



# Oakland Voter

The League of Women Voters Oakland Area  
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2007-2008 Issue 3

November/December 2007

**Local Governance –  
Focus on Townships and Sharing of Services  
Thursday, November 15, 7:00 pm**

**West Bloomfield Parks & Recreation Bldg., Rm. 101  
4640 Walnut Lake Rd., West Bloomfield, MI 48325**

**A Panel Discussion with:**

**Maxine Berman, Director of Special Projects, State of Michigan**

**Don Green, Supervisor of Milford Township**

**David Payne, Supervisor of Bloomfield Township**

**Joanne Smith, former Mayor of Farmington Hills**

Our panel members have experience with cities and townships of varying populations, including suburban and exurban/rural townships. They will provide an overview of township government to give us a general understanding of how these governmental units work, and provide insight as to the decision-making process for becoming a city or not. Issues related to sharing of services between local units of government will also be discussed. These insights should prepare us for taking consensus on February 11 for the State Study on Local Governance. **Barb Moorhouse**, Oakland Area’s representative on the State Local Governance study, will be Moderator of the program. See pages 3 and 4 for background information on townships, plus the consensus questions.

The public is welcome. Refreshments will be served.

**Do you know the size of the smallest township in Michigan? Answer on page 3.**

**Michigan Farmers Fear a Loss of Migrant Workers. See page 9.**

**PART II –Immigration Study and Consensus Meeting  
Saturday, December 1, 9:30 AM  
ST. ANDREWS LUTHERAN CHURCH,  
6255 TELEGRAPH ROAD, BLOOMFIELD TWP.  
(just north of Maple Road on the east side of Telegraph)**

Our next general meeting on immigration will address consensus questions 2, 4, 5 and 6 which were printed in our September Voter. Question 2 addresses how unauthorized immigrants currently in the U.S. should be treated. Question 4 addresses how Federal immigration law dealing with unauthorized immigrants should be enforced. See you there. We need your input. (Note: only League members can participate in consensus.)

*Bernadette Najor, Program Vice-president*

The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan 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.

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2007-2008

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THE OAKLAND VOTER is the official publication of the League of Women Voters. It is published eight times a year by the LWVOA. Articles and Letters to the Editor, with writer's name, address and phone number may be sent to the LWVOA office.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE *by Eva Packard*

**"LWV: Where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement."**

That is the central theme of the national **Membership Recruitment Initiative (MRI)**. It connects directly with the interests of the women we will be asking to become members. We will be reaching out to women 50-65 who are entering retirement or recently retired and have been politically active in the past. This large and diverse group of women is looking for leadership and civic engagement opportunities – and League is an ideal place for them to commit their time and energy.

**Andrea Zalewski**, who will help coordinate Oakland Area's MRI effort with Membership VP **Sue Abrams**, and I attended a one-day training session in Lansing on Oct. 27. **Debbie Macon** leads this effort on the state level and **Linda DePoorter** is also on the state team. **Sherrill Smith** of the Saginaw League (which participated in Phase I of the MRI project and successfully increased its membership beyond the goal) will be the team's liaison to Oakland Area.

Partnering with other groups and developing a solid relationship with the media are key ingredients along with an interesting program of activities. To that end, we have worked to put together a calendar which includes:

- A student Public Service Announcement contest with judges from the media culminating in a **PSA Award Banquet on January 17** and the showing of the winning PSAs. (See page 7.)
- A meeting (See Page 1) on **Township Government on November 15** which will be followed by a Consensus meeting and LWV Birthday Party on **February 11**.
- A joint evening **Town Hall** with LWV Northwest Wayne County with **Senate Majority Leader Michael Bishop** and **House Speaker Andrew Dillon** on **January 28**.
- **Running for Office programs** with the Women Officials' Network, AAUW, WAND + other women's organizations on **February 9 and March 8**.
- **National Program Planning** brunch at Vicki Lange's on **Jan. 12**.

We are also planning programs for Sunshine Week about open government/freedom of information in March and on climate change in April.

