

Missouri VOTER

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League of Women Voters

November/December 2005

President's Letter

One of the things I want to do this year is visit all the local leagues and so far I've been able to visit two of them. October 22, Kathleen Boswell and I went to Springfield (LWV of Southwest MO) for their New Member Orientation meeting. Then on November 6, I attended Columbia-Boone County League's new and prospective member "get acquainted" meeting. What fun, and what a learning experience - not just for the new members but also for me. Let me know what's going on in your league, I'd like to come.

LWVMO signed on as a member of the Steering Committee for the Missouri National Student/Parent Mock Elections. The Committee had its first meeting November 10 for general planning. The committee will be meeting again in March to set the plans in motion. At that time I will be calling on League members for help on this project - even though we are only eight local leagues, hopefully we will be able to spread out to neighboring schools. Watch for more info on this program in the Spring.

We are currently in the planning stages for 2006 Council to be held in Columbia - let us hear from you on what you would like to have on the program.

On a more personal note, last week I attended funeral services for Esther Ellison. Most of you did not know Esther, but perhaps you remember an article in the *MoVoter* a few years ago about the 3 year old little girl going to the polls with her mother and how she kept looking for the "decorated poles." This was Esther's remembrance of her mother's determination to vote in the first election after the ratification of the 19th amendment. She was a founding member of the Sedalia-Pettis County League and an active and dedicated member for the rest of her life. At the funeral service, the pastor made many references to Esther's devotion to the

Continued on. Page 6

2006 Legislative Priorities

- ▶ Ensure the safety and well being of Missouri's children.
- ▶ Funding for Missouri's public education that is both adequate and equitable statewide. (focus on the Missouri Foundation Formula)
- ▶ An electoral process that is fair, accurate, efficient, accessible, accountable and uniform.
- ▶ Adopt a Missouri renewable energy standard for the production of electricity.
- ▶ Access to quality health care (including mental health) at an affordable cost for all Missouri residents.
- ▶ Fairness in Missouri's taxes.

These are the areas the Advocacy team will be concentrating on during the coming legislative session and are not listed in order of importance.

There are other areas that the League is interested in but do not have the "people power" to follow the legislation. If you have a special interest and would like to help follow the bills through the legislature, please contact one of the advocacy team members listed below. For example, we already know there are a lot of various kinds of tax bills - more than one person can handle and help would be appreciated. Also, are you signed up on the Action Committee, so when an Action Alert is issued you can be contacted and ready to go?

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LEGISLATIVE REPORT

LWVMO 2006 priorities were agreed upon at the Advocacy Committee meeting Dec.3rd in Columbia at the Public Library and adopted by the LWVMO Board. These will be our primary focus during the 2006 Legislative session.

As we did in 2005, a letter, to each Missouri State Senator and Representative (sent to their home) as well as one to our Governor, will state these priorities, our mission and will wish them well in the 2006 Session.

Beginning January 13th the Legislative Bulletin will be sent by e-mail to **all LWVMO** members who send their e-mail address to Micki at lwwmo.yahoo.com and request it.

Any member who prefers the Bulletin sent to them via US Mail will need to subscribe and pay \$10.00 to cover the mailing and handling. Send your subscription to League of Women Voters, 8706 Manchester Road Suite 104 St Louis, Mo.63144.

The Legislative Bulletin will be printed bi-weekly beginning January 13th through May 12th. Also there will be a summary at the close of the session and again in July when the bills are signed into law or vetoed. Each director's e-mail and telephone number will be given with LWVMO's position and why we are supporting, opposing or monitoring all bills discussed, as well as a short summary of each bill.

Action Alerts will be e-mailed, so be sure the office has your current address. The Alerts will include a rationale for the alert, and instructions as to action needed by members from the Director whose portfolio includes the bill that is to be acted upon. Please send a reply to the director on any action taken.

The Advocacy Committee wants to communicate clearly with all members and hope you feel free to ask us questions and give us advice.

If you would like to follow all the action in the Legislature, log on to www.moga.mo.gov .

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CONSIDER THOSE PETITIONS BEFORE YOU SIGN ONE

by Jane Baumgarten - LWV member since 1994 and former Action Chair for LWV Oregon

The League of Women Voters of Oregon is encouraging its members to be alert during the circulation of initiative petitions. You will be asked to sign a variety of initiative petitions "to just get it on the ballot and let the people decide." Your signature is valuable. Use it so sign only an initiative petition you believe belongs on the ballot. Here are six questions to help you make up your mind about an initiative petition:

- Is it complex? Some issues can be decided by a simple yes or no vote. Complex issues may need to be thoroughly examined in the legislative arena.
- Is it confusing? Some initiatives are not written well or contain conflicts that may require court resolution or interpretation.
- Does it belong in the Constitution? If the initiative amends the Constitution, consider whether it really belongs there. Amending the Constitution is cumbersome and costly and requires the vote of the people.
- How will it be funded? Consider the effect on the overall flexibility of the budget. The initiative may create its own revenue source or earmark, restrict or obligate a specific percentage of the General Fund revenues.
- Who is behind it? You can find out who are the real sponsors and opponents of the measure. Contribution and expenditure reports are available through the Ethics Commission at www.mec.mo.gov.
- Who is collecting the signatures? Before you sign, ask to see identification of the signature gatherer. Numerous instances of fraud have occurred that could have been avoided by insisting on seeing identification. And, if a case involving fraud is found, you will have information that could assist authorities.
- Take time; think before you sign! And spread the word.

**Rachel Farr Fitch Health Care Award
2006 Nomination Form**

Name of League making the nomination: _____

Time frame of the project _____

Number of people involved _____

(If more space is needed, attach separate sheet)

Description of the project _____

Outcome of the project _____

Resources and other groups used to carry out the project _____

Attach newspaper clippings or other samples of publicity received for the project as supporting material.

Nominations must be received in the LWVMO office by March 1, 2006.

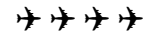
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League, and read the “poles” story. I had been in the League a only short time, and not sure “League and Mary” were a fit when I saw Esther in the parking lot at the grocery store. Esther said “I’ve been wanting to talk to you - how about having lunch?” So we set a date and met for lunch. Then I learned she was on the nominating committee and looking for officers. When I said “I don’t think I could do that,” she replied “of course you can, honey, I’ll help you.” So I became LL treasurer and, Esther became my League mentor urging me on through all the local offices and later to LWVMO board and offices. She kept up on my schedule, and always called to learn “what went on at the meeting.” I’ll miss her calls, but will continue to strive to live up to her expectations in my League activities.

Mary Merritt

Raise Funds and Have Fun Traveling

The LWVMO has made arrangements with Travel Concepts International to encourage groups to book travel through their company. For each League member and their guests that book travel plans with Travel Concepts, the company will pay \$50, which will be split between LWVMO and the local league. You can call them at 1-800-762-4216, or navigate their website at www.tcitravel.com. Plans can be made on the website by destination or travel dates.



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Columbia hosts Civil Liberties forum

The LWV Columbia-Boone County was one of 10 Leagues in the nation to host Local Voices: Citizen Conversations on Civil Liberties and Secure Communities. The five-hour event was held in June and funded by the LWV Ed Fund, from a grant by the John D. and Catherine T. Mac Arthur Foundation.

Co-sponsors were the Asian Center, Centro Latino, the Islamic Center, the Voluntary Action Center, Daniel Boone Regional Library, Stephens College, the NAACP, the Human Rights Commission, the Freedom of Information Center at MU and CAT3 (public access TV).

There were 96 people present, representing a wide diversity of groups and ages. Despite the differences of their backgrounds and experiences, they found they had many more similarities and more points of agreement.

As the US Congress renews its discussion of the Homeland Security Act, the LWVUS has issued a report on conclusions stemming from these conversations. The report, entitled Local Voices, stressed two major findings:

1. Americans feel that more openness in government is key to striking the proper balance between security and individual liberty.
2. Americans deeply value our system of checks and balances and are concerned about a slippery slope toward policies favoring greater security at the expense of our basic freedoms and rights.

Additionally, the report concludes that government needs to share information with and listen to the public: the public needs to make efforts to keep informed and to make their voices heard; and the media and other organizations need to facilitate and monitor activities to achieve these ends. Copies of the report are available online at www.lwv.org.

In keeping with these recommendations and in response to specific comments made in our local

conversations, the Defense of Liberties Task Force of Columbia-Boone Co. LWV will focus its educational efforts on openness and accountability in government over the coming year.

LWVMO Calendar

- Jan. 14 LWVMO Board Meeting, Columbia
- Jan. 21 Board Meeting back-up date
- Jan. 27 MoVoter articles to editor
- Jan./Feb. Do National Program Planning
- Feb.28 Candidate filing at Sec'y of State office
- Mar. 1 National Program proposals due
- Mar. 4 LWVMO Board Meeting, St. Louis
- TBD Legislative Day, Jefferson City
- Apr. 28 LWVMO Board Meeting, Columbia
- Apr. 29 **State Council**, Columbia
- June 9-12 **LWVUS Convention**, Minneapolis

Consider this your first Call to Convention. Let's begin planning now to share rides and rooms and have a great showing from our local Missouri Leagues. Watch for information from other Leagues on their interests for national program planning, which will be voted on at convention.

Spotlight on Local Leagues

The newly-combined **KCJCP League** has been busy joining forces with other groups to host a Raytown City Charter Forum on Oct. 19 and a cost of health care forum with KCPT-PBS on Nov. 22. Funding came from MacNeil/Lehrer Productions and the LWV Ed Fund.

LWVSEMO, under the direction of Nelda Steffen, registered voters at the naturalization ceremony in Cape Girardeau on Nov.7. It was the first time in several years that they had participated in doing that.

Happy Holidays

Fall Workshop Highlights

The annual fall workshop hosted by LWVMO in Sedalia on Nov. 12 was filled with a variety of session topics and plenty of time for those attending to network with others of a like mind. Much information was handed out that was to be shared with other local members, so if you haven't heard from someone who attended representing your League, ask them about what they learned.

We heard from state board members on legislation, the status of the two state studies on the libraries and charter schools, and from a panel of Columbia members on how to do a local League study, from planning to completion. Having a good local study can mean attracting new members, finding sources for new funding, and having some fun while doing League work. There were three breakout sessions, ranging from Charter Schools, TABOR and web site design and management. All were well attended and considered valuable.

One of the two guest speakers for the day was Dr. Rick Sluder, the Dean of Education for Central Missouri State University, and the one who oversees the university's 10 Charter Schools in the Kansas City area. Those schools have 3,000 students, and they range from inner city high schools for students at risk to an elementary school where all lessons are in French. He assured the group that while the schools are free of some government regulations, they do have to meet state requirements like MAP scores and financial audits. He said there are 41 states with charter school legislation, and about 3,625 charter schools in the nation. Still, only 4% of children attend charter schools.

After lunch, Joyce Wood, a Government Review Commission member, joined us to speak on what the commission had found and reported

to the governor. Their recommendations to improve the efficiency of the government were suggestions, but still she was hopeful that many of them would be followed. The commission saw a need for more communication between agencies and departments. Education was a major concern, and she said that adding dollars to programs do not translate into better education. They also want a commission set up to investigate the merit system and options for rewarding good employees. Many of the changes will never happen because they would require a constitutional change, while others could be done quickly by an executive order. The complete report is available at the Missouri State website.

Members who spent the day with us left the workshops re-energized and ready to do League work in their communities. We look forward to seeing even more of you at our next get-together.

Rachel Farr Fitch Health Care Award nominations due March 1

The Rachel Farr Fitch Health Care Award is given to an individual or group that has done outstanding work in the field of health care. The nominee does not have to be a member of the League of Women Voters. The service or activity does not have to be a League project but it must be compatible with LWV ideals and not in conflict in any way with our program positions.

Each local League may submit one nominee. Written nominations should follow the format set up and available from the LWVMO office. The winner will be selected by a committee appointed by the LWVMO president.

Criteria:

1. The number of people served or impacted.
- 2 The project was health care service that impacted the community or world.
3. The number of people involved in carrying out the activity.
4. The project should have taken place in the last two (2) years.
5. Special consideration will be given to other groups that were networked during the project.

The award, given each two (2) years, will be announced and presented at LWVMO State Council.

MISSOURI VOTER

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