

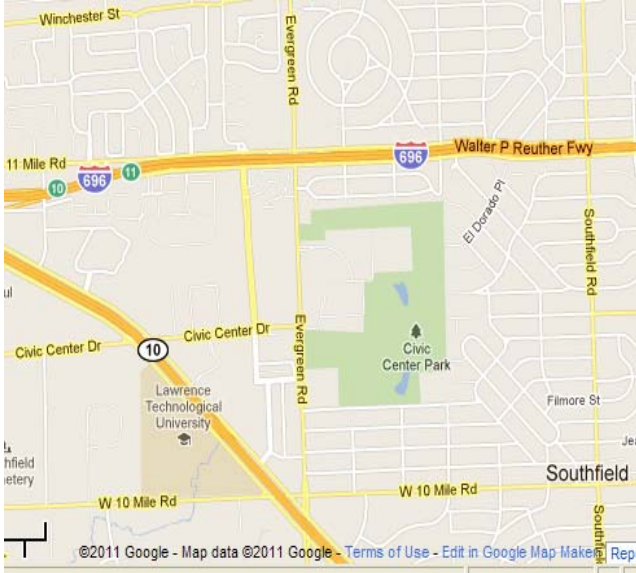


Oakland Voter

League of Women Voters Oakland Area
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2011-2012 Issue 2

November-December 2011



The Role of the Federal Government in Public Education

A LWVUS Study with Consensus Questions Part II – Equity and Funding

**Monday, November 14
10:00 am – noon**

**Southfield Library
26300 Evergreen. Southfield 48076**

**Between 11 Mile (I-696) and 10 Mile Rds
in the Southfield Civic Center**

PANEL DISCUSSION:

Cassandra Ulbrich, State Board of Education

Vice President for Advancement and Community Relations at Macomb Community College

Geri Rinschler, Trustee, Birmingham School Board, 1996 to the present;

Current Chair of the Oakland County School Board Association.

In September, we discussed and answered consensus questions on common core standards – and you will all agree that the questions were difficult. The next five questions look easier.

This time around, we are dealing with the traditional federal involvement in public education and how it has evolved. Should federal funds be distributed based on need, population and enrollment or should they be given to those who best qualify for competitive grants? How should mandates and funding be related, or should they? What should the relationship be? An example of a mandate attached to funding was the requirement to lift the cap on the number of charter schools to qualify for Race to the Top Funding.

Join us as we continue to develop a position that will be the basis for LWVUS action on the role of the federal government in public education. **Remember to bring your Consensus Questions in the Sept-Oct. Oakland Voter** (which is available online at www.LWVVOA.org). We will be covering Questions 10-15.

See pages 5 and 6 of this VOTER for background information related to Equity and Funding.

Page 2: President's message on elections activities, including local Proposal advocacy
Page 3: November elections – Voter Information and Voter Registration
Page 4: Oakland County and Congressional Redistricting
Page 7: Regional Workshop on Voter Service and the New Media

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2011-2012

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THE OAKLAND VOTER is the official publication of the League of Women Voters. It is published six 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.
- Editor: Eva Packard

LWVOA ON FACEBOOK!

If you are not already a member of Facebook, you can sign up at www.FACEBOOK.com and make "League of Women Voters Oakland Area" one of your Facebook friends.

Invite your friends to learn about League activities and upcoming programs.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Elections, Elections, Elections

The election season began with a request from Oakland Community College to register voters at OCC campuses. Carole Elder, Shelley Goldberg, Betty Spehar and Judy Bateman answered the call and agreed to register one day only at three campuses. They are laying the groundwork for next year when the presidential election should bring the need for a more extensive registration effort. (See article on page 3.)

Then came requests to endorse millages which provided us with opportunities to use our local positions. Our Board voted to endorse library millages in Farmington and Hazel Park, school district millages in Birmingham and Madison School districts, and a public safety millage in Farmington Hills. That kept me busy sending letters to the editors of the various local newspapers.

Judy Bateman, Jerry Burden, and Ann Edwards put together an incredible **nineteen** candidate forums this election cycle. When you consider that forums involve finding a facility, sending letters to all the candidates, coordinating moderators, panelists, screeners, persons distributing question cards, and making arrangements with local cable companies, this is a truly herculean effort. Judy, Jerry and Ann seem to have it down to a science, but nevertheless I stand in awe. Next month we will list our many volunteers.

Don't forget Deb Horner and Tera Moon who take the information from all those questionnaires from the candidates and put it online to make sure every Oakland County voter can get the information they need on candidates and proposals.

Patricia Finn is another unsung hero. She sent me copies of all the press releases she mailed to local newspapers publicizing these forums, and I was amazed that she could keep it all straight.

Eva Packard is now doing voter service for State, but is always available as a consultant with her wealth of knowledge of Oakland County elections.

This keeps us all incredibly busy, but this is what we do, and it is gratifying to hear the thanks of candidates who rely on us to provide them with a means to get their messages out, as well as thanks from ordinary citizens who attend the forums or watch them on TV or rely on our online voter guides.

Mary Ann Barkach, 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.

VOTER SERVICE for November 8th, 2011 City & School ELECTIONS



VOTER GUIDES for the **November 8th elections in 28 cities and 20 school districts** are posted on our website www.LWVOA.org. Proposals on the ballot are included in each guide as applicable to that city or school district. Guides with just proposal wording are also available for Bloomfield Hills and West Bloomfield Township.

Cities with contested elections are: Auburn Hills, Birmingham, Clawson, Farmington, Farmington Hills, Ferndale, Keego Harbor, Lathrup Village, Madison Hts, Northville, Novi, Oak Park, Pleasant Ridge, Rochester, Rochester Hills, Royal Oak, South Lyon, Southfield, and Sylvan Lake. **School districts with contested elections** are: Avondale, Berkley, Birmingham, Clarenceville, Farmington, Huron Valley, Madison, Novi, Oxford, Rochester, and West Bloomfield.

See the **CANDIDATE FORUMS calendar** on www.lwvoa.org for forums scheduled for the Cities of Southfield, Clawson, Keego Harbor, Sylvan Lake, Pleasant Ridge, Royal Oak, Rochester Hills, Ferndale, Farmington Hills, Rochester, Birmingham, and Lathrup Village and for the School Boards of the Huron Valley, Rochester, West Bloomfield, Birmingham, and Berkley districts. Forums have been recorded and are being rebroadcast on local cable with some also available online on-demand. Check with your local cable organization for rerun information.

A Voter Guide is also being prepared for the **Primary election in State Representative District 29** where the incumbent (Tim Melton) recently resigned. It should be posted online by Oct. 18th.

REGISTERING VOTERS – HERE (Oakland County) AND THERE (Florida)

by Carole Elder and Mary Ann Barkach

Responding to a request from Oakland Community College to register voters, Betty Spehar and Shelley Goldberg worked two hours, 11:30 A.M. - 1:30 P.M. at the Highland Lakes Campus on Sept. 14th. Carole Elder took a turn from 3 - 5 P.M. When finished, **70** students were registered!!!! This number is quite noteworthy. Carole delivered the forms to the Oakland County Clerk's office.

What made the effort at the Highland Lakes campus so successful? Our OCC contact, Velma Jones, arranged for us to be in the student lounge when classes were beginning and letting out. For the entire week, she was emphasizing civics and celebrating Constitution Day with displays and hand outs. Uncle Sam appeared on stilts. We expect to maintain contact with OCC and prepare to provide a good quantity of volunteers for voter registration prior to the 2012 presidential election.

Judy Bateman, plus members of the NAACP and AAUW, volunteered at the Royal Oak and Southfield campuses of OCC. This was done on Monday and Wednesday, Sept. 12 and Sept. 14. Judy reported a more normal total of 12 registrants, and she mailed the forms to the Royal Oak and Southfield City clerks.

Contrast this with what is going on in Florida and other parts of the country where statehouses are passing laws making it harder for eligible voters to cast ballots. These laws include requiring photo identification, cutting back on early voting and putting restrictions on voter registration drives.

A New York Times article on October 3, reported that in Florida, "a new law imposing restrictions on voter registration drives has led the state's League of Women Voters, a non-partisan group that had registered voters for 72 years, to call a moratorium on new registration drives in the state, citing penalties that the group can face under the law. Independent groups that register voters – like the league – face fines of between \$50 to \$1,000 per applicant if they fail to turn in the applications to elections officials in a timely manner. 'It's too cumbersome,' said Deirdre Macnab, the league's president. 'There is too much red tape and regulation'".

The Brennan Center for Justice at New York University has concluded that the laws and executive orders that were issued in 14 states this year "could make it significantly harder for more than 5 million eligible voters to cast ballots in 2012."

DUES NOTE:

Our new League year began July 1st, which means DUES are due for the 2011-2102 League year. **Dues remain at \$60.** If you have not yet paid your dues for this League year, go to www.LWVOA.org and click on JOIN THE LEAGUE to print a membership form to use for mailing a check payable to LWVOA to our office or to utilize PayPal to pay your dues online.

CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING FOR 2012-2020 ELECTIONS

By Sheryl Mitchell

Public Act 128 of 2011 passed by the state legislature was signed by Governor Snyder on August 9, 2011. The legislation **divides the State of Michigan into 14 Congressional districts**. Michigan lost one district because of our decrease in population based on the 2010 Census. **Oakland County will be represented by four (4) Congressional districts: 8, 9, 11 and 14**. None of them is wholly contained within Oakland County.

The districts are not without contention. The Legislative Black Caucus has announced that it intends to file suit in Federal Court to challenge the State and Federal legislative redistricting maps on the basis that, as drawn, the maps will result in fewer minorities elected to the Legislature and Congress. Michigan law requires that the redistricting process be completed by November 1, 2011. Unless a challenge is upheld, the new Congressional districts will go into effect on the 91st day after the final adjournment of the 2011 Regular Session of the Michigan Legislature.

The League of Women Voters of Michigan participated with more than 40 organizations as part of the Michigan Redistricting Collaborative. In June, LWVMI President Sue Smith gave testimony before the Senate Committee on Redistricting to encourage greater transparency and expanded opportunities for the public to provide feedback on redistricting plans.

The first elections using the new districts will be held in 2012 and the terms of office will start in January 2013. Current U.S. Representatives representing Oakland County are Sander Levin, Thaddeus McCotter, Gary Peters and Mike Rogers. Rogers will run in the new 8. Levin will run in the new 9, McCotter will run in the new 11. Peters plans to run in the new 14 as does Congressman Hansen Clarke of Wayne County.

The four districts are comprised of the following cities and townships (villages are included in their townships):

District 8:

Oakland County: *Cities:* Clarkston, Oakland part of Fenton, Rochester, most of Rochester Hills;
Townships: Addison, Brandon, Groveland, Holly. Independence, Oakland, Orion, Oxford, Rose, Springfield.
Ingham and Livingston Counties: All of county.

District 9:

Oakland County: *Cities:* Berkley, southern Clawson, Ferndale, Hazel Park, Huntington Woods, Madison Heights, Pleasant Ridge, Royal Oak; *Townships:* Bloomfield, Southfield.
Macomb County: *Cities:* Center Line, Eastpointe, Fraser, Mt. Clemens, Roseville, St. Clair Shores, part of Sterling Heights, Macomb part of Grosse Pointe Shores, Warren; *Townships:* Clinton.

District 11:

Oakland County: *Cities:* Auburn Hills, Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, northern Clawson, Farmington, Lake Angelus, Oakland part of Northville, Novi, southwest corner of Rochester Hills, South Lyon, Troy, Walled Lake, Wixom;
Townships: Commerce, Highland, Lyon, Milford, Novi, Waterford, northwest part of West Bloomfield, White Lake.
Wayne County: *Cities:* Livonia, Wayne part of Northville, Plymouth; *Townships:* Canton, Northville, Plymouth.

District 14:

Oakland County: *Cities:* Farmington Hills, Keego Harbor, Lathrup Village, Oak Park, Orchard Lake, Pontiac, Southfield, Sylvan Lake; *Townships:* Royal Oak, southeast part of West Bloomfield.
Wayne County: *Cities:* part of Detroit (north/east/along river), Grosse Pointe, Grosse Pointe Park, Grosse Pointe Woods, Hamtramck, Harper Woods, Wayne part of Grosse Pointe Shores.

Alternative Forms of Voting - When a Consensus is not a Consensus

In March, we met at Renate Soulen's house to learn about Alternative Forms of Voting Systems and take consensus on this state study. Debra Horner patiently described Plurality Voting, Approval Voting, and Instant Runoff Voting. Among other things we learned that voting systems and their consequences are not the easiest things to understand. But we decided we liked Plurality Voting which we have now. We had no consensus on Approval Voting. We opposed Instant Runoff Voting, thinking it needed testing on a local level.

We recently learned that the other leagues in Michigan also had difficulty and reached a variety of conclusions, and therefore, the state League announced that there was **No Consensus**.



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. 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 most needy 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>.

Produced by the LWVUS The Education Study: The Role of the Federal Government in Public Education
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See the national website www.lwv.org at For Members/Projects and Programs for additional Background Papers:

- **.Role of Federal Government in Public Education: Historical Perspectives**
- **.Common Core Standards and Assessments**
- **.Where Are We Now and the Impact on Early Childhood Education**
- **.Legislation and Funding for the Education of Children with Special Needs**

Regional Workshop on VOTER SERVICE and the NEW MEDIA

Saturday, November 19, 10 am – 3 pm

Livonia Library, 32777 Five Mile Rd (East of Farmington Rd in Livonia Civic Center)

LWV of Michigan will be holding regional workshops to help Leagues enhance our capabilities for the 2012 elections. Lunch is included in the event. **Registration is required** and there is a \$10 fee. Go to www.lwvmi.org/events and scroll down to TAPPING THE POWER: Voter Service and the New Media.

The morning will focus on **online Voter Guides**. The **VOTE411** tool is being offered free by LWVMI for use throughout the state. Kristal Jackson of LWV Flint Area, a user of VOTE411 in 2010 and 2011, will walk us through the process and demonstrate the results they were able to achieve for voters. We will also discuss and demonstrate **video Voter Guides** which have been used by Flint and Kalamazoo.

In the afternoon, Mary Pickett of Oakland Area will discuss the use of **newer communication media**, such as **websites, Facebook, and electronic newsletters** to help us maximize the visibility and effectiveness of our voter service information for elections as well as its use for other League activities. Her presentation will update and expand on the excellent and very well-received presentation that she made at state convention.

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Time Dated Material Enclosed

Calendar of Events

For elections, see Voter Guides and Candidate Forums on www.LWVOA.org.

Wed. Oct 26 7 pm LWVOA Board meeting @ LWVOA office, 725 S. Adams Rd, Birmingham 48009

Tue. Nov 8 7am-8pm CITY & SCHOOL Board General ELECTIONS
29 Cities, 20 School Districts, State Rep 29 Primary (See Page 3)

Mon. Nov 14 10 am GENERAL MEETING
Role of the Federal Government in Public Education
Part II – Equity and Funding - Discussion and Consensus
@Southfield Library, 26300 Evergreen, Southfield 48076 (See Pages 1, 5, 6)

Sat. Nov 19 10am-3pm Regional Workshop on Voter Service and the New Media
@Livonia Civic Center Library, 32777 Five Mile Rd, Livonia
Register at www.lwvmi.org/events. Lunch included; \$10 fee. (See Page 7)

Sat. Jan 28 10 am National Program Planning at Vicki Lange’s house

Fri. Feb 17 6 pm LWV Birthday Party at Renate Soulen’s house

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