We have had a busy fall thus far: **Special thanks go to:**

- **Dorothy Conrad** and **Marge Polidori** for again putting on a tasty luncheon with speakers on Immigration. (See page 8.)
- **Bernadette Najor** (Chair) and Immigration Committee members **Laura Gogola**, **Karen DeGrendel**, and **Mary Ann Barkach** for arranging and leading the discussion at Part I of our Immigration Consensus. Part II will be on **December 1**.
- **Deb Horner** for preparing Voter Guides for 26 cities, 6 school districts and 1 township and **Judy Bateman** (8), **Jerry Burden** (3), and **Ann Edwards** (3) for coordinating 14 Candidate Forums among them, and **Tera Moon** for getting all that information posted on our website.

Please note all the above highlighted dates on your calendar!

*Eva* pres@lwvoa.org

## LWVMI Study of Local Government

**The scope of the study is, "How can the delivery of services at the local level be made more efficient and more effective?"** This study focuses on counties and townships. (Note: Information on counties was in the October Voter)

### **Home Rule in Michigan**

Home rule is a general grant of rights and powers to local governments, subject only to certain enumerated restrictions. Cities, villages and charter counties are presumed to have the powers to perform all tasks unless that power has been specifically preempted by the legislature. That presumption of power does not exempt local governments from legislative oversight. **Townships** and general law counties (i.e. those that are not charter counties) **do not have the rights of home rule.**

Michigan has 2,499 local units of government. Of these, 1,860 are general purpose units and 639 are special purpose units. General purpose units include the following: 83 Counties, 271 Cities, **1,241 Townships**, and 263 Villages. Special purpose units include: 556 School Districts, 29 Community Colleges, 54 Intermediate School Districts.

### **TOWNSHIPS**

In Michigan, if you don't live in a city, you live in a township (and everybody lives in a county). Townships are a product of Michigan's early history, and Michigan is one of 20 states that currently have some form of township government.

Michigan has 1,242 townships that vary in size and population. Originally, townships were to be 36 square miles, but they presently range from less than one to more than 600 square miles. Based on the 2000 Census, Michigan township populations vary from 10 to 95,648 people. Approximately half of all Michigan residents live in a township. (Only one-third of Michigan residents lived in a township in 1980.)

Townships and counties are statutory units of government, having only those powers expressly provided or fairly implied by state law. Cities and most villages are vested with home rule powers, meaning they can do almost anything not prohibited by law.

There are two types of townships in Michigan, General Law and Charter Townships. Charter Township status is a classification created by the Michigan Legislature in 1947 to provide additional powers and streamlined administration for governing a growing community. A primary motivation for townships to adopt the charter form is to provide greater protection against annexation by a city. As of March 2005, 131 of Michigan's 1,241 townships had opted to become a Charter Township.

The Michigan Constitution and state statutes limit the amount of property tax millage that townships can levy for general township operations. General Law townships are allocated at least one mill. Townships chartered by a referendum may levy up to five mills. Townships chartered by board resolution after November 22, 1978, must have a vote of the electors authorizing the levy of five mills. In either case, the five mill limit may be increased up to ten mills with a vote of the electors.

Townships also utilize other sources of revenue to support services. User fees, permits, fines and special assessments on real property are the most frequently used sources.

Township government is conducted by a Township Board consisting of a Supervisor, Clerk, Treasurer and two to four Trustees. Members of the Township Board are elected to four-year terms on a partisan ballot.

State laws authorize townships to perform a wide variety of functions in two important categories: mandated and permissive. Mandated functions include:

- a. Assessment of property by an Assessor who is certified as qualified by the State Assessors Board;
- b. Collection of taxes for the county and for the school districts within the jurisdiction of the township,  
and
- c. Conducting elections.

Permissive functions include: fire protection, traffic safety, land use and zoning, subdivision controls, and licensing of businesses. Townships may also provide public water and sewer systems, street lighting, libraries, and youth and senior citizen programs.

### Consensus Question on Counties

(See the October Voter for the Consensus questions 1 and 2 on Counties.)

### Consensus Question on Townships

3. Should the state constitution be changed to require:  
Townships to transfer the functions traditionally performed by the clerk and treasurer to appointive positions and departments established by the township; and, empower its manager or supervisor to supervise and coordinate administrative departments, boards and commissions?
4. If townships meet the following standards:
  - \* A minimum required SEV as stated by law or regulation and
  - \* A minimum density of population as stated by law or regulation and
  - \* A stipulated range of services and
  - \* The levy of a tax large enough to support those stipulated services,Should townships be required:
  - a. To employ professional managers? or
  - b. To adopt a city form of government?
5. Should the state constitution be changed to require township elections to be nonpartisan?
6. Should state laws require the terms of township board members to be staggered?

