

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MISSOURI

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OFF AND RUNNING . . .

Welcome to the first issue of the League of Women Voters Legislative Bulletin for the 2008 Legislative Session. You are receiving this complimentary copy because you are a previous subscriber. If you wish to continue getting the Bulletin, see the form at the end.

By the time you read this, the session will be well underway, with the Governor's State of the State Address delivered. Because this is an even numbered year (election year) with an incumbent governor and legislature, committees are already assigned and ready to function. Usually legislators are reluctant to begin actively working on bills until they have heard the Governor's priorities. Bill filing began in December, so many bills are already filed, first read, and awaiting committee assignment.

This issue will introduce you to the session itself (see calendar below), the legislative priorities of LWVMO, and the Advocacy Committee members who will be reporting to you on the progress of bills and other activities. These volunteers (some board members, some not) study bills and report to you the action Leaguers need to take. We hope this is not a "one-way conversation," that you will inform yourself and help us urge passage of legislation that will best serve all Missourians. League's priorities were chosen based on member interest and timeliness. League's state and national positions guide us in selecting bills/issues to support or oppose throughout each legislative session.

Jan.	9	94 th General Assembly, 2 nd Regular Session Convenes
	15	Joint Session – State of the State Address
	21	Martin Luther King Day – No Session
Feb.	5	Joint Session – State of the Judiciary Address
	6	Joint Session – State of Transportation Address
	28	Last day to introduce bills (Senate)
Mar.	13	Spring Break Begins – Upon Adjournment
	24	Easter Break – No Session
	25	Session Reconvenes
Apr.	1	Last day to introduce bills (House)
May	9	Appropriation Bills must be Truly Agreed and Finally Passed – 6 p.m.
	16	Session ends – 6 p.m.
	30	Adjournment per Constitution (Veto Session to be September 10)

LWVMO LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES 2008

League priorities are:

- Electoral process that is fair, accurate, efficient, accessible, accountable and uniform
- Tax policy that promotes financial stability
- Energy initiatives to reduce global warming

League supports and continues to monitor:

- Access to quality, affordable healthcare, including mental health
- Equal access to quality public education for all Missouri children
- Children's safety and well-being
- Non-partisan court plan

ELECTIONS, ETHICS, CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM – NANCY COPENHAVER

As LWVMO Vice President and Legislative Director, I will be editing the Legislative Bulletin as well as following the priorities of League regarding the electoral process. I am retired from teaching high school business (28 years), served one term in the Missouri House of Representatives (2001-02), and am currently working part-time as a deputy county clerk, recording minutes for the Randolph County Commission. Feel free to contact me for questions or requests in this area.

Issues that we will be watching this year include: (1) attempts to add additional obstacles to voting (National is working against such obstacles as well) (2) changes in campaign finance limits, since they were recently restored by court action (3) advance voting (good—encourages more voting) (4) reducing ballot size by not voting in non-contested races (reduces costs for some jurisdictions but, not good--reduces voter choice). Also expected is an attempt to dilute the acclaimed Missouri Plan, a non-partisan court plan for selection of judges and League is working with a coalition of groups fighting such action.

ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT – WIN COLWILL AND DONNA BERGEN

Win Colwill, from the Columbia League, has been active in the area of energy for many years. She has frequently testified before legislative committees and is highly regarded around the state. Win is joined this year by Donna Bergen, a Board member from Springfield, in keeping us apprised of these issues. Donna is retired from a career in management in the corrections field and a former small business owner.

Since reduction of global warming is a legislative priority, we're glad to see bills that address energy efficiency and renewable energy emerging already. One (HB1485 – Sater) would give tax deductions for installation of solar or fuel cell systems. Another (HB1326 – Sater) would give tax credits for purchase of hybrid vehicles. Other measures being printed in both House and Senate include: green standards for state buildings, low-interest loans for energy conservation projects, a mandate for a State Energy Report, and renewable energy research grants. Further study will be needed before a decision is made about League support. Let us know what measures you think LWVMO should push.

TAX POLICY – ELAINE BLODGETT

Elaine Blodgett, a former president of LWVMO when she was in the St. Louis area, relocated to Columbia several years ago where she is currently president of the Columbia League. As a former teacher and history buff, she has been following tax policy for several years, and representing League on Missourians for Tax Justice, a coalition partner.

HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH, AND CHILDREN'S ISSUES – LAEL VON HOLT

Having worked in the field of mental health for a number of years, Lael Von Holt is an excellent choice to monitor issues in this area. She is known for her thorough study of the issues and her knowledge of League positions in the area. Her preview of the session follows:

The 2008 Regular Session of Missouri's 94th General Assembly will not be likely to see major legislation in health and mental health, at least not to the extent of recent sessions. Reform in the public health system is now law, and now underway. MO HealthNet and Insure Missouri will be major reference points, as will the Mental Health Transformation effort.

Legislation to be monitored this session includes: oversight of new law, regulation of private health facilities, children's mental health, streamlining in the Department of Mental Health, and expanding services for counseling and autism disorders. Benefit restorations and funding proposals for MO HealthNet and Insure Missouri have been highlighted in the Governor's budget but have yet to make their way through the Legislature. Intense debate can be expected. League will support legislation that is more inclusive of the needy and that strengthens the safety net, pending progress in universal health care.

Of interest in mental health is SB768 (Rupp), which establishes the Missouri Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders and the \$5 million dollar budget proposal for the Thompson Center for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders in Columbia.

The State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), which League supports, has been extended to March 2009. Months of debate in Congress failed to reach sufficient compromise to expand the program, but settled instead on extending the program and leaving further debate to the next Congress. Missouri will continue to participate under the extension, and proposals such as MO HealthNet for Kids will be implemented.

LWVMO will continue to monitor health and mental health legislation and report from time to time as the session progresses. If there are specific bills under this portfolio that you would like included in the Legislative Bulletin, please let me know.

EDUCATION – LOIS DETRICK

Lois Detrick relocated to Springfield to be near family members after a distinguished career in higher education in the University of California system. She will be monitoring activity in education and is particularly interested in the education our youth in civics.

LEGISLATIVE DAY IN JEFFERSON CITY – COMING IN MARCH

Save Thursday, March 13 on your calendar for LWVMO Legislative Day in the Missouri Capitol. Plans are tentative but should include visits by several key legislators regarding issues of particular concern to League, updates on legislation progressing, time to meet with individual legislators to promote League's positions, and networking with other League members around the state. Watch future Legislative Bulletins for specifics.

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