



Oakland Voter

The League of Women Voters Oakland Area
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2008-2009 Issue 5

March 2009

**The NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE Compact:
A Legitimate Step Forward for the Election of the President
or
An Attempted End-run Around the Constitution?**

Wednesday, March 25, 2009 at 7:00 p.m.
Bloomfield Township Public Library
Lone Pine & Telegraph Rd.

Background, Discussion and CONSENSUS
Coffee and Dessert served

Presentation by **Barbara Suhay**
Political Science Faculty, Henry Ford Community College

Find out the history of the National Popular Vote Compact movement. What is it? How would it change the Electoral College? What are the pros and cons of the NPV as a compact? Does it need to be approved by Congress as an interstate compact? Is it Constitutional? Most importantly, would it drastically change our Presidential elections? And finally, **what do YOU as members believe should be the position of the League of Women Voters regarding NPV?** See [Pages 3 and 4](#) for background and the consensus questions that the League is asking.

A local League member, Barbara Suhay has taught American Government, Political Parties, and Comparative Government at Ohio State University and local colleges. She is a past President of the Michigan Conference of Political Scientists.

Observer Corps Training

Tuesday, April 21 at 7 pm
Heritage Park Visitor Center
25099 Farmington Rd. (between 10 and 11 Mile Rd.)
Farmington Hills 48336

Observers attend local governmental meetings; learn what their government is doing, the issues facing their community, and how they are being addressed. They promote government transparency and accountability, helping to ensure that the issues facing their community and decisions that impact their lives are being handled "in the sunshine," in the open. Observers also assist in determining when League action might be appropriate. Come learn more about them. **Debbie Macon** will conduct the training.

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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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

NATIONAL:

The national recession has impacted the League of Women Voters of the United States which has to tighten its belt to accommodate a downturn in financial support. The major decision which impacts all League members is the decision **to suspend publication of *The National Voter magazine***, both the paper and online versions.

The national League emails a **weekly Leaders' Update** which any member can request. They need your Email ID and then you can register with them and set up a password for access. Then, under the Member tab, you can access Recent News and Updates to see the last two Leaders' Updates which come out on Thursdays. Or you can Get Involved and join a League-sponsored Email list such as the one for Leaders' Updates so that they are sent to you automatically.

The LWVUS Board has adopted new legislative priorities for 2009. **Global Climate Change and Health Care are the top priority** legislative issues. Major congressional action is expected and LWVUS will seek to be an active player. **Tier two priorities** are Election Reform and DC Voting Rights. Tier two issues will be acted upon if significant success is possible. **Tier three issues** being watched are: Campaign Finance Reform; CEDAW (the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women); Civil Liberties; Ethics; and Redistricting. Tier three issues could see LWVUS action if good opportunities present themselves and there is no pressing action on top priority and tier two issues. The LWVUS prioritizes legislative issues for advocacy in order to focus limited resources on those issues where it is considered the League can have a meaningful impact and there is member interest and opportunity for progress.

The national Climate Change Task Force has produced several papers which are available online at www.lwv.org. The national Health Care Task Force will begin putting papers online in the spring.

Karen DeGrendel and I plus **Sue Gregorius** and **Pam Brady** of Troy met with new Congressman Gary Peters to ask him about his views on major League issues and learn his issue priorities. He has been appointed to the committees he asked for: Financial Services and Science & Technology.

Read Pages 1, 3 & 4 on the **National Popular Vote (NPV)** Compact which the League is studying nationally. More information about NPV and its Pros and Cons is available on the US website for members. Oakland Area will be taking **Consensus** on this issue at our **March 25th meeting**.

STATE:

Interviews are in process with many of our 14 State Representatives, but we are still looking for volunteers in a few Oakland County districts where we do not have many members. We send a team of two. If you would like to help the League understand where our legislators stand on various issues that League is interested in, contact **Patricia Finn** at finn.patricia@gmail.com.

Read Pages 5 and 6 about our State Program Planning and the **State Convention** on the weekend of **May 15-17**. **Become a delegate** and learn more and meet Leaguers from throughout the state.