### Consensus Questions on Counties and Townships

7. A. Should the League support sharing of governmental services such as fire, police, parks and recreation, water, and sewage treatment among local units of government?
7. B. Should the state provide incentives to encourage sharing of services such as fire, police, parks and recreation, water and sewage treatment among local units of government?
8. A. Should the League support reducing the number of local units of government through consolidation?
8. B. Should the state provide incentives to encourage consolidation of local units of government?

#### **Voter Guides for Fall 2007 Elections** *by Deb Horner*

The League assembled Voter Guides for elections in various Oakland communities in preparation for the upcoming general election on November 6. Voter guides include information provided by the candidates about themselves and their answers to issues important to the office being sought, as well as the wording of any proposals on the ballot. Guides for 27 cities, six school districts, three library boards, and one township were prepared and have been posted on the LWVOA website.

Thank you to **Sarah Westerman** for help in assembling and layout for the guides, **Laura Gogola** for typing faxed and mailed responses, **Ann Curley** for helping with candidate questionnaire mailings, **Debra Horner** for handling emailed responses and preparing guides, **Tera Moon** for posting the guides online, and **Eva Packard** for proofreading, candidate communication and oversight.



**Have these Leaguers been busy or have they been busy!**

### **VOTER SERVICE: CANDIDATE FORUMS**

*by Judy Bateman*

The Oakland Area League has had a very successful voter service season. For the November 6 election, we hosted **14 candidate forums (12 cities and 2 school districts)** which were all well attended. All were cablecast and the rebroadcast schedules listed on our website. Press releases were sent to all the local papers and were printed in most of them. Also, thanks to **Paula Bowman** and the Northwest Wayne League for doing the city of Northville forum, a city our Leagues share.

**Jerry Burden** coordinated the following 3 forums: Keego Harbor and Sylvan Lake, both on September 25; and Wixom, October 15.

**Judy Bateman** coordinated these 8 forums: Berkley, October 11; Southfield, October 16; Clawson, October 22; Birmingham City, October 23; Royal Oak, October 23; Madison Heights, October 24; Birmingham Schools, October 25; and Ferndale, October 28.

**Ann Edwards** coordinated these 3 forums: City of Rochester Hills, October 4; Rochester Schools, October 16; and City of Rochester, October 18.

Moderators included **Judy Bateman, Jerry Burden, Carla Gribbs, Mary Howarth, Barbara Moorhouse, Penny Shanks** and **Neil Zechman**. **Dorothy Conrad** arranged the location for the city of Birmingham forum.

The following people served as screeners, timers, or ushers: **Linda Brown, Carole Elder, Fran Fisher, Nancy Goedert, Laura Gogola, Trisha Jochim, Ruth Hathaway, Darlene Janulis, Sybil Levenson, John Magary, Judy Miller, Tera Moon, Sandy Sanchez, Betty Spehar, Joan Sterling, Alissa Terrell, and Andrea** and **Paul Zalewski**. Many of these people assisted at more than one forum.

We had several co-sponsors including the Southfield Chamber of Commerce, the Royal Oak Chamber of Commerce, the Clawson Chamber of Commerce, Rochester Schools, the Birmingham PTSA Council, Citizens for a Fair Ferndale, and The Community House in Birmingham.

We thank the many communities that allowed us to hold our forums in their City Halls or other community buildings which are setup for cable. Special appreciation goes to Civic Center TV15 of West Bloomfield, Bloomfield Cable, and WROK Royal Oak for setting up taping at the Sylvan Lake Lutheran Church, The Community House in Birmingham, and the First Congregational Church in Royal Oak, respectively.

## Help Oakland Vote Day held on October 3, 2007



At left:  
Eva Packard,  
President, LWV Oakland Area, with  
Ruth Johnson,  
Oakland County Clerk/Register of  
Deeds

### We Need You!

The Oakland County Elections Division is looking to hire some good people to be poll workers for the January primary election. The need is particularly critical during the winter months when many poll workers – especially those who are retired – head south. **Poll workers are needed for the January 15th Presidential Primary.**

Ruth Johnson, Oakland County Clerk/ Register, points out that “It’s a chance to greet neighbors, make a little money and be engaged in the democratic process. Our local city and township clerks are wonderful – with just a little training, they’ll have you ready to work the polls on Election Day.” If you are interested, call the Elections Division, Oakland County at 248/858-0564 or visit [www.oakgov.com/clerkrod](http://www.oakgov.com/clerkrod) or contact the Clerk of your local city or township.

