



Voter

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Prep for the National Study on Education!

There are several articles to read in preparation for the National Study on Education topic of our November Unit meetings. *(Thanks to Barb Person and Dorothy Karlson for pulling all the information together)*

So, grab your glasses, a cup of tea, and a comfy chair; the National Study materials are on pages 6 – 21.



November Calendar

- November 5, 2011 9:30 am
West Metro
Location: St. Louis Park City Hall
- November 9, 2011 12:30 pm
Unit 2 Meeting
Topic: National Study on Education
Location: Parkshore Card Room
- November 10, 2011 7 pm *(date change)*
LWV SLP Board Meeting
Host: Dorothy Karlson
- November 17, 2011 7 pm
Unit 3 Meeting
Topic: National Study on Education
Host: Judy Cook
- November 29, 2011 6 pm – 9 pm
Phonathon Pot Luck and Fundraiser
Host: Eilseen Kniesley

Upcoming Events

- December 6, 2011 7 pm
LWVSLP Board Meeting
Host: Eilseen Kniesley
- December 14, 2011 12:30 pm
Unit 2 Meeting
Topic: Lively Issues
Location Parkshore Card Room
- December 15, 2011 7 pm
Unit 3 Meeting
Topic: Lively Issues
Host: Aggie Leitheiser

If you were unable to join us for the Candidate Forums, you can see them on the local Civic Channel 17. There were a lot of great questions and answers.

Thanks to Eilseen Kniesley for coordinating the 2011 Forums!

President's Message

A big thank you to everyone who worked to make the City Council and the School Board Candidate Forums so successful. Eilseen Knisely was the overall coordinator and made clear and easy assignments so no-one had too many responsibilities. The question and response section was very informative and it was good to see so many in the audience and that they stayed after the official meeting to visit with the candidates. This is such an important part of our service to our community and it's always a well-attended event. We can be proud that we have such a high caliber of candidates from which to choose. **DON'T FORGET TO VOTE ON NOVEMBER 8!**

I just received a big packet in the mail from the LWVMN about the Voter ID issue. As you know, this issue will likely be debated during the upcoming legislative session and several legislators have declared their intent to make it a constitutional amendment in the fall of 2012. As you visit with your friends and family over the upcoming holiday season, here are a couple points you can make about this issue:

- The League of Women Voters was born out of the Women's Suffragette movement. Creating barriers to vote, particularly barriers that disproportionately impact disadvantaged populations is contrary to our organization's foundation and beliefs.
- Minnesota's election system is one of the best in the nation. Our state has multiple checks on voter eligibility. **There is no evidence of voter impersonation.**
- A voter photo ID system would **cost state and local governments millions of dollars.** This unnecessary cost would be passed on to you, the taxpayer.
- **11% of citizens who are eligible to vote do not have a valid, state-issued photo ID** showing their current address and many face barriers in obtaining one.

You'll be getting additional information as the year continues. Please continue to thank our local legislative leaders (Reps. Simon and Winkler and Senator Latz) who have been big opponents of the Voter ID proposals.

Highlights from the October LWV of St. Louis Park Board meeting:

- We finalized plans for the October events of Unit 2 (Green Cities DVD) and the candidate forums and appointed Eilseen, Carlota and Aggie to draft the questions.
- Judy prepared flyers for Board members to post about the forums. She will also do publicity about the event. Other assignments from Eilseen for the forums were discussed and agreed to.
- The November Board meeting was rescheduled to November 10th.
- In November we will review the National study on Education on November 9 for Unit 2 and November 17 for Unit 2. Also, the West Metro meeting on November 5 at St. Louis Park City Hall will be on this topic.
- A fund-raising Phonathon is scheduled for Tuesday November 29th at Eilseen's home. We'll have a potluck at 6 and start the Phonathon at 7pm. All members are welcome.
- We discussed process and funding for the scholarship program. We decided the Cub Food truck was not feasible. Dorothy will contact a book store about wrapping packages.
- We discussed non-partisan position of current policies. Some changes will be discussed in more detail at a future meeting
- Judy reported about her participation in new citizen ceremonies and registering the new citizens to vote; a very up-lifting activity.
- Debbie brought up the idea of getting involved in more community events as a group of LWV members (i.e.. Go to Spanish Immersion School and discuss voting). We'll need further discussion of making this a more routine part of our activities.



Worth Noting

Support Group for LWV Surviving & Thriving in Social Media

A few months ago, LWV launched a New Media Facebook group, and it has been a great success! 82 LWV members from around the country are helping each other learn best practices for using new technology and social networks to improve their communications, fundraising and advocacy work. Petti Van Rekom (LWV Capistrano Bay Area) says "It's great to have a group of LWV members who WANT to learn to use technology better. The help and rapid support is terrific!" Please join the LWV New Media Facebook group and help make our discussions even better! Group members range from beginners to regular users of social media and technology. There's an understanding among members that no question is too basic. We're here to support each other in using and learning best practices in new technology and communications to help our LWV succeed. Often a blog post or question ignites energizing discussions on how to apply social tactics not just to nonprofits or advocacy groups, but specifically to LWV work.

October 27, 1917 – 20,000 women march in a suffrage parade in New York. As the largest state and the first on the East Coast to do so, New York had an important effect on the movement to grant all women the vote in all elections.

Be An Observer

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 the number listed above. Remember to wear your pin at the meetings – our presence at the meetings is noted and appreciated.

Completed Observer notes can be emailed to deb.brinkman@gmail.com.

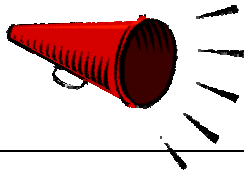
October 13, 1960- Third presidential debate with Republican nominee Richard Nixon in Hollywood and Democratic nominee John Kennedy in New York was televised, showing a split screen.

The Brennan Center has just issued a comprehensive report on changes in state laws across the country that have made it more difficult for people to vote. There are news articles covering the story but League members will want to read the report and see the background research.

http://www.brennancenter.org/content/resource/voting_law_changes_in_2012

Chris Carson

Director, LWV Glendale/Burbank



**LWV Metro Blast
METRO AREA League Event**

"Every Breath You Take: Why Minnesota's Air Quality is Crucial to Your Health"

Thursday, Nov. 3

7:00 – 8:30 pm

White Bear Lake City Hall, Council Chambers

4701 Highway 61

White Bear Lake, MN 55110

Map: <http://tiny.cc/acwyn>

Featuring:

Elisabeth MacNamara, President, LWVUS

J. Drake Hamilton, Science Policy Director, Fresh Energy

Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey County Commissioner

Robert Moffitt, Communications Director, American Lung Association in MN

Sponsored by LWV, Fresh Energy, the Sierra Club, and the American Lung Association in Minnesota.
Hosted by LWV White Bear Lake Area.

Protecting the air we breathe is a critical public health priority. This educational forum focuses on the link between air pollution and the increased diagnoses of asthma and other respiratory conditions. Experts in health care, environmental policy, local government, and civic engagement will make it clear why strong standards for air quality are crucial to protecting our health.