See Page 7 for an all-day LWVMI forum "**The 21st Century Voter: Promoting Michigan Voter Power**" on **April 24** at Henry Ford Community College with distinguished speakers addressing Innovations in State Election Laws, Election of Michigan Supreme Court Justices, and Term Limits.

LOCAL:

See Page 5 to read about our Local Program Planning meeting. **To be more involved in our communities, we need YOU**. Join us on **April 21** to learn how you can be an Observer.

The city of Bloomfield Hills and the Clarkston and Oak Park School districts have contested elections on the May 5th ballot. **Judy Bateman** and **Jerry Burden** will be arranging candidate forums; **Deb Horner** will prepare Voter Guides on our website.

Tera Moon is coordinating the updating of our eight **They Represent You (TRY)** brochures. Thank you to the members who volunteered to verify the information in each of them. The TRYs will be posted on our website and printed for distribution to community clerks and public libraries.

Mark **May 30th** on your calendar for our Annual Meeting at Shenandoah Country Club. Economic issues are expected to be the focus of our invited speaker. More in the next VOTER.

Eva 248-473-5595 pres@lwvoa.org

"As a League of Women Voters member, you are part of an organization where citizens like you are actively engaged in effecting change on the local, state and national level."

Background for the National Popular Vote Compact

At the 2008 Convention, the delegates voted to adopt a new study, ***"The Advisability of Using the National Popular Vote Compact among the States as a Method for Electing the President."***

The League has a long-standing position in support of the direct election of the president by popular vote. Now, League members have the opportunity to consider whether to support the National Popular Vote Compact (NPV Compact) as a viable process to achieve that result. The NPV Compact would avoid the need for a constitutional amendment abolishing the Electoral College (EC), and would assure that the individual receiving the most votes would become president.

The NPV Compact proposal uses the mechanism of the EC. States that legislatively enact the NPV Compact would agree that their state electors would vote for the individual that received the most votes nationwide. Thus, the popular vote count from all 50 states and the District of Columbia would be added together. State elections officials in all states participating would award their electoral votes to the presidential candidate who receives the largest number of popular votes.

This alternative method of assigning a state's EC votes would take effect only when enacted by states collectively possessing a majority of the electoral votes. This 270-vote threshold also corresponds essentially to states representing a majority of the people of the United States.

The plan includes procedural provisions to help assure smooth functioning of the agreement – conditions that deal with states deciding to withdraw from the Compact at the last moment, enforcement issues and recounts.

Currently four states (Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, New Jersey with a total of 50 electoral votes) have passed legislation to enact the NPV Compact. The Compact has passed the Michigan House.

There are pros and cons to this plan, which are discussed in full in papers found on the LWVUS Web site. Summaries of these papers are also available. League members can learn more about the plan from these sources and consider its ramifications at consensus meetings across the country. Be sure to participate! Who better than the League to be ready to speak to this good-government issue?

To prepare for the consensus meeting, please read the complete version of this paper and the Pros and Cons prepared by the LWVUS NPV Compact Study Committee and available at www.lwv.org. Login as a League member and select "Projects and Programs" and then select "National Popular Vote Compact Study" under Taskforces and Studies.

The League of Women Voter's Position on the Selection of the President

Announced by National Board January 1970, Revised March 1982 and Updated June 2004

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the direct-popular-vote method for electing the President and Vice-President is essential to representative government. The League of Women Voters believes, therefore, that the Electoral College should be abolished.

The League also supports uniform voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. The League supports changes in the presidential election system – from the candidate selection process to the general election. We support efforts to provide voters with sufficient information about candidates and their positions, public policy issues and the selection process itself. The League supports action to ensure that the media, political parties, candidates, and all levels of government achieve these goals and provide that information.

National Popular Vote Compact Consensus Questions

For Questions 1-6, choose one of the options. If the group cannot reach Consensus, indicate No Consensus.

Question 1: *Amending the Constitution*

a. Should altering a basic element of the Constitutional framework, which is achievable by amendment to the Constitution, be accomplished by amendment to the Constitution?

OR

b. Is action by states through a compact process an acceptable way to alter the method for electing the President and Vice-President?

Question 2: *Amending the Constitution*

a. The League should continue to work for an amendment to the Constitution to establish the direct popular election of the President and the abolition of the Electoral College because a compact has never before been used to address a fundamental constitutional issue such as voting and it might set a precedent for the future.

OR

b. The League should support the NPV Compact as a way of achieving an important goal despite the novelty of the use of the compact approach to address a fundamental constitutional issue such as voting.

Question 3: *Congressional Consent*

a. The possibility that the NPV Compact will require congressional consent is not of sufficient concern to block the implementation of the plan.

OR

b. The possibility that the NPV Compact will require congressional consent is of sufficient concern to block the implementation of the plan unless consent of Congress is obtained.

Question 4: *Enforcement*

a. The NPV Compact contains sufficient enforcement provisions to assure smooth operation of the plan.

OR

b. Although it is not possible to determine whether the enforcement provisions will be sufficient to assure smooth operation of the plan, the plan should be passed anyway.

OR

c. Enforcement of the plan is likely to add uncertainty and bring the courts into the presidential election in ways that raise substantial concerns.

OR

d. The lack of adequate enforcement provisions is sufficient to conclude that the NPV is not a viable plan.

Question 5: *Uniformity*

a. The uniformity of voting systems is more important to American democracy than the possibility that the NPV Compact can be adopted.

OR

b. The NPV Compact is more important than uniformity of voting systems because it would succeed in achieving the popular election of the President.

Question 6: *Popular Election of the President*

a. It is more important to achieve the goal of national popular election of the President than it is to achieve the goal of abolition of the Electoral College.

OR

b. It is more important to amend the Constitution to abolish the Electoral College than it is to achieve the goal of popular election of the President by alternative methods, such as the NPV Compact.

Question 7: *Achievability* (Treat as two separate questions.)

a. The NPV Compact will have problems being passed because of the need for congressional consideration and the need for action by so many states.

Agree Disagree No Consensus

b. A constitutional amendment to establish the direct popular election of the President and the abolition of the Electoral College will continue to have problems being passed.

Agree Disagree No Consensus

State Program Planning

LWVOA again gathered in **Vicki Lange's** comfortable Western style living room on a wintry January day. We are so grateful for her hospitality. Thank you to **Patricia Finn** for organizing the tasty potluck brunch which members enjoyed before turning to State Program Planning.

Members want to **RETAIN all present LWVMI Program Positions** and **UPDATE the Taxation and Budgeting position** by looking at and understanding tax structure options such as a sales tax on services and looking at budgeting of expenses vs. services provided in order to smart-size government.

Oakland Area (OA) affirmed its interest in working to gain support of other groups for Fair and Impartial Courts and participating in an advocacy campaign to obtain public funding for Michigan Supreme Court races and to require disclosure of all money spent in such races.

LWVMI also asked for our top two priorities from a subset of Democracy Agenda good government topics that they felt had the potential for action in this legislative year.

OA chose Election Administration as its first priority. The state had listed no-excuse absentee ballots and establishing regulations against fraud in the ballot initiative process under this area. Our members recommended that it also include easing restrictions on in-person registrations, providing electronic voting options for the military, and allowing early voting.

Our second priority is Campaign Finance and Enforcement. Members emphasized requiring that political robo-calls have an identity disclaimer and be disclosed on campaign expenditures. They also felt that issue ad groups should have to register and disclose their supporters.

Ethics & Lobbying and Redistricting were the other state Democracy Agenda items. Instead OA members added **Term Limits as a third priority.** They see extending or eliminating term limits as key to solving lobbying concerns and lessening severe partisanship.

OA's recommendations will be combined with those from other Leagues in Michigan to develop the State Program for approval at the May State Convention.

Local Program Planning

February 14th was the 89th birthday of the League of Women Voters and, thanks to **Sue Abrams**, we celebrated with birthday cake on that snowy day. Thank you to **Randa Keener** for arranging the West Bloomfield Library room and helping set up refreshments.

As the Oakland Area Board would like to increase activity in our many local communities, attendees were asked about the hot issues in their area. We were fortunate to have members present who had been Mayors of their communities and knowledgeable on issues: **Dorothy Conrad** (Birmingham), **Jan Dolan** (Farmington Hills), and **JoAnne McShane** (Farmington).

The list of issues that emerged was mainly focused on statewide issues that impact local government units, especially in funding:

- Proposition A Funding

- Consolidation of School Districts

- Consolidation of Police, Fire and other services

- Legacy Costs for Health, Pensions, and the impact of Public Act 312 on Arbitration

LWVMI program positions rather than local positions are relevant for these issues.

Citizen Education emerged as an area where League volunteers could help communities. There is a need to increase knowledge by the public about where to get help in these hard times and also on understanding the relationship between taxes assessed and services provided.

The group concluded that no new local study was needed, but rather that members should become more aware of local concerns and how our governmental units are addressing them. **Observing meetings** is important to that end and **helps promote transparency and accountability.** A state brochure is available from State Representatives on the Open Meeting Act.

Please note the **evening of Tuesday, April 21**, on your calendar for **Observer Corps Training** by our own **Debbie Macon** at the Visitor Center of Heritage Park in Farmington Hills.

Join the Observer Corps and assist the League to be effective in providing help to the 60 communities and 27 school districts that we serve!

- Eva Packard

Great Lakes – New Plans and Workshops *by Randa Keener*

Michigan has more freshwater coastline than any other state in the nation. Our Great Lakes are crucial to Michigan's economic and environmental survival and LWVOA, as well as LWVMI, are committed to ensuring the health of the Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes provide jobs in commercial and sport fishery, charter boating, harbors and marinas; they provide the backbone of the state's travel industry as well as water for agriculture and food industries, plus the manufacturing of steel and autos. The Great Lakes are also a major link in the international maritime transportation network.

With this in mind, the Michigan Office of Great Lakes (OGL) developed the Michigan Great Lakes Plan (MGLP) with input from over 20 regional meetings and thousands of individual stakeholders. The Michigan Great Lakes Plan is based on the compact developed through the 2005 Great Lakes Regional Collaboration (GLRC) that covers the entire Great Lakes basin. The MGLP is designed to protect, restore and sustain Michigan's Great Lakes for current and future generations.

The plan states: "To meet this commitment, Michigan needs to:

- Ensure that alternative energy sources are pursued and that the environmental impacts of current energy sources are minimized.
- Restore and delist Michigan's 14 Areas of Concern.
- Protect human health associated with fish consumption advisories and harmful algal blooms.
- Restore beaches by controlling pollutants such as phosphorus, pharmaceuticals, and bacterial contamination.
- Prevent the introduction and control the spread of new invasive species.
- Update old and deteriorating infrastructure throughout the state.
- Ensure effective and efficient management of urban stormwater.
- Implement and share effective land use planning tools throughout the state and across county boundaries.
- Increase opportunities for the public to access the Great Lakes and our inland lakes and streams.
- Protect and restore critical fish and wildlife habitat."

The MI-Great Lakes Plan was released January 13, 2009. It's available at www.michigan.gov/deggreatlakes; click on Protection and Restoration. This document should help refresh your memory of past LWVMI program information and kick start a renewed commitment to our magnificent water resources. Michigan continues to face severe budget constraints that will likely result in significant program impacts; but in discussions last year, there was enthusiasm for efforts to make better use of existing resources through collaboration and education.

The Michigan Office of the Great Lakes invites you to participate in a MI-Great Lakes Plan Implementation Workshop on Wednesday, March 11, 2009 at the Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center, 55 S. Harrison Ave., Michigan State University, East Lansing 48824 from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Sign in begins at 8:00 a.m.

Advance registration is required, preferably by Wednesday, March 4. Please contact the Office of the Great Lakes at 517-335-4056 or by email at DEQ-GreatLakesRestoration@michigan.gov. More information regarding workshop objectives, a detailed agenda, and workshop materials will be available.

Available Delegate Slots for the LWV of Michigan State Convention

As the largest League in the state of Michigan, we have 11 delegates for the State Convention which runs from Friday evening to Sunday noon in **Lansing** on the **weekend of May 15-17th**. This is a fine opportunity to meet Leaguers from all over the state and learn how the League of Women Voters works and talk about issues. Oakland Area has several openings for Delegates and new members are welcome. **Contact Eva Packard** at packarde@juno.com or 248-473-5595 if you might be interested in attending the convention.

See the State Program Planning article in this *VOTER* for our League's input to the state board for program and advocacy. In addition to the items listed, we also discussed a Concurrence that will be voted on at the convention on large-scale animal feeding operations known as "Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation" or "CAFOs". The Berrien-Cass Counties League (which has CAFOs in their area) has a position that recommends state regulatory action and more public information regarding CAFOs in order to safeguard our waters. The Michigan League is proposing to adopt this as a state position which the state and all Leagues can advocate and lobby for. LWVOA members on 2/14 supported this Concurrence.



In Memoriam

Mary K. Heritage, a LWV lifetime member, passed away in November, 2008. Besides serving as president of the Rochester League (1973-75), she worked for more than a decade as Legislative Chair. In that capacity she was active in supporting league positions on all governmental levels. Locally, she was particularly interested in environmental issues and testified frequently at hearings relating to Clinton River projects. Mrs. Heritage was also active in various voter service activities including preparation of county and local Voter Guides and Voter Ready References

brochures for the Rochester area. She also served as a board member for the Detroit Metro Area League, was mentor to Macomb County leagues for many years, and was instrumental in chartering the LWV Troy.

Mrs. Heritage was also a long-time member of the Rochester Friends of the Library, the Historical Society, and an Elections Precinct Chair. She was a mayoral appointee to the Rochester Historical Commission.



*The League of Women Voters of Michigan and
Henry Ford Community College present*

**The 21st Century Voter: Promoting Michigan Voter Power
Friday, April 24, 2009, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm**

Mazzara Conference Center - Henry Ford Community College - Dearborn, MI

Keynote Address

**21st Century Voting: Innovations in State Election Laws
Jocelyn Benson**

Assistant Professor of Law, Wayne State University

Luncheon Speaker

**Fair & Impartial Courts: Election of Michigan Supreme Court Justices
The Honorable Marilyn Kelly**
Chief Justice, Michigan Supreme Court

Panel Discussion - Revisiting Term Limits

Senator Michael D. Bishop

Senate Majority Leader

Representative Andy Dillon

Speaker of the House

Dr. Marjorie Sarbaugh-Thompson

Professor, Wayne State University Dept. of Political Science

Request registration & conference info from voterpower@lwvmi.org or 517-484-5383



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:

- Wed. Mar. 25 7 pm** **"National Popular Vote Compact" study and consensus**
 Bloomfield Township Public Library, Meeting Room 2,
 1099 Lone Pine @Telegraph Rd, Bloomfield Twp. 48302

- Mon. Mar. 30 7 pm LWVOA Board meeting. 725 S. Adams Rd., Birmingham 48009

- Thur. Apr. 2 7 pm "Let's Talk about Health Care for Children" by LWV Grosse Pointe
 Grosse Pte War Memorial, 32 Lakeshore, Grosse Pte Farms 48326

- Tue. Apr 21 7 pm** **Observer Corps Training**
 Heritage Park Visitor Center, 25099 Farmington Rd., Farmington Hills 48336

- Fri. Apr. 24 9am-3pm **The 21st Century Voter: Promoting Michigan Voter Power** by LWVMI
 Mazzara Conference Center, Henry Ford Community College, Dearborn

- Tue. May 5 7am-8pm **Election Day for City of Bloomfield Hills and the School Districts of Clarkston, Clawson, Ferndale, Hazel Park, Lake Orion, Lamphere, Oak Park and Clarenceville.** See the Oakland County website (www.oakgov.com/clerkrod) under the Election Division for candidate names for each district and for proposals.

- Fri-Sun May 15-17 **LWVMI State Convention**, Lansing, MI Delegate slots are available.

- Sat. May 30 10 am** **LWVOA Annual Meeting**
 Shenandoah Country Club, 5600 Walnut Lake Rd, West Bloomfield 48323

*The community needs everyone to participate in order
 to be a strong, safe, fair and vibrant place to live.*

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