



Oakland Voter

League of Women Voters Oakland Area
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President: Mary Ann Barkach e-mail: Pres@lwvoa.org

2011-2012 Issue 3

January–February 2012

NATIONAL PROGRAM PLANNING and BRUNCH

SATURDAY, JANUARY 28, 2012

10:00 a.m.

At the home of Vicki Lange

115 Linda Knoll
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304

What is national program planning? It's our chance to take a look at the studies we already have completed, the positions we have developed, and whether they are still viable. Do they need review or updating?



We can discuss new emerging issues and evaluate possible studies, considering:

- Is there widespread member interest?
- Is this a timely issue?
- Is government action the most effective way to address the problem?

Local leagues can propose one new study, update, or a concurrence with a study that another League is proposing. If we propose a new study, we need to submit a statement stating the study's scope.

National also wants to know if we have been able to utilize national positions in our local communities.

A list of US positions is on page 7. For more info, go to www.LWV.org and type **LWVUS positions** in the search box. A summary will come up. You can click on a position to get the full statement.

It is always a treat to meet in Vicki's western style home where we can admire her many western artifacts while we munch and discuss. This is a potluck brunch. See **Map/Directions on page 7**.



RSVP to Patricia Finn at 248-302-3510 and let her know what you plan to bring – coffee cake, egg casserole, fruit, etc.

Dinner and a Movie!

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2012

6:30 – 9:30 P.M.

At the home of Renate Soulen

5333 Hickory Bend
Bloomfield Township

RSVP to 248-642-6568

(Map & Directions on page 6.)

Join us for LWVOA's Fundraising Birthday Party
Cost: \$30 per person, or \$50 per couple

A 3-course dinner including wine and non-alcoholic beverages will be **followed by the movie "Dave"**. An improbable political satire, this film addresses political corruption while also providing comedy and even a bit of romance. Informed voters can have fun - come and enjoy! ☺



Funds raised will **support the 2012 Public Service Announcement (PSA) contest for high school students**. It's focused on stimulating voters to become informed before casting a vote. Tag line:

Know Before You Go – Be An *Informed* Voter.

Details about entering the fourth annual PSA contest can be found on our website www.LWVOA.org.

LWV Detroit Metro Area meeting Topic: Water Quality

Sat., February 4, 2011

10:00 a.m.

St. Andrew Lutheran Church

6255 Telegraph Rd. (n. of Maple)
Bloomfield Township, MI 48301

Speaker details to be sent by Email.

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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

2011 concluded with one last challenge for our Voter Service people who were completing 19 candidate forums in Oakland County. Mary Bugeia of DMA had received a last minute request to do one in Warren for the city election. Mary contacted us and together the Dearborn-Dearborn Heights League and LWVOA accepted the challenge and put one together which was well received by the participants and those who attended.

Coming up in February is our fund-raising movie social at Renate Soulen's home. (See page 1.) After that, study and consensus will occupy us for the first half of 2012.

A national **study on Privatization** is scheduled for March and April with consensus due by May 1. This timely study will consider the transfer of services, assets and functions to the private sector, community impact, and strategies to ensure transparency and accountability. The study is being chaired by Jeff Jenks. If you would like to join the study, contact Jeff at travelisfun@wowway.com.

A State League **study on Redistricting** is also in the works. It will include a brief history of redistricting in Michigan; the problems with the redistricting process, and an overview and evaluation of procedures used by other states. Consensus questions and background information will be sent to local Leagues with consensus to be completed by June 1.

This study should be especially timely since Redistricting in Oakland County is still in the news with the controversial passage of a bill that will shrink the number of County Commissioners from 25 to 21 and allow the commission members to carve out voting districts. Until passage of this bill, districts were drawn by the five-member Apportionment Commission, made up of the County Clerk, Treasurer and Prosecutor, as well as the Chairs of the county's Democratic and Republican party committees. This year, it is 3-2 majority Democratic. The Board of Commissioners is majority Republican and the Democrats have called the measure politically motivated and plan to challenge it as against the state Constitution.

The State League has been busy. In the area of advocacy, they are fighting obstacles to voting, including State Election bills SB751 and SB754 that create unnecessary barriers to voting. Even though there is no evidence of fraud in Michigan elections, the bills would require photo ID to obtain absentee ballots and require state certification and training of third party agencies doing mail-in registration which will make it more difficult for League members to register people to vote.

On top of that, the LWVMI office moved to 600 W. St Joseph Street, Lansing, MI 48933. The phone number 517.484.5383 will remain the same. This move was necessitated by the Impressions 5 Museum's building renovation taking over the League's office space.

