Coordinator: Judith Cook 952-928-9846

City Council Meeting, January 3, 2011, Barb Person, observer

All Council Members except for Phil Finkelstein were present.

Presentations:

Mayor Jacobs was recognized by Gail Dorfman for his service as Co-Chair of Active Living in Hennepin County from 2006-2010. Active Living promotes design that is safe and plans easy access to exercise options such as trails and parks. Good examples of their design are exhibited at Excelsior and Grand and at the new West End development in St. Louis Park. The mayor highlighted Sean Walker for his expertise and dedication on city projects.

Public Hearing:

Fire Stations #1 (3750 Wooddale Ave.) and #2 (2262 Louisiana Avenue). Both stations will be leveled and reconstructed beginning in May 2011.

Station personnel from #1 will be moved to #2 when demolition begins. Station #2 will remain open where an auxiliary trailer will house two firefighters and emergency equipment. The Fire Chief stated that there will be full coverage with no reduction in services or response time.

The new stations will have more appropriate reinforced floors and facilities for both men and women personnel. Trees and sidewalks will be added to the grounds. Ball fields, Northside Park and a parking lot will be redesigned at #2. The ball fields will reopen in 2012.

Resolutions, Ordinances, Motions & Discussion Items:

Domestic Partner Voluntary Registration Program. The first reading of the Ordinance was adopted. The Human Rights Commission supports the program and asked Council for approval. Several residents spoke in agreement with this step to end discrimination in St. Louis Park. Council Member Sanger initiated the ordinance to welcome residents and to try to alleviate problems associated with medical emergencies in decision making situations. This ordinance causes no harm to anyone. Comments by several Council Members were very emotional. Council approved the reading unanimously and directed staff to include domestic partners in City benefits.

Designating 2011 Mayor Pro Tem. Council Member Sanger was approved for this position in 2011.

Communications:

Residents are encouraged to plow their sidewalks and clear fire hydrants during this snowy winter.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

LWV SLP OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS FOR 2010-2011

OFFICERS:

President: Aggie Leitheiser
Vice President: Debbie Blake
Secretary: Nancy Klaber
Treasurer/W.Metro: Barb Person

DIRECTORS:

Observer Coordinator: Judith Cook
Voter Service: Vacant
Membership: Ellen Hacker
At Large: Elaine White
CMAL: Dorothy Karlson
Voter Editor: Deb Brinkman



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 (dues and subscriptions are not tax deductible):

- First Year Introduction \$25.00
- Voter Subscription Only \$10.00
- Single Active Attending Member \$45.00
- Supporting/Member-at-Large \$50.00
- Family Membership (2 or more in single household) \$70.00

Make checks payable to LWVSLP and send check & this form to:

Ellen Hacker, Membership Chair
3993 Brunswick Ave. South
St. Louis Park, MN 55416
(952-920-9549) ehacker@comcast.net



4327 Alabama Avenue, South
St. Louis Park, MN 55416

Aggie Leitheiser, President
(952) 938-6255,
aggieleit@comcast.net

Ellen Hacker, Membership
(952) 920-9549
ehacker@comcast.net

Deb Brinkman, Editor
(612) 803-6142
deb.brinkman@gmail.com

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.

www.lwvmn.org/localLeagues/SLP