(Nov 2 - LWV Rochester is hosting the same Clean Air event. Please check LWV Minnesota website for more information)

**LWV Minnesota Members Special Event
Breakfast with LWVUS President,
Elisabeth MacNamara**

Tuesday, November 1 from 8 am to 10 am

Red Stag Supper Club

(Woman-owned and first LEED*-CI certified restaurant in Minnesota)

509 1st Avenue NE, Minneapolis, MN 55113 <http://www.redstagsupperclub.com>

We are so fortunate to receive a visit from LWVUS President, Elisabeth MacNamara, and invite you to join us for her "Welcome to Minnesota" breakfast. Enjoy lively conversation and get the inside scoop on what's happening with LWVUS straight from the top. In addition to this rare opportunity to meet our captivating LWVUS President, you will be privy to one of the first viewings of the short documentary, "Democracy for All? The Barriers of Voter ID," produced by LWV Minnesota Education Fund.

Bring a friend or neighbor as your guest. What a unique way to introduce them to League of Women Voters Minnesota for the first time.

Minimum suggested donation: \$25 per person

RSVP to Beth Johnson at ejohnson@lwwmn.org or 651-224-5445 by Friday, October 28th.

*LEED promotes a whole-building approach to sustainability by recognizing performance in five key areas of human and environmental health: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection, and indoor environmental quality.



The Role of the Federal Government in Public Education

Presented by:
League of Women Voters West Metro Alliance

Public Invited
Saturday, November 5, 2011, 9:30 am
St. Louis Park City Hall, Council Chambers, 3rd Floor
5005 Minnetonka Boulevard, St. Louis Park 55416

You are invited to attend a panel discussion to discuss the role of federal government in public education in preparation for local LWVs taking consensus for the LWVUS study.

Our panelists:

Nicola A. Alexander is an Associate Professor in the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Alexander is a board member of the National Education Finance Association and has published in *American Educational Research Journal*, *Educational Policy*, *Journal of School Business Management*, and *Journal of Education Finance*.

Angie Eilers holds a Ph. D. and M.A. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a B.A. from Lawrence University, and a certificate from Harvard University's Kennedy School for Executive Education. For over 20 years Dr. Eilers has been engaged in the field of education as a researcher, analyst, evaluator and professor of education. Areas of expertise include education reform, policy implementation and effectiveness, and post-secondary attainment.

The Education Study scope is broad and includes the following areas under the role of the federal government in public education (pre K through grade 12): the history, funding and equity issues which are addressed under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the common core standards/assessments which are required for many federal grant programs but are national, not federal.

Sponsored by the League of Women Voters West Metro Alliance: Brooklyn Park/Osseo/Maple Grove, Crystal/New Hope/E. Plymouth, Golden Valley, Minnetonka/Eden Prairie/Hopkins, St. Louis Park, South Tonka and Wayzata/Plymouth.

<http://www.LWVMN.org>

National Study on Education Submitted by Barb Person and Dorothy Karlson

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study, as adopted by the LWVUS Board, states:

The Education Study scope is broad and includes the following areas under the role of the federal government in public education (pre K through grade 12): the history, funding and equity issues which are addressed under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the common core standards/assessments which are required for many federal grant programs but are national, not federal. The culminating position will address only those issues delineated in the scope.

Although the study focuses on the federal government, the original intent of the study included the Common Core Standards. These were written and funded by the National Governors' Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Historically we have always had national standards written by the teaching organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of Math and the National Council of Teachers of English. However, the discussion here will focus upon how these new standards called Common Core State Standards will be used by the federal government.

Consensus Questions General Questions

1. The current role of the federal government in public education is
 - a. Much too small
 - b. too small
 - c. about right
 - d. too large
 - e. much too large

2. What should be the role of the federal government in public education? (Rank)
 - a. To ensure that all students preK-12 receive a quality education.
 - b. To develop accountability measures that will study the progress of all students so that they achieve adequate yearly progress.
 - c. To mandate Common Core Standards for all students K-12.
 - d. To monitor state efforts for funding
 - e. To measure teacher effectiveness through test data.

3. A quality public education is important to perpetuate a strong and viable democracy.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. No consensus
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree

National Study on Education
Consensus Questions, Continued

Common Core Standards

1. Currently the governors and state education officers have developed Common Core Standards that are national but not federal. Should the standards be mandated of the states in order to obtain federal funding? (Choose one)
 - a. Special grant programs such as Race to the Top
 - b. All programs under Elementary and Secondary Education Act where the needs qualify for funding.
 - c. All programs receiving federal funding from any source
 - d. All of the above
 - e. None of the above

2. Should there be a national assessment aligned with the common cores standards?
Yes | No
 - a. If Yes, Should implementation be voluntary or federally mandated? (choose one)
 - b. Voluntary
 - c. Mandated
 - d. Mandated, if fully funded

 - e. If No, what other accountability measures might you suggest? (choose one)
 - f. Continue to allow the states to develop their own assessments.
 - g. Suggest that the local education districts use their own assessments or adopt one that is a nationally norm-referenced assessment such as the Stanford Achievement Test or Iowa Test of Basic Skills.
 - h. Suggest that districts use a portfolio type of assessment where student projects and activities would be scored holistically

3. National standards should lead to: (choose one)
 - a. A nationally mandated curriculum to be aligned to the national standards and assessments.
 - b. A national curriculum that is only suggested but not mandated.
 - c. A suggested structure for states and local education agencies to develop their own curriculum.
 - d. No national curriculum.

4. What role should the national assessment consortia play in student evaluation? (Rank order)
 - a. Provide an assessment system that is aligned to the Common Core Standards.
 - b. Provide comparison data showing progress toward reaching Common Core Standards.
 - c. Provide criteria for determining readiness for college and careers.
 - d. Provide information to students, parents, teachers and school districts about student achievement.
 - e. Provide diagnostic information on each child.

National Study on Education
Consensus Questions, continued ...

5. Data from the national assessments are often difficult for parents, teachers and others to understand. If we have a national assessment, what information is most important to be reported to parents, teachers, students and the community? (choose one)

- a. Data should be "norm referenced" (where students are ranked) for district comparison only.
- b. Data should be "criterion referenced" and clearly informative so that teachers, parents, and students know how individual students have mastered criteria established at a national level.
- c. Data should be used to determine "cut" scores knowing if students have mastered requirements for special grade levels.

6. Information from nationally required assessment data should be used to (Choose one):

- a. Sanction schools not measuring up to the specific levels
- b. Reward schools that achieve high scores
- c. Rank teachers based on student test score data
- d. Reward teachers who have exemplary scores
- e. Inform districts how their population compares to others similar to theirs.

Funding and Equity

7. In the past most of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) funding has been non-competitive based on need. All/Any Schools that prove they fall under the federal guidelines for funding receive those funds. However, competitive grants are now being proposed to states/districts who meet certain federal requirements, such as Race to the Top. Which would be appropriate: (choose one)

- a. Non-competitive funding for all applicants meeting requirements
- b. A combination of non-competitive and competitive grants
- c. Competitive grants only
- d. No federal funding

8. If the federal government's role is the concern of the "common good" then: (choose one)

- a. Mandates only should be sanctioned.
- b. Mandates and funding should both be provided.
- c. Funding should be provided through grants only.
- d. A combination of funded mandates and grants should apply.
- e. No mandates should be required and limited grants for innovation available.

9. Equity in public education means equitable access to: (Rank order)

- _____ high quality teaching/learning
- _____ adequate and current learning materials
- _____ clean and well maintained physical facilities
- _____ food and health care
- _____ safe and secure neighborhoods
- _____ secure housing

National Study on Education
Consensus Questions, continued ...

10. Currently Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) funding is considered "categorical" rather than for general use. This means that it can only be used with special populations for special purposes. ESEA should remain targeted toward poverty and special needs.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. No consensus
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

11. The federal government has a role in supporting early childhood education, birth to 5, for all children?

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. No consensus
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

12a. Federal support for early childhood education programs (e.g.Head Start, Title I, Special Education, Early Start) should include funding for parent education and support regarding child development, child health and nutrition, and access to other supportive services, such as mental health as needed.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. No consensus
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

12b. This funding should be extended to :

- a. All children
- b. only those with special needs
- c. special needs first

National Study on Education

The History Of Federal Government In Public Education: Where Have We Been And How Did We Get Here?**Where Have We Been?**

From the very beginning of our Republic, a well-educated citizenry was thought to be essential to protect liberty and the general welfare of the people. Even before the Constitution was established, the Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 included responsibilities of the nation for an education system. Education has long been considered a national concern by the federal government. Through federal action, education has been encouraged and financially supported from the first Northwest Ordinance in 1785 to the present. Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution granted Congress the power to lay and collect taxes to provide for the general welfare of the United States. It is under this "general welfare" clause that the federal government has assumed the power to initiate educational activity in its own right and to participate jointly with states, agencies and individuals in educational activities.

During the first century of our new nation, Congress granted more than 77 million acres of the public domain as an endowment for the support of public schools through tracts ceded to the states. In 1841, Congress passed an act that granted 500,000 acres to eight states and later increased land grants to a total of 19 states. The federal government also granted money, such as distributions of surplus federal revenue and reimbursements for war expenses, to states. Though Congress rarely prescribed that such funds be used only for schools, education continued to be one of the largest expenses of state and local governments so the states used federal funds whenever possible for education.

Two of our constitutional amendments played an important role in public education. In 1791, the 10th Amendment stated, "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." Public education was not mentioned as one of those federal powers, and so historically has been delegated to the local and state governments.

In 1868, the 14th Amendment guaranteed rights to all citizens by stating, "all persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens in the United States and of the state wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the law."

Included below is a brief historical overview of federal involvement in public education.

National Study on Education

History of Federal Government In Public Education, Continued ...**History of the Role of the Federal Government in Public Education:
Timeline**

Event	Date	Explanation
Land Ordinance & Northwest Ordinance	1785/1787	Requirement of a system of public education to be established in each township formed under a specified formula. Regulated monies raised via taxes and selling or renting land.
Land Grants	1841/1848	Congress granted 77+ million acres of land in the public domain as endowments for support of schools. Federal government also granted surplus money to states for public education.
Early philosophy – first six presidents		Discussion of a national university and urging of federal involvement in public education. Seen as critical to preparation for citizenship in a republican form of government.
First Morrill Act otherwise known as the Land Grant Act	1862	Donated public lands to states to be used for the endowment to support and maintain at least one college with specific purpose of teaching branches of agriculture, mechanic arts and industrial education.
The original Department (Office) of Education established	1867	Began to collect data – information on schools and teaching that would help states establish effective school systems.
Second Morrill Act	1890	Gave the Office of Education responsibility for administering support for the original system of land-grant colleges.
Smith-Hughes Act	1917	Promoted vocational schools
Lanham Act	1941	Eased the burden on communities affected by presence of military and federal installations: payments to school districts.
Impact Aid laws	1950	
GI Bill	1944	Provided post secondary education assistance to GIs returning from World War II
George-Barden Act	1946	Provided funding for agricultural, industrial and home economics training for high school students
National Defense Education Act	1958	In response to Soviet Sputnik. NDEA included support for loans to college students in science, mathematics and foreign languages.
Elementary and	1965	Established comprehensive set of

Secondary Education Act		programs including Title I of federal aid to disadvantaged.
Title IX	1972	Prohibited discrimination in education based on gender.
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act	1973	Prohibited discrimination based on disability.
Department of Education cabinet level agency	1980	Recognized the important role of public education in our country.
Educational Testing Service (ETS) and NAEP	1983	Federal government transferred responsibility for administering the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to ETS: the nation's report card.
Nation at Risk	1983	Report indicating that the USA was falling behind in education achievement.
President G.H. Bush	1989-1992	"Indian Education Bill of Rights" K-12 Drug awareness model Advisory committee on Hispanic education America 2000 education reform program Work began on national standards
President W. Clinton	1993-1999	Academics 2000 offered grant to states / local school districts for innovation. Teach for America.
President G.W. Bush	2001-2008	Reauthorization of ESEA –No Child Left Behind.
President Barack Obama	2009 -	President Obama's Blueprint for Reform – Reauthorization of ESEA. Race to the Top: Grants awarded to states with innovative ideas that accepted the Common Core Standards.

Produced by the LWVUS The Education Study: The Role of the Federal Government in Public Education

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National Study on Education

Common Core Standards

Students who move from one part of the United States to another during their K-12 school careers are likely to encounter substantial variations in requirements for graduation. The Common Core Standards Initiative (CCSI, 2010) stated: "We need standards to ensure that all students, no matter where they live, are prepared for success in postsecondary education and the workforce. Common standards will help ensure that students are receiving a high quality education consistently, from school to school and state to state. Common standards will provide a greater opportunity to share experiences and best practices within and across states that will improve our ability to best serve the needs of students."

Currently, standards for student performance vary widely by state. The roots of current state-to-state inconsistencies lie in the fact that public education in the United States has traditionally been a local responsibility. However, textbook publishers have created something of a "de facto" national curriculum, based on market needs. Consequently, many textbooks from major publishers have reflected the curricular choices that were made by educational groups in the largest states. Some publishers do create textbooks and other curricula for smaller markets.

Rothman (2009) summarized the efforts of various groups to create common standards across the United States. Initial efforts to foster development of national standards and a related system of assessments in the core subject areas began in the early 1990's through awarding grants to a dozen national organizations.

The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) launched the Common Core State Standards initiative in March 2009 after the nation's governors agreed in concept to adopt a uniform set of standards. The final report was issued on June 2, 2010 (NGA, 2010), and, by early 2011, 40 states have adopted the Standards. The adopting states are currently aligning them to their own state standards.

The Fordham Institute (Carmichael, et al. 2010) reported that the Common Core standards received high marks when compared to state standards across the country. The Institute suggests that Common Core Standards represent an opportunity for creating consistency and raising standards in all states.

Assessments

The implementation of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has created a 50-state and 50-test environment in public education. As a result state-to-state expectations and performances vary greatly. States publish annual reports of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), which are required by federal law, but the meaning of "proficient" in those reports can vary widely from one state to another (Cronin, et al. 2007).

Larger testing companies market a variety of norm-referenced standardized tests. However, they are designed to rank students, rather than to determine how well students have mastered curricular objectives as criterion-referenced tests would do. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) publishes results that are technically adequate for state-to-state (and international) comparisons, but that assessment is not designed to produce individual student scores. NAEP requires a large sample of students to produce results.

Most school systems are too small to qualify for testing that would produce local NAEP results. The tradition of local governance has led to inconsistent requirements and standards for student performance across the country. Thus, in 2010, the United States does not have a consistent set of academic assessments for grades K-12.

National Study on Education
Common Core Standards, Continued ...

Two coalitions, together representing 44 states and the District of Columbia, won a U.S. Department of Education competition for \$330 million dollars federal aid to design "comprehensive assessment systems" aligned to the Common Core and designed to measure whether students are on track for college and career success. The awards, announced in September 2010, were divided between the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), comprised of 26 states receiving \$170 million, and the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium that comprises 31 states and received \$160 million. At least 12 states participated in both coalitions and are waiting to decide which assessment system will best meet their needs. An advantage of having assessments that are used in more than one state is that results from all participating states could be compared.

Why not national standards or assessments?

The most common arguments against adopting the Common Core Standards for K-12 center on two issues: 1) the cost and difficulty of changing the existing curriculum and assessments and (2) the sovereignty of states in issues related to education and local control. Governor Rick Perry of Texas stated that the Race to the Top funding would only generate a one-time amount of \$75 per student, yet cost Texas taxpayers an additional \$3 million. A third argument is that the individual state standards might be more rigorous. However, states that adopt the Common Core are permitted to add 15 percent more in content.

Another concern is the potential to use scores from the student assessments as a major component of teacher evaluations and merit pay plans, an idea that has popular appeal. (*TIME*, 2010). In August 2010, ten of the nation's premier educational researchers (Baker, Barton, Darling-Hammond, Haertel, Ladd, Linn, Ravitch, Rothstein, Shavelson & Shepard, 2010) co-authored a report that cautioned against relying on student test scores as a major indicator for evaluating teachers, citing the technical problems associated with using scores from standardized student assessments in value-added statistical models.

Does the United States need a national curriculum?

The U.S. Department of Education presents the view that, since the developers of the Common Core Standards and the proposed assessments have been groups with state representation rather than the federal government, neither program is a federal initiative. (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, March 13). In March 2011, the Albert Shanker Institute issued a call for common curriculum guidelines (Albert Shanker

Institute, 2011; Gewertz, C. 2011, March). This document voices the concern that common assessments are being developed from the common standards with no curriculum in between. In May 2011, another group published an article with a different view: "Closing the Door on Innovation: Why One National Curriculum is Bad for America" (2011), discussed by Gewertz, C. (2011, May). The article also cites the prohibition against a federal curriculum contained in the 1965 ESEA.

National Study on Education
Common Core Standards, Continued ...

Within the next decade, the education of disabled children was funded by a separate law: the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (EAHCA). Over a 35-year span, the law was reauthorized and became the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the latest of which was reauthorized in 2004 and called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). The upcoming reauthorization of ESEA will also influence how IDEIA is administered and practiced.

IDEIA has four sections that cover the Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) of 6.6 million disabled children who are age 0-21.

- Part A (General Provisions)
- Part B (Assistance for Education of All Children with Disabilities)
- Part C (Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities)
- Part D (National Activities to Improve Education of Children with Disabilities)

Mandates in Special Education Funding

Funding requires adherence to the federal mandates. The most important mandate is the zero-reject policy, under which no child is turned away from educational services. To qualify for special education service, a student must be classified with one (or more) of 13 disabilities now covered by IDEIA. The definition of "a child with a disability" is found in the United States Code, Title 29 1401(3) (A):

3) The term 'child with a disability' means a child— (i) with mental retardation, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance (referred to in this chapter as "emotional disturbance"), orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities; and (ii) Who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services.

The Role Of The Federal Government In Public Education: Legislation And Funding For The Education Of Children With Special Needs

In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed by Congress. ESEA was the center of President Johnson's War on Poverty and was influenced by the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The children who were covered by ESEA in 1965 included those who were disabled and covered by an amendment to the original ESEA (Title IV – Aid to handicapped children).

The federal government demands that states submit plans for the distribution of monies to local agencies for direct instructional programming that adhere to federal mandates. Under each state's laws, an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) is constructed for each child receiving services. The purpose of an IEP is to assure the student of a FAPE, as ensured by law. The child is to be placed in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) for education.

In order to qualify for federal funds, state and local agencies are bound to federal guidelines to specify identification procedures and the placement of disabled children. State grant applications for federal funds must include a plan for distribution of the funds to local education agencies (LEAs), as well as sufficient time for the general public to review and comment on the state plan. LEAs receive allotments from the state for their district special education needs. The shortfall in funding then needs to be addressed by the local education agencies.

National Study on Education
 Common Core Standards, Continued ...

Current Funding Challenges

Federal Underfunding: The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975) included legislation for funding local programs through state distribution of 40 percent of the cost. "Full funding" (40 percent) has never happened; the actual amount has varied. There were federal funds covering from 8 to 10 percent of the cost to states ten years ago, according to Katsiyannis, et al. (2001). The FY 2012 U.S. Department of Education Budget lists 17 percent as the current figure, with an estimated \$1,765 cost per pupil. The allotment has increased 1.7 percent in the FY 2012.

Increasing enrollment: Special education enrollment has grown, from 3.8 million in 1973 to 6.6 million in 2011. Federal special education support increases for FY 2012 are held at 1.7 percent over FY 2011.

Maintenance of effort: Because of severe financial straits, more states are applying for waivers to the spending requirement by the federal government for special education funding. The waiver, called a Maintenance of Effort (MOE) has not been easily obtained and involves holding a spending pattern based on the previous year. Waivers were given to Iowa, West Virginia, and Kansas last year; waivers are pending for New Jersey, South Carolina and Alabama (Shah, 2011).

Inclusion and training: Currently, ninety-five percent of disabled children are educated in inclusive classrooms, the rest being educated in separate classes, institutions or at home. An increase in inclusion practices is a strong possibility for fund-strapped districts (Shah, 2011). The balancing act – attention to finances, while providing for children's needs – continues to be precarious, and it is also critical to provide teachers with quality in-service training.

Special Education Legislation Milestones

<i>DECADE</i>	<i>CASE/LEGISLATION</i>	<i>RESULT</i>
1950	1954: <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i>	Paved the way for special needs children to receive better education, but at this time children were still denied an education based on their disability.
1960	Bureau of Education for Handicapped Created. 1965: Elementary and Secondary Education Act became law.	No funding for handicapped under federal or state law. Amendment to original ESEA Title IV – Aid to handicapped children.

National Study on Education
Common Core Standards, Continued ...

1970	<p>1972: <i>PARC v Pennsylvania</i> and <i>Mills v. Board of Education</i></p> <p>1973: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act became law.</p> <p>1974: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) became law.</p> <p>1975: Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) became law,</p>	<p>Ruled: Disabled have equal rights.</p> <p>Protected disabled individuals from discrimination due to disability.</p> <p>Parents gained access to all information maintained by a school district on their students.</p> <p>Free appropriate public education for all handicapped students.</p>
1980	1986: Addition of <i>Handicapped Children's Protection Act</i> to EAHCA.	Mandated that all school students and parents have rights under both Section 504 and EAHCA.
1990	<p>1990: EAHCA amended and called <i>Individuals with Education Disabilities Act</i> (IDEA).</p> <p>1996: I DEA reauthorized.</p>	IDEA reauthorized. Additions include students to be included in state and national assessments, inclusion (Least Restrictive Environment, LRE). Regular classroom teachers now required to take part in an Individual Education Plan (IEP) team.
2000	<p>2001: No Child Left Behind became the title of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.</p> <p>2004: Reauthorization of IDEA (P.L. 101-476) now called IDEIA.</p>	Accountability at state and local levels required. School districts are required to provide more instruction and interventions to help prevent enrollment in special education. Response to Intervention (RTI) gains momentum as a screening tool. Students are expected to take responsibility for their behavior and are subject to the same rules as the rest of the students.

THE ROLE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN PUBLIC EDUCATION: EQUITY AND FUNDING

Public school funding comes from many sources – federal, state and local taxes as well as grants provided by both governmental and nongovernmental agencies. The federal government adds less than 10 percent to local education budgets, yet it contributes significantly to the rules for how the funding is used. Additionally, the United States invests 5 percent of the GDP in public education. Nearly half of the k-12 education funding in the United States is intended to come from the states, drawn from a combination of income taxes, fees and other taxes. However, some states resemble Illinois, where the state's share is only 27 percent. The remainder usually comes from local property taxes.

Equity

States that rely heavily on property taxes to fund education tend to have large inequities in school funding, which mirror the inequity of wealth in society-at-large. Hurst (2007) noted that inequities in wealth stem from the fact that wealthy people earn much of their income from investments and/or inherited funds, while the poor earn all of their income from jobs and they spend it on food, shelter, transportation, etc. In the United States, the wealthiest 20 percent own 84 percent of the total wealth.

Inequities in school funding reflect housing patterns. During the past 50 years since *Brown vs. Board of Education*, schools have become re-segregated (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Currently, three-fourths of the Black and Latino/a students attend schools that are predominately non-white.

Adequacy

Since, 1990, rather than looking at equity, most lawsuits have focused on adequacy—whether a state is providing local districts with just enough funding and resources to give all students a basic education. Odden and Picus (2008) developed a model calculating the cost of an adequate education. They defined an adequate education as one that includes factors such as a full-day kindergarten, core class sizes of 15 for grades K-3, 25 for grades 4-6 and specialist teachers. The cost of an adequate education varies. For instance, more money is needed to educate students from impoverished communities and students with special needs.

Funding Priorities

When schools are not funded adequately, this has a long-lasting impact. For instance, Darling-Hammond (2010) noted that dropouts cost the country at least \$200 billion a year in lost wages and taxes, costs for social services and crime. Since the 1980s, national investments have spent three times more on the prison system than on education. Data show that the national average for educating a child is \$9500, while it costs \$43,000 per year to keep a person incarcerated. With 5 percent of the world's population in the United States, we house 25 percent of the world criminals (Kang & Hong, 2008).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

In 2001, President George W. Bush signed the reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act, "No Child Left Behind," which was intended to close achievement gaps, particularly for minority children. However, data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reveal that scores were higher in math and reading for minority students before NCLB.

National Study on Education
Equity and Funding, Continued ...

One provision of NCLB permitted parents to remove a student from a low-performing school and transfer to another, better performing school. They would receive a voucher which would pay some of the cost of attending another school – public or private. Additionally, courts and education agencies stepped in to “remediate.” The sanctions imposed by NCLB had the effect of punishing or threatening punishment to low-performing schools and teachers, sending them the message that they were incompetent and that they should not have the right to make decisions about how to educate students. Studies (Reeve, 2009) showed that threatening public schools and teachers with punishment had harmful effects on students who remained in the public schools. Supporters of NCLB appreciate the increase in accountability for schools and teachers as well as the focus on low scoring sub-groups. Critics of NCLB decry the lack of federal funding for many of the Act’s mandates, the emphasis on penalties, the reliance on standardized tests, and the lack of attention to gifted students as well as to subjects such as science, social studies and the arts. One goal of NCLB has been to offer choice to parents whose children attend poorly performing schools. However, large-scale studies of voucher school students have revealed little difference in their performance compared to public school students with similar backgrounds, and having vouchers has not raised the performance of the neediest students (Rouse & Barrows, 2009). Furthermore, many (Holland, 2011) argue that the NCLB goal of 95 percent of students meeting state standards in reading and math by 2014 is unrealistic.

Race to the Top (RttT)

Race to the Top was signed into law by President Barack Obama in 2009. This program shifted the basis of awarding funds to emphasize competition. Competitive grants reward reform planned in the winning states. Funding is flexible as long as states demonstrate grant dollars are aligned with the agenda outlined in their winning applications. Only twelve states received funding through RttT. Two of the requirements met by states that received RttT funding were (1) improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance and (2) lifting the cap on the number of charter schools that could be created.

While both these funding requirements can be effective, neither is foolproof, and each addresses only one part of the problems schools face. For instance, research studies show that promising increased pay based on teacher effectiveness is not an effective incentive. Furthermore, research showed there is a problem when teacher performance evaluation is based only on student scores in standardized tests (Springer et. al. 2010).

Although there is no question that some charter schools are effective, they have not been the panacea many expected. They were originally proposed as an opportunity for educators to test research-supported methods for reaching hard-to-educate children, and some have done quite well. However, a large-scale research study funded by pro-charter advocates revealed that only 17 percent of the 2403 charter schools had significantly more growth in test scores compared to traditional public schools, and, in fact, 37 percent showed significantly less growth (Center for Research on Education Outcomes, 2009). Furthermore, many charter schools do not admit and/or retain students who need increased support, e.g., students from impoverished communities and students with special needs.

The progress of the U.S. Department of Education’s Equity and Excellence commissions can be tracked through <http://www2.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/eec/index.html>

National Study on Education

***Role of the Federal Government in Public Education:
Where Are We Now and the Impact upon Early Childhood
Education?***

The United States has changed dramatically since the early debates on public schools. The responsibility for education for the common good shifted from mainly local control to state control. Now, in 2011, attention is coming from the federal government and national organizations to control standards.

Congress is currently in a debate and stalemate over the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965 ESEA, reauthorized as "No Child Left Behind" in 2001). Major issues include the purpose and role of the federal government in public education.

Pro: An increased role of the federal government in education ensures equal education opportunities for all children across the country, so that we will be better prepared to compete globally. The federal government has always had a part in distributing funding to state and local school districts for specific needs, so there will be more consistency across the districts and states.

Con: Education has traditionally been a local and state issue. An increased role of the federal government will add to the number of unfunded federal mandates (laws passed with no monetary support). Decisions at the local level best serve the needs of students in the local area.

Funding for Early Childhood Education

This Brief covers the reasons for the federal role in public education relating to early childhood, the importance of parent education, and the pros and cons related to federal intervention in early childhood education.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) creates standards and guidance for early childhood providers across the country. Their position statements promote and endorse an integrated, well-financed system of early care and education for the learning and development of all children, including children in poverty.

National Study on Education
Where Are We Now, Continued ...

Timeline of Major Federal Programs for Early Childhood up to 2010

	Year	Purpose
Head Start	1965	Funded by U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services to provide children from low-income families free access to early education. It also includes children who are at risk and with disabilities.
Even Start Title I, Part B.	1988	Integrated early childhood education to low-income parents for children birth through age 7, integrating adult education and early childhood learning with family literacy programs.
Early Head Start	1995	Funded programs for low-income families supporting 2 generations, usually mothers and infants and toddlers.
Title I of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)	Many revisions since 1965	Local education agencies apply to state agencies for approval of the program that is subsequently funded by the federal government.
No Child Left Behind (NCLB)	2001	Promotes the use of Title I, Part A, to fund pre-school programs, recognizing the importance of preparing children for entering school with language, cognitive and early reading skills.
Early Reading First	2002	Extends the goals of NCLB under Reading First to preschoolers.
Special Education preschool grants and state grants programs 3-5	2002	Part of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funding for preschool students ages 3 to 5.
Special Education Grants for Infants and Families	2007	Part C of IDEA (birth to 2 for children with disabilities)
Child Care Development Fund (CCDF)	Many revisions since 1990	The Child Care and Development Fund assists low-income families, families receiving temporary public assistance, and those transitioning from public assistance in obtaining child care so they can work or attend training/education.

Pros: From an economic standpoint, achieving equity builds lasting value. Heckman's (2010) research shows that inequality in the development of human capabilities produces negative social and economic outcomes at every level and can be prevented by the proper investment in people. Early childhood education, particularly for disadvantaged children and their families, levels the playing field to provide equal opportunities for success. Every dollar invested in early childhood education returns ten cents on the dollar annually for the life of a child, a 10 percent per year return on investments. Furthermore, solid economic returns are possible, providing investments come early and are comprehensive, cohesive, and sustained over time, because it shapes the future and builds equity. Heckman warns that investing later chains us to fixing the missed opportunities of the past that are very costly. Heckman's research clearly documents the impact of quality early childhood education upon later success in school, and beyond, in health and in economic advantages for society in general.

National Study on Education

Where Are We Now, Continued ...

Cons: Reasons against the federal involvement in early childhood basically come from providers of childcare centers as well as legislators. Some argue that universal preschool will be too expensive to support and that it will take away funding for K-12 grades. Educators who own and manage private preschools raise concerns that parents will choose "free" preschools instead of private ones.

CMAL

Submitted by Dorothy Karlson

Just what is CMAL? What is the Met Council?

The first CMAL meeting of this season was held at Minnetonka City Hall on Saturday morning, October 15th. The purpose of the meeting was to answer those two questions.

What is CMAL? LWV members see the letters C-M-A-L often in the Voter and probably have learned that those letters stand for "Council of Metropolitan Leagues," but there is a lot more to learn about that organization. The 25 delegates to CMAL represent 19 LWVs in the seven county metropolitan area. It is supported by membership dues, education grants, and individual contributions. It has an elected board of directors who plan four meetings each year that are open to everyone, not just LWV members. Delegates also monitor Met Council meetings, share CMAL positions with decision makers and inform local LWVs about area-wide issues.

CMAL works to address issues like land use, transportation and transit, housing, parks and open spaces, and water quality. LWVs working together on common issues enable more effective legislation on these and other issues.

What is the Met Council? The second question was answered by Jennifer Munt, the recently appointed representative to the Met Council from District 3, an area of Hennepin County just west of St Louis Park. She said that the Met Council deals with "flushes, buses, and a whole lot more." In talking about the history of the Met Council, Munt said that in 1967, there was water pollution, a deteriorating bus system, rapid growth and disparities between communities. Charlie Weaver introduced his brain child, a Metropolitan Council whose mission it was to plan for orderly and economical development of the seven county metropolitan area and to coordinate services that any one city or county could not effectively provide.

The 17 members on the Met Council are appointed by the governor and approved by the State Senate. Sixteen members represent geographic districts and the seventeenth is the chair at large. They took in \$756 million last year and spent \$761 million. Their responsibility is to oversee:

1. The regional waste water system – Under the Met Council, the region's waste water has improved with mercury reduced and aquatic life restored. 260 million gallons of water flow through the system each day.
2. The transit system – 91 million rides are provided each year. A regional transit system is being developed with Light Rail Transit an important part of that.
3. The Metro HRA – Their responsibility is to offer section 8 vouchers. There are now 7000 on a waiting list for this housing indicating an 8 year wait.

Long range planning is also part of their responsibilities including planning for regional transportation and parks. They do regional data and analysis making forecasts of population and employment.

They recently did a study of the Arden Hills proposal for a Viking stadium. Their job was to find out if the public would be hurt by this project.

There is more to learn at the upcoming CMAL meetings on January 21st, March 17th, and May 19th. Dorothy Karlson is the representative to CMAL from LWV SLP and everyone is welcome to share rides and attend these meetings.

LWV Minnesota

2011 Online Voter Guide

Check out the **Vote 411** guide from LWVMN. <http://www.vote411.org/>

For areas that have primaries, visit <http://onyourballot.vote411.org/?sfr=1311946039065> to access information on who will be on your ballot.

Ensuring that every eligible citizen is able to exercise their right to vote is a priority for LWV Minnesota. Our agenda for voting rights in the 21st century includes:

- Opposing photo ID requirements for voters
- Establishing early voting in Minnesota
- Modernizing our voter registration system.



Educate. Advocate. Reform.

LWV United States

National Webinar on October 20: Become a Ruth S. Shur Fellow

The LWVUS is now accepting nominations for new Ruth S. Shur Fellows to join the team and commit to a two-year term of coaching. Learn about the benefits of being a fellow and submit a nomination here. Nominations must be submitted online by November 7, 2011. Self-nominations are welcome! Register for the informational webinar on October 20, 2pm ET, here.

Watch Recent LWVUS Webinar Recordings Online

Did you miss the recent LWVUS webinar series on elections or would you like to share the webinar with a League member you know? You can now access full-length recordings of the Shaping Tomorrow: Registering Voters and Do's and Don'ts of Debate Moderating webinars online. Look for a full library of webinar recordings on the new LWVUS website, launching soon!

League Asks Senators to Promise to Protect Public Health

League President Elisabeth MacNamara sent a letter urging Senators to protect America's children and families from dangerous air pollution.

<http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=17996>



Citizens' Redistricting Commission
A Letter from our LWV Minnesota Director, Laura Wang

Dear Local LWV Presidents,

I know that many of you are aware of a project that LWV Minnesota has been sponsoring through our work with the Minnesota Democracy Network and Draw the Line Minnesota, which is a coalition of four organizations that have been working to create more participation and transparency in Minnesota's redistricting process. Among the projects we have sponsored with our partners is a Citizens' Redistricting Commission, which was made up of 15 volunteers representing diverse communities and political perspectives. This commission will be submitting testimony and maps to the 5-judge panel that has been charged with creating Minnesota's new maps. I want to provide you with some more information and background about the Commission, LWV Minnesota's role, and the testimony. I expect that some of you will get questions about this in the days to come. The Commission had excellent stories in the Pioneer Press and MinnPost today but there are critical details that were not covered. Here's some background that will be helpful to know when I you get questions -

The Commission established four principles, on top of the legally mandated requirements, that they believe go into a good map. Those principles are 1) protecting and preserving communities, including communities of interest; 2) enhancing opportunities for minority representation; 3) not intentionally protecting or preserving incumbents; and 4) compact districts.

The testimony that they are providing to the Court today leads with these principles. It also includes a summary of the citizen input that they received at the 18 hearings that they held, and a request to the Court that they continue to create opportunities for citizens to be involved and have input.

The Commission is submitting maps of both the congressional and legislative districts, but they are making it clear to the Court that they feel these maps still need more citizen input. The maps represent the work that they accomplished in the time they had, but they felt that the maps – especially the legislative maps – need more vetting by the public. They are requesting that the Court see these as a starting point. Clearly, this is a nuance to the testimony that is not going to be easily conveyed in the press.

We expect that the principle that sounds the least controversial – not protecting and defeating incumbents – is the one that will cause the most controversy as people review the maps. The Commission worked with a GIS specialist who was instructed to not use any address information of incumbents in drawing the districts. After the Commission decided to move forward with the map, the GIS specialist ran numbers on the partisan index for both maps and looked for incumbent pairings.

The map is very balanced from a partisan perspective. It also appears that a very high number of incumbents are paired to run against each other. This, of course, has been the focus of many of the stories in the press. If you are asked about this, either by your local media or your legislators, it is important to emphasize:

- 1) This map is the result of hard work by 15 volunteer citizens that reflects the criteria that they developed after talking with over 300 Minnesotans. The sponsoring organizations, including LWV Minnesota, did not dictate the drawing of the map or the criteria. It was driven by the volunteer commission members. This group worked extraordinarily hard to make sure that their final product reflected what they heard from the people with whom they spoke – their biggest frustration was not having time to continue to get more input.
- 2) At many of their meetings, commission members heard that incumbent neutrality was a criterion that Minnesotans wanted to see in the process. As a result, they drew the maps without regard to any incumbent data. The pairings were not influenced by whether or not the Commission members or the sponsoring organizations liked or disliked a particular legislator. They were true to the principle of neutrality.
- 3) The Commission makes it very clear to the Court that they want to see them continue to improve these maps - they would be improved by more vetting, particularly by the public. These maps are not being presented as a final product, but a starting point for the Court to work off of that reflects the Commission's work over the last three months.

Obviously these conversations will be difficult when talking to lawmakers with whom we have good relationships and connections who do not like how their district changes on the Commission's proposed draft maps. If you have any questions or would like more information about the map and testimony being submitted by the Commission today, please let me know. Also, do not hesitate to refer anyone to me who would like to discuss the Citizen's Redistricting Commission and LWV Minnesota's role in more details.

Thank you!

Laura Fredrick Wang

Executive Director
LWV Minnesota/LWV Minnesota Education Fund
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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.

Minnesotans for Marriage Pledges to Violate Disclosure Law

By: Mike Dean

October 4, 2011

Months after the Campaign Finance and Disclosure Board adopted a guidance that requires full disclosure of campaign contributions in support of ballot questions, a decision that closed several loopholes that would have allowed millions of dollars of undisclosed contributions will flow to both sides of the marriage debate. Today the National Organization for Marriage (NOM) and Minnesotans for Marriage (MFM) announced their intention to violate this very provision of Minnesota's disclosure law.

Minnesota has become ground zero for a national fight over whether the public should know who is behind political spending. Last year, the legislature and governor required that all political spending by independent expenditure groups and groups supporting constitutional amendments be disclosed.

The NOM and MFM are attempting to circumvent Minnesota's ground breaking disclosure law of 2010 by allowing contributions to be funneled through shell corporations to avoid disclosure of the source of the funds. The Supreme Court has repeatedly found that disclosure is valuable for informing the public during an election. As the Court has explained, "transparency enables the electorate to make informed decisions and give proper weight to different speakers and messages." *Citizens United v. FEC*, 130 S. Ct. 876, 916 (2010). This observation comports with our own experience. Every day we evaluate the content of speech based on its source. To say the author is irrelevant, as opponents of the staff recommendations have suggested, is plainly wrong.

The Supreme Court has made it clear that the public has a right to know who is behind political spending during an election. This attack on Minnesota's disclosure law is an attack on Minnesota's desire for fair and open elections.

This decision by NOM and MFM will likely trigger another lawsuit challenging Minnesota's right to know who is behind political spending. The Minnesota Taxpayers League and Minnesotan's Concerned for Life have already challenged Minnesota's disclosure law because they find it too difficult to file campaign finance reports. These challenges represent the next battle over campaign finance laws after the U.S. Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision.

Draw the Line Minnesota

www.drawthelineminnesota.org

Voters should pick their politicians, not the other way around.

Testimony to Minnesota's Judicial Panel 8 pm October 5, 2011

Posted on 10/06/2011

Candi Walz, Chair, Draw the Line Minnesota

Your honors, thank you for having me here tonight.

I am Candi Walz, representing Draw the Line Minnesota as Chair of the Citizen's Redistricting Commission.

Draw the Line Minnesota's nonpartisan commission includes 15 volunteer members.

We represent a diversity of geographic, political, racial and cultural perspectives, yet we're all bound by the shared belief that redistricting is one of the most important, yet least public, aspects of our voting and governing system.

Over the past two months, we've held 18 public input sessions across Minnesota and we've heard from more than 300 citizens from all walks of life.

Based on the process that our Citizen Commission undertook, I want to offer two important lessons that have come to guide our thinking about redistricting, and that I hope will aid in your decision-making.

First, engaging citizens in the redistricting process is essential for generating public understanding and support for the final map.

Let me be clear: I am not here claiming to represent all Minnesotans through the work of the Citizen's Commission. But I am here on behalf of the ideal that all Minnesotans who are interested in the process of redistricting should be given an opportunity to have their voices heard in this important process.

Your public hearings are a great step toward creating avenues for citizen participation and we applaud you for them.

Draw The Line, continued ...

But you can go further.

We recommend that all Minnesotans have the simple chance to examine and comment on their representation and the proposed map before a final decision is made; we believe it's that simple.

The second lesson is the message from Minnesotans on the criteria for drawing maps. The overwhelming opinion we heard from people around the state was simple: protect Communities of Interest first and foremost in the ultimate map-creation process.

We see a "Community of Interest" as a grouping of people in a geographic area that share common interests...

A city, a school district, a sovereign entity, or even a cultural community like the Somalis in Cedar Riverside or a transportation corridor like the pockets of farm communities along the Minnesota river. Redistricting should aim to preserve, rather than divide, **representation for these people who share common interests.**

Draw The Line, continued ...

Our belief is simple: Minnesotans want their voices heard in combination with neighbors who share their geographic, economic, and social interests.

In Willmar, we heard from people living in the smaller rural communities that they feel their interests are often overshadowed by the larger regional centers.

In Duluth, we heard from tribal leaders concerned that Northern Minnesota's Indian Country has been divided between two Congressional Districts – a division they feel diminishes their ability to be heard in Congress or in Minnesota.

I understand that anecdotes can't define a legal principle, but definition is possible. At least 17 states have formally adopted preservation of Communities of Interest as part of their redistricting law, and others (including Minnesota) have used the principle in court proceedings.

And it's what the public trusts and supports. Preserving Communities of Interest was the first and foremost goal for the hundreds of people that attended our hearings – far more important than any partisan goals that seem to dominate our political discussion.

It's an idea that underpins three other principles that emerged from our public hearings – in order: Ensure fair and non-diluting minority representation – that is, give everyone, including minority communities, a chance to be well represented; Don't intentionally protect or defeat incumbents; and Create compact districts

These principles will guide our continued work as we create a map and written testimony that reflect the sentiments gathered throughout our process.

But we believe it's these two ideas – engaging citizens in the redistricting process and striving to create a map that protects communities of interest – will yield the best process and the best map for Minnesotans.

Before I leave you tonight, I'd like to share just one final thought.

Bad laws passed one year can be changed the next. An elected official that doesn't perform as expected can be voted out in two years. But the decisions that you will make as a judicial panel will have an impact on all of the representatives elected and the laws that they pass for Minnesota for the decade to come.

That's important work and it warrants involving the public in each step of your process. You will never regret asking for more public input into the fundamental decisions of a representative democracy.

Thank you for your time.

Observer Reports

Observer Coordinator: Judith Cook 952-928-9846

City Council Meeting - October 3, 2011 – Aggie Leitheiser, Observer

All members except Councilmember Omodt were present.

1. Public Hearing for Off-Sale Liquor License for Cedar Lake Wine & spirits. Motion approved. Brief discussion about the need to review number of licenses as part of an overview of number of licenses in place and how many are desirable.
2. MnDOT proposes to close the existing Highway 169 access ramps at 22nd Street, 22nd Lane, and 23rd Street and construct a visual barrier. Construction will be done in 2012. Barrier will be 12 feet high – shorter than a noise wall. Two public meetings were held. Large majority of residents are in favor because of safety concerns.
3. Revised Deer Management Policy which includes keeping the deer feeding ban.
4. Reminders about the annual Halloween party on October 21 and the 125th anniversary party for St. Louis Park on October 16. Volunteers are welcome for both events.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45.

City Council Meeting - October 17, 2011 – Deb Brinkman, Observer

All members except Councilmember Finkelstein were present.

The minutes from Study Session September 19 and Study Session September 26 were approved as written.

Presentations: Acceptance of monetary Donation from St. Louis Park Historical Society to the Depot at Jorvig Park. Mayor Jeff Jacobs referred to a letter from Senator Franken and note that Charlie Brown was a resident of St. Louis Park.

Public Hearings:

Thanh Do Intoxicating On-Sale Liquor License was approved

Assessment of Delinquent Utilities, Tree Removal/Injection, Mowing, False Alarms and other Charges was approved

Consolidated Public Hearings

2012 Budget and Property Owner Service Charges for Special Service District No.1, No.2, No.3, No.4, No. 5, No.6. Resolutions approved. One person representing his mother brought a letter indicating her intent to pay. There was a brief discussion to review the penalty and the need to reach out to help those who are delinquent conserve.

ParkAlert Citizen Notification System Policy was adopted and approved as another means to contact St. Louis Park citizens. Residents can subscribe to receive phone calls or texts for non-emergency meetings and/or emergencies or community threats.

Meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm.

Observer Reports, continued ...**St. Louis Park School Board Meeting – October 24, 2011 – Dorothy Karlson, Observer**

Kathleen Milbrath, Supervisor of School Nutrition, gave a report on the changes being made in the food service in the schools of the district. She reported that Chef Dotty Zahner is working with staff to develop new menu items which are taste tested by the students. Bread is now whole grain, fresh fruit is available at lunch and only brown rice is served. Every effort is being made to ensure that students have a healthy diet. It costs \$1.24 for the raw food in each meal.

Superintendent Debra Bowers displayed a huge plaque announcing that St. Louis Park has been named in the best 100 communities for young people. This honor has been granted five times.

Mike Nordean, head of the Alternative Teacher and Professional Pay System/ Quality Compensation (ATPPS/Q-Comp) plan in the district, reported on changes being made in teacher evaluation. This is a method of evaluating a teacher's performance and determines the amount of Q-Comp money that goes to each one. The teachers have three observation experiences each year.

Chuck Corliss, from the Center for Efficient School Operations, gave a report on the results of the changes that have been made in the air coming and going out of all areas of the schools. The changes have cost \$355,000 which came from funding already in place in the district. Savings in the future will come from the efforts to have a minimum of cold air coming in from the outside which has to be heated.

Bob Laney, Assistant Superintendent, told about the present class sizes which in the elementary schools range from 24.1 to 25.2. Open enrollment was closed because of lack of space. 330 children are enrolled in kindergarten and 302 are in the 12th grade. Total enrollment in 2007 was 4201 and in 2012, 4364.

The sale of General Obligation Refunding Bonds was approved. These bonds enable the district to reduce levies.

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 the number listed above. Remember to wear your pin at the meetings – our presence at the meetings is noted and appreciated.



LWV SLP OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS FOR 2011-2012

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Make checks payable to LWVSLP

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>