As part of **Help Oakland Vote Day**, a ceremony was held to honor longtime poll workers. Eva was invited to speak as president of an organization which fosters the participation of citizens in government. Her comments (at right) say it all.

“The League of Women Voters is pleased to help honor poll workers throughout the county who are so vital to the heart of our democracy – the RIGHT to VOTE..

The League of Women Voters understands the LONG HOURS that you all contribute to this fundamental process so key to our freedom.

You get up early before dawn and leave the polls after dark.

You have to exercise patience in dealing with people who are unsure regarding the process or whether they are in the right place to vote.

You have had to adapt over the years to changes in equipment and how votes are cast.

It can be exacting work, especially the reporting of the results.

The League of Women Voters appreciates the many individuals who have volunteered to be there on election day and help us all exercise the precious right to vote.

The American public thanks you very much. Thank You and Thank You Again!”

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### Working as Poll Workers for the Italian American Club

The esteemed reputation of the LWVOA led the Italian-American Club to again request our assistance in conducting their election of officers. The voting occurred from 11:30 am to 7:30 p.m. October 17, after which we quickly tallied approximately 350 ballots so the results could be announced at their banquet taking place upstairs. The balloting is conducted in a very professional manner, similar to the way it is handled at city polls, with picture I.D. or a club membership card required. **Andrea Zalewski** arranged for the volunteers, **Betty Spehar** and **Gretchen Pugsley** acted as captains and **Dorothy Warren**, **Christine Jurgensen** (who worked the full day), **Mary Ann Barkach** and **Sandy Sanchez** assisted. In addition to performing a service which was much appreciated, this was a League fundraiser as well.



## **LWVOA Youth Public Service Announcement (PSA) Contest**

Our thanks to **P. J. Royale**, Development Vice President, who has been making a tremendous effort to put together the LWVOA Youth Public Service Announcement (PSA) Contest for students in Oakland County. This contest challenges Oakland County public high school students to use their communication skills and creativity to develop public service announcements (PSAs) to educate, inspire and motivate youth and other citizens to become informed and involved in the election process and in other civic activities. The winning PSAs will be aired on PBS, CBS and Comcast.

The contest will offer Oakland County Public High School students:

- Excitement, competition, school spirit, teamwork and a lot of fun.
- Visibility for students and their high schools in radio, television and newspapers.
- Opportunity to make a positive difference.
- Monetary rewards, prizes, entertainment gift certificates and awards for the winners.
- LWVOA PSA Award Banquet recognition of the PSA winners, schools and PSA participants.
- An opportunity at the banquet to meet and talk with powerful executives in the media industry who are serving as judges.

All PSA entries had to be postmarked by November 2, 2007, and judging will occur by November 30. PSA contest winners will be announced at the PSA award banquet.

The PSA Awards Banquet will be held January 17, 2008, at the Rock Financial Showplace and provides an opportunity to see and hear all the winning entries and meet the winners and celebrity judges. This is a fundraiser to help pay for airtime to show the PSAs again later in the year and to support the League's Citizen Education activities. The public is welcome.

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### **An Easy Way to Help**

We need to know what gets printed about our candidate forums, voter guides, and other activities. If you take a newspaper (whether daily, biweekly, weekly, or semi-monthly) which writes about any League event or member, YOU can help by cutting out articles in newspapers and mailing them to the League office (LWVOA, 200 S. Washington, Ste. 4, Royal Oak, MI 48067) if they mention any LWVOA information or event either to announce an event or to report on what happened at an event. There are many local newspapers in Oakland County and we rely on our members to let us know what is published about the League in their communities. We support 60 communities. Please help.

## **Fall Luncheon Meeting**

**Dorothy Conrad** and **Marge Polidori**, along with the Detroit Metropolitan Area LWV, hosted our Fall Luncheon meeting at the First Baptist Church in Birmingham on September 24. After lunching on pita sandwiches, salad and scrumptious desserts (particularly the chocolate cake with cherry topping), we turned to the business at hand.

Immigration was again the topic of the day, with two representatives from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services: Maria Chavez, Prior Acting District Director who is returning to El Paso, TX; and Mick Dedvukaj, new District Director as of September 24, coming from New York City. Also speaking was immigration lawyer Melanie Goldberg from David Wenger & Associates. **Mary Bugeia**, Acting President of DMA, moderated the meeting.

U.S. Immigration Services separates enforcement duties from the granting of benefits, such as naturalization, and adjustment of status. Chavez and Dedvukaj handle the benefits aspect and stressed security as the number 1 priority, followed by the need to provide better customer service with a better understanding of various cultures, as well as the importance of setting goals. Chavez discussed the need to balance compassion with the law in providing benefits.

Goldberg discussed the outcry in 13 states by employers who require more workers, yet are hampered by existing immigration law which does not provide enough H1B visas. Last year 130,000 applications were filed on the first day for 50,000 slots (which was increased to 65,000). H1B visas are for skilled foreigners with a bachelor's degree or higher who may only work for a petitioning U.S. employer. Goldberg fears that employers will locate offices outside the United States if they cannot get sufficient workers here. One example is Microsoft which has opened an office in Vancouver.

Our thanks to **Margaret Kanost, Carole Elder, Andrea Zalewski** and **Christine Jurgenson** for calling to remind members about the luncheon; and to **Mary Bugeia, Joan Heinicke, Sue Leich, Christine Jurgensen, Dorothy Warren, Charlotte Mahrt and Fran Fisher** who provided the refreshments.

### **SPONSOR**

**Those of us who work on the Voter would like some feedback. What do you like? What do you dislike? What would you like more of?**

**We're also looking for people to write articles of interest to Leaguers or to cover League meetings.**

**Let us know your thoughts. Call Mary Ann Barkach at 248/474-2353 or e-mail at mbarkach@yahoo.com**





## Michigan Farmers Fear Loss of Migrant Workers

The number of migrant workers in Michigan is estimated at 60,000, although the figure varies from 50,000 to 100,000, depending on whether workers' family members are included. These statistics are reported by Daniel Inquilla, an attorney for Farmworker Legal Services in Michigan. In Michigan, migrants help harvest more than 40 varieties of produce. Nationwide, nearly one million people work in the agriculture industry. About 50%-70% are illegal immigrants who obtained jobs under false pretenses, according to the Farm Bureau. However, the industry depends on migrants who work 10-hour days at labor-intensive jobs that many farmers say U.S.-born citizens don't want.

Michigan farmers fear a potential labor shortage that they warn could jeopardize their businesses if Congress does not pass a workable temporary worker program. According to the Farm Bureau, without a guest worker program, Michigan's specialty crop sector could suffer nearly \$270 million in production losses annually. Rene Rosenbaum, a farm worker expert at Michigan State University, said that migrant workers annually pump \$18,000 to \$19,000 each into the state's economy.

John Bakker, the executive director of the Michigan Asparagus, Plum and Onion Committees, says that most farmers who employ migrants develop a relationship with them and continue to work with them over the years. But Bakker fears that the heated national debate over immigration is making migrant workers less inclined to travel for work and decreasing the number willing to work on farms. He says that "Labor is a huge issue for the asparagus industry."

Fred Leitz Jr., a fruit and vegetable producer at Leitz Farms in Sodus in Berrien County says, "Forty percent of my costs goes to the labor. If you take away my labor, literally you take away my hands. A shortage of labor would mean that high-value crops, such as strawberries, apples, peaches, berries and grapes, do not get harvested and just rot in the fields." Leitz employs about 220 seasonal workers at his farm. Most do not speak English. He provides free housing, and they were paid \$7.80 per hour in 2005.

As more farmers leave the industry, more of the U.S. food supply will be imported, he said. "It's better for us to import the labor and keep a safe, reliable, affordable food supply here," Leitz said. "Let's import the worker and not the food. It keeps the money in this country." For years, Leitz has lobbied Congress to legalize the Hispanics who now make up the bulk of the agricultural workforce in Michigan and elsewhere.

Under a 1986 law, employers were not made responsible if workers used questionable identification, and basically a system of "don't ask, don't tell" developed. Under the current program, a farmer can request temporary working status for migrant workers who are foreign citizens. Farmers must request the workers 45 days in advance and pay a \$100 application fee, plus \$10 per approved worker, up to \$1,000. But many farmers complain that the program has too much paperwork and is too bureaucratic.

### Other Voices

A contrary opinion comes from Philip Martin, a University of California economics professor, who points out that when the "bracero" program ended in 1964, farmers in California thought they would be ruined. Actually they were able to adapt – although not easily – and now produce five times more tomatoes than they did under the old system. (The "bracero" program, initiated in 1942, was designed to bring in Mexican agricultural laborers. It continued until 1964, when Mexico and the U.S. ended it as a response to criticisms and reports of human rights abuses.)

Mark Krikorian, of the Center for Immigration Studies, also says that farmers could adapt by growing different crops if necessary, using improved methods, thus increasing productivity. He says a tight labor market would benefit low-skilled American workers whom he believes would take the jobs now filled by immigrants, and that wages would rise. He believes a guest worker program would stifle this ongoing modernization process.

## Safeguarding our Non-Partisan Reputation in an Election Year

by Eva Packard, President

*In order to assure that we maintain the non-partisanship reputation of the League of Women Voters, League Boards adopt and re-affirm non-partisan policies. At the first board meeting of this League year, the Oakland Area Board discussed and re-adopted the Non-Partisanship Policy statement below. Most of the policy deals with constraints on Board members.*

*However, there is a section for members of the League who are not on the Board. Members are free as individuals to speak out on public issues or to participate in candidate campaigns, and indeed they are encouraged to do that. A member should not, however, be involved in a League candidate forum as a representative of the League if they are publicly involved for or against any candidate in that forum, because the League never supports nor opposes any candidates. Because questions have arisen regarding recent forums, we are printing this policy for all members to read and be aware of.*

### **Non-Partisan Policy Statement of the League of Women Voters Oakland Area**

June 2007

The League of Women Voters is non-partisan in that it does not support or oppose any political party or candidate; it is political in that it takes positions on selected governmental issues after member study and agreement.

While the League urges its members to be politically active, certain constraints are necessary in order to maintain the non-partisanship of the organization. The Board of Directors of the Oakland Area LWV has adopted the following guidelines:

#### **Officers and Board of Directors:**

The President, Citizen Education Vice-President and Voter Service Chairs may not be a candidate or hold elective office at any level. They may not work publicly for or against any political party or any candidate for office. To work publicly means playing an active role on campaign staff or at a public meeting on behalf of a party or candidate, giving a party or candidate such large financial support that it would be identified on a contributor's list; circulating petitions in behalf of a party or candidate; or working for a party or candidate's at the polls. They may not serve in a policy-making position in an area of government covered by the League program at any level.

Board members other than President, Citizen Education Vice-President and Voter Service Chairs may run for and hold local elective office with the approval of the local Board. If approval is withheld, the director must formally resign from the Board. Public notices released by the League of that resignation must be carefully worded to avoid the appearance of endorsement. Other Board members may not work in a significant way in a candidate's campaign; some activities could be permissible, with Board approval.

A Board member may serve on any public board, commission, or committee. However, the Board must be notified, and that Board member does not represent the League unless officially designated by the Board.

#### **League Members:**

Members may not, **as League representatives**, publicly express an opinion that is in opposition to a League position once League (local, state or national) takes a position on an issue,

Members actively working for or visibly supporting a candidate may not represent LWVOA at a Candidate Forum or other League event in which that candidate participates.

#### **Nomination or appointment of Board members:**

The nominating committee shall be given copies of these policies before selection of nominees. The nominating committee shall give a full explanation of these policies to all prospects for nomination. Acceptance of nomination shall denote acceptance of these policies.

## **A CITIZENS GUIDE TO TRANSPORTATION FUNDING**

*This is a summary of material Carolyn Buell, LWVDM, compiled from the Winter 2007 issue of SEMscop, a publication of SEMCOG, the 7 county SE MI Council of Governments. [www.semco.org](http://www.semco.org)*

Our area has a disproportionately high number of cars on the road because we lack the option of a mass transit system. We have more miles of public roads than many states, and there's a lot more wear and tear on our roads. Motorists traveled 38.8 billion miles in 2005. There are 3.4 million licensed drivers with 4 million vehicles. In addition, 200,000 passenger vehicles travel through our region each day.

Maintaining and improving our transportation system is critically important. A reconstructed road can last up to 25 years, while resurfacing that road will last roughly 10 years. Since most of our transportation system was built in the 1960's, it now needs to be rebuilt.

The challenge: 1) Each year it costs more to maintain and improve our transportation system.  
2) The State gas tax has remained at 19 cents since 1997.

### **HOW WE PAY FOR OUR TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM**

Our 19 cent gas tax is fairly low and ranks 42<sup>nd</sup> out of 50 states. The state gas tax is used to maintain roads – 17.5 cents goes to MDOT, county road commissions, cities and villages. Two cents is dedicated to public transit; less than 1 cent goes to road projects critical to economic development and 0.5 cents supports bridges, railroads and recreational areas.

Our region has made great strides over the past several years to improve the existing transportation system. Our roads are safer. Over the past 4 years, there has been other progress including pavement resurfacing/reconstruction/rehabilitation, bridge replacement and repairs, and 183 miles of new nonmotorized facilities were constructed. Traffic signal improvements have been made and large and small buses were purchased.

We pay 18.4 cents a gallon in federal tax, but as a "donor" state, we only get back 91%. Future revenues from federal funding will substantially decrease by 2010-2011. State revenue from the gas tax and vehicle registration fees is not keeping up with the rising costs of maintenance and construction. Despite increased vehicle miles, vehicles are more fuel-efficient – consuming less fuel. The erosion of the gas tax is a direct result.

### **THE COST OF IMPROVING OUR SYSTEM**

It costs: \$6 million to widen a road from 2-5 lanes for one mile  
\$2.6 million to resurface a 2-lane road for one mile  
\$9 million to rebuild a 6-lane freeway one mile  
\$400 - \$2000 to fill a pot hole

Some road repairs are short-term fixes – for five years or so – just enough to last until we have the money available to make a longer-term fix. In order to fix all of our regions' bridges, we will need \$7.2 billion. About 50% are over 30 years old and about 1/3 in SE Michigan are currently considered in need of repair.

While only 2% of trips in southeast Michigan are made using public transit, it provides mobility to those without automobiles and to those who choose not to drive. Transit service requires government subsidy. Currently 2 cents of the state gas tax, along with local millages and contributions from community general funds, support the region's transit system. Any improved transit will require each of us to pay more.

### **WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE**

We need \$70 billion through 2030 but only \$40 billion is available. In the long term, we'll need stable sources of revenue that can efficiently raise enough revenue to address our many urgent transportation needs.

What are we willing to do? Pay a little more at the pump? Drive a little less? Use the bus?  
Voice your concerns to our policy makers and to SEMCOG.



The League of Women Voters Oakland Area  
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A Voice for Citizens,  
 A Voice for Change

## Time Dated Material Enclosed

### Calendar of Events

- |        |         |         |  |
|--------|---------|---------|--|
| Tues.  | Nov. 6  | 7am-8pm | <b>Local GENERAL Election</b> for 27 cities, 6 school districts.   |
| Thurs. | Nov. 15 | 7 pm    | <b>Background meeting on State Local Government Study</b><br>Panel on Township government and sharing services<br>West Bloomfield Parks & Rec, 4640 Walnut Lake Rd., 48325 |
| Sat.   | Dec. 1  | 9:30 am | <b>Immigration Consensus General Meeting – Part 2</b><br>St. Andrews Lutheran Church, 6255 Telegraph Rd, Bloomfield Twp. 48301   |
| Mon.   | Dec. 3  | 7 pm    | LWVOA Board Meeting, Residence Inn, 27477 Cabaret Dr, Novi 48377   |
| Sat.   | Jan. 12 | 9:30 am | <b>National Program Planning General Meeting</b><br>Home of Vicki Lange  |
| Thurs. | Jan. 17 | 6 pm    | <b>LWVOA Student PSA Contest Award Banquet</b> , Rock Financial Showplace<br>46100 Grand River Ave., Novi, MI 48374  |
| Mon.   | Jan. 28 | 7 pm    | <b>Town Hall with Senator Majority Leader Mike Bishop<br/>       and House Speaker Andy Dillon</b>   |
| Sat.   | Feb. 9  | 9 am    | Me? Run for Public Office??? with Panel of local elected women officials.<br>Co-sponsors: Women Officials' Network (WON), AAUW, WAND                                       |
| Mon.   | Feb. 11 | 7 pm    | <b>State Local Government Consensus + LWV League Birthday Party</b>  |
| Mon.   | Feb. 25 | 7 pm    | LWVOA Board Meeting  |
| Sat.   | Mar. 8  | 9 am    | The Nuts and Bolts of Running for Public Office with WON, AAUW, WAND   |