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.



Role of Federal Government in Public Education, a national study, was completed and consensus taken due to the diligence of education committee members - Mary Ann Barkach, Grace Kachaturoff, Kathleen Maisner, Geri Rinschler, Barbara Rosalik and Lori Soifer.

The first of two general meetings covered **Common Core Standards** - educational standards developed by the states and adopted by all but two states. **Dr. Michael Yocum**, the Director of Learning Services at Oakland Schools, along with Panel Chair **Geri Rinschler** and **Lori Soifer**, both Birmingham School Board trustees and League members, explained what Oakland County is doing to develop a high quality curriculum and to train teachers. In the past tests relied on multiple choice questions. Now the focus in teaching and testing will be on critical thinking and writing in which a reasonable argument should be made to advance an idea. This will be an enormous job requiring a multi-year effort at a time when less funds are available.

Our second general meeting covered **Equity and Funding**, and we were fortunate to have State School Board Member **Dr. Casandra E. Ulbrich** speak, along with **Geri Rinschler**, Panel Chair. They described how under the Bush administration and **No Child Left Behind** legislation, the emphasis was on accountability as measured in test scores and set 2014 as the year in which all students were to be 100% proficient in math and reading. Schools were measured on AYP (Annual Yearly Progress) goals, and thousands of schools failed. In August, 2011, Pres. Obama's Secretary of Education Arne Duncan reversed direction of the law and urged states to apply for waivers if they were carrying out serious school improvement programs.

Pres. Obama emphasized competition, and urged states to apply for **Race to the Top Funding (RTTT)**. The problem with this was that states had only two months to apply. In the first round, only two states got RTTT funding – Michigan not included. Now Michigan has the reforms, but not the funding. Our panelists both believe that the Dept. of Education should be non-partisan.

In discussing these issues and reaching consensus, LWVOA members rejected the over-emphasis on testing in recent years and believed teaching should emphasize knowledge, skills and reflective thinking. Use of the word “mandates” was rejected, preferring government “support”. Already approved mandates and any new programs should be fully funded. They felt a combination of competitive and non-competitive grants are acceptable, if the states are given sufficient time to apply. Implementation of Common Core Standards should be voluntary, not mandatory, with the federal government assuming the supporting role in the development of curriculum. The schools primary responsibility is to provide the best teaching/learning environment for ALL students. While not part of the consensus, many members expressed concern that public education is slowly being dismantled by entrepreneurs and groups with their own agendas, making education a profitable venture. Funding for public education is diminishing as “reform” institutions are established.



Coming up – Privatization Study by Mary Ann Barkach

Our work is never done. Next up is the national **Privatization Study**. The scope of the study “is to identify those parameters and policy issues to be considered in connection with proposals to transfer federal, state or local government services, assets and/or functions to the private sector. It will review the stated goals and the community impact of such transfers, and identify strategies to ensure transparency, accountability, and preservation of the common good.” **To participate in this timely study, contact Jeff Jenks**, Chairman, at travelisfun@wowway.com. Jan Dolan is a committee member. Jeff and Jan would like others to join them.

A Michigan example of privatization dilemmas is occurring in Grand Rapids where the State wants to dismiss 170 nursing assistants at \$20/hr. on the public payroll and replace them with contract workers at \$10 /hr. at a 125 year old veterans' home serving nearly 600 residents. The plan has resulted in a lawsuit contending that patient care is being jeopardized. A *New York Times* 11/07/11 article “A Hidden Toll as States Shift to Contract Workers” can be found at www.nytimes.com by searching for “As states shift to contract workers, savings”.

Candidate Forum Report Fall 2011 by Judy Bateman

This election season LWV Oakland Area was involved in **20 candidate forums** from the primary in August through the November general election. The forums were well attended and many were covered in the media. We were even served coffee and cookies at a few forums. Eighteen forums were **coordinated by Jerry Burden, Judy Bateman, and Ann Edwards**. City forums hosted included Southfield (primary and general), Clawson, Keego Harbor, Sylvan Lake, Pleasant Ridge, Royal Oak, Rochester Hills (primary and general), Ferndale, Rochester, Birmingham, and Lathrup Village. School board forums hosted covered the Huron Valley, Birmingham, Rochester, West Bloomfield, and Berkley districts. The Council of Homeowner Associations in Farmington Hills coordinated a city forum which we co-sponsored and Mary Ann Barkach participated as a questioner on the panel. We also teamed with LWV of Detroit Metro Area to hold a forum for Warren in Macomb County for their city election.

Many thanks to our moderators: Carla Gribbs, Mary Howarth, Jerry Burden, Judy Bateman, Tera Moon, Sheryl Mitchell, and Renate Soulen. The following members and friends were screeners, timers, and pages: John Magary, Laura Gogola, Carole Elder, Cathleen Hodson, Tylene Henry (from NAACP), Royal Oak Chamber of Commerce, Renate Soulen, Kim Bateman, Pat Szura, Karen DeGrendel, Helen Sergott, Linda Brown, and Kathy Dorn. Oakland County forums were videotaped for viewing on local cable stations and some were also available online for viewing. Thanks to everyone who helped for a job well done.

Be aware that you have to specify a political party to get a Feb. 28 Presidential Primary ballot.

Interviewing City and County Clerks by Mary Ann Barkach

LWV members fanned out in November-December to interview city and county clerks. Results of the study and recommendations for changes to policy or practices will be distributed to and discussed with clerk associations and the Secretary of States Bureau of Elections staff. The survey is a national LWVEF Public Advocacy for Voter Protection project which the LWV of Michigan is participating in.

Here in Oakland County, city/township clerks were interviewed by **Mary Howarth and Ann Edwards** in **Rochester Hills**, **Renate Soulen** in **Bloomfield Township**, and **Gretchen Pugsley and Doug DePoorter** in **Novi**. The purpose was to collect information about how local clerks recruit and train election workers, and what election-day problems they encounter. Our members found the interviews to be informative, and they were impressed with the availability and cooperativeness of the clerks.

County Clerk Bill Bullard and Election Director Joe Rozell were interviewed by **Sheryl Mitchell and Eva Packard**. Oakland County provides poll worker training for communities with less than 10,000 population. Communities with more than 10,000 population do their own election training or they can go to the County for training. Poll workers who miss the local training session also can attend the county training.

Oakland County faced an unusual challenge when Pontiac's Emergency Manager fired the City Clerk shortly before the November 8th election, and the County had to assist in administering the election. Having sufficient poll workers proved to be a challenge, and the County helped the city work around the shortages due to poll workers who resigned or did not show up by recruiting a few from townships with no elections, by merging separate precincts in a location and by sending a few County workers to help. Fortunately, only a State Rep vacancy and an uncontested school board election were on the ballot so turnout was light.

Italian American Club election

The Italian American Club in Livonia again asked the LWVOA to conduct their election on October 19th from 11:30 am until 7:00 pm. **Linda DePoorter** chaired the project assisted by her husband, **Doug DePoorter, Betty Spehar, Gretchen Pugsley, Jan Dolan, and Mary Ann Barkach**. Linda organized the election in a very professional manner and taking part was enjoyable. Nevertheless, it proved challenging because the vote was very close requiring a recount. Kay Pugsley joined us for the recount. This effort is also a fundraiser, and LWVOA was paid well for our effort.

SCHOLARSHIP in Memory of Fran Fisher

Fran Fisher's veterinarian son Paul Bloom has set up a scholarship in her memory at Michigan State University to help veterinary students finance their education. It combines Fran's love of teaching and her love of animals. Every \$2 contributed is matched by another \$1 until the matching pool is exhausted. Donations are tax-deductible on your federal income tax form. (Fran's family has also made a generous contribution to LWVOA in her memory.)

Make checks payable to the **Frances Melman Fisher Memorial Spartan Cornerstone Scholarship Challenge** or payable to **MSU with a note attached specifying the name of the Scholarship.**

Mail the check to: MSU, 300 Spartan Way, East Lansing, MI 48824-1005

Fran was a League leader as well as an exceptional teacher who inspired her students about science and the environment and its flora and fauna. Her house was a wonderful home for a variety of animals.

Marilyn Hanning bequest

In November, LWVOA gratefully received a \$1000 bequest from Avril H. Fenwick of S. Carolina, in honor of his mother, Marilyn M. Hanning. Marilyn had been an LWVOA member, though not an active one, but she was a big supporter and did not forget us even when she moved away. She especially enjoyed the Voter Service materials that she received. She was also a member of AAUW and enjoyed music and had a large CD collection.

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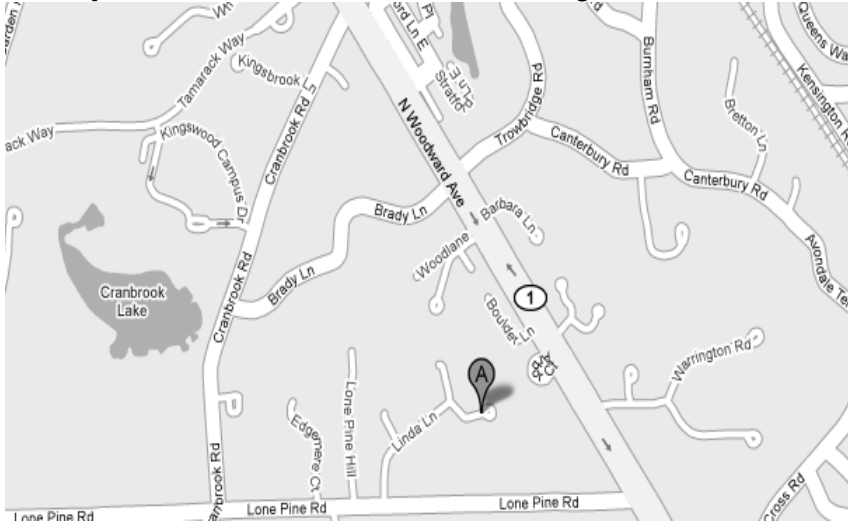
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FINAL NOTICE regarding 2011-2012 DUES

Our new League year began July 1st, which means DUES are due for the 2011-2012 League year. **Dues remain at \$60.** We must report our membership for this year to state and national by January 31, which means **we must receive your payment by January 28th in order to keep you on the mailing list. 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. Mail it with a check payable to LWVOA to our office. Or utilize the PayPal option to pay your dues online.**

Map/Directions – Sat., January 28th National Program Planning and Brunch



Map to Home of
Vicki Lange
115 Linda Knoll,
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304
248-646-5317

Vicki's home is located off Linda Lane, which is north of Lone Pine Rd. between Cranbrook Rd. and Woodward.

Drive north on Linda Lane to a yellow sign with an arrow; the house behind the sign is Vicki's and has a long circular driveway.

LWVUS Public Policy Positions

REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

Promote an open governmental system that is representative, accountable and responsive.

Voting Rights

- Citizen's Right to Vote
- DC Self-Government/Full Voting Representation

Election Process

- Apportionment
- Campaign Finance
- Selection of the President

Citizen Rights

- Citizen's Right to Know/Citizen Participation
- Individual Liberties
- Public Policy on Reproductive Choices

Congress and the Presidency

- Congress
- The Presidency

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Promote peace in an interdependent world by working cooperatively with other nations and strengthening international organizations.

United Nations

Trade

U.S. Relations with Developing Countries

Arms Control

Military Policy and Defense Spending

NATURAL RESOURCES

Provide an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest.

Natural Resources

Resource Management

Environmental Protection and Pollution Control

- Air Quality
- Energy
- Land Use
- Water Resources
- Waste Management
- Nuclear Issues

Public Participation

Agriculture Policy

SOCIAL POLICY

Secure equal rights and equal opportunity for all. Promote social and economic justice and the health and safety of all Americans.

Equality of Opportunity

- Equal Rights
- Education, Employment and Housing

Fiscal Policy

- Tax Policy
- Federal Deficit
- Funding of Entitlements

Health Care

Immigration

Meeting Basic Human Needs

- Income Assistance
- Support Services
- Housing Supply

Child Care

Early Intervention for Children at Risk

Violence Prevention

Gun Control

Urban Policy

Death Penalty



League of Women Voters® Oakland Area

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Time Dated Material Enclosed

Calendar of Events

- Sat. Jan 28 10 am National Program Planning** at Vicki Lange’s house (See Pages 1 and 7.)
115 Linda Knoll, Bloomfield Hills 48304
RSVP to Patricia Finn (248-302-3510). Let her know what you will bring.
- Sat. Feb. 4 10 am LWV Detroit Metro Area meeting on Water Quality
St. Andrew Lutheran Church, 6255 Telegraph, Bloomfield Twp 48301
- Thu. Feb. 9 7 pm LWVOA Board meeting @ LWVOA office, 725 S. Adams Rd, Birmingham 48009
- Fri. Feb. 17 6:30 pm LWV Birthday Party** – Dinner & Movie “Dave” (See Pages 1 and 6.)
Renate Soulen, 5333 Hickory Bend, Bloomfield Hills 48304
RSVP 248-642-6568 Cost \$30 per person, \$50 per couple.
- Tue. Feb. 28 7am-8pm Presidential Primary (Closed) ELECTION – Must request Party Ballot
Pontiac & Auburn Hills residents also have State Rep. 29 General election.
- Mar./Apr. General meetings on privatization. Dates to be determined. (See Page 3)
- Sat. May 12 10 am LWV Oakland Area Annual Meeting**
- Sat-Tues June 8-12 LWV of United States national convention, Washington, DC

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