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2017 Chapter Program Meetings

We will have Chapter Program meetings in January for both East and West side chapters. The focus this year will be on State and Local Program, in anticipation of LWV Ohio's May 5-7 convention in Cuyahoga Falls and our own annual meeting on May 20.

- Cleveland Heights/University Hts/Hillcrest. Chapter Program meeting will be on **Saturday January 21, 2:00-4:30** at Cleveland Heights/ University Heights Main Library, 2345 Lee Road
- Westside Chapters Program meeting will be on **Saturday January 28, 9:30-11:30** at Rocky River Public Library at 1600 Hampton Road
- Shaker Heights Chapter Program meeting will be held on **Sunday January 29, 1:30-3:30** at the home of **Susan Troia**, 13710 Shaker Boulevard, #906 in Cleveland

Any member can attend any of the chapter meetings. Chapter Program meetings are a major opportunity to set the direction of local League activities. It's also a great opportunity to connect with other Leaguers and let your voice be heard.

To read about current State and local positions go to www.lwvohio.org/site.cfm/Advocacy/LWVO-Positions.cfm

Greater Cleveland League positions are at www.lwvgreatercleveland.org/lwv-greater-cleveland-positions

Existing Chapter positions can also be reviewed at www.lwvgreatercleveland.org/chapter-positions

We will be sending out information on these meetings as we get a little closer to their dates. We hope to see all of you at one of the three meetings.

— *Michael Baron*

We Decide

One of the unique features of the League of Women Voters is its member involvement in deciding what public policy issues should be uppermost in our advocacy and education activities. In many kindred organizations, it is an elected board or an appointed program committee that makes such determinations.

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We Decide *continued from page 1*

Leagues have been deciding on our Program for many a year. Our list of active positions that we believe in is long but we do have a routine for checking on our good intentions. Members gather every January to undertake this Program review process. In 2017 we will be taking a hard look at our State League positions; in 2018, National League Program will undergo our scrutiny. In both years, we assess our local Program so we can reshape it as needed at the spring annual meeting.

League has a tried-and-true format for the reviews – it's simple: KEEP, DROP, UPDATE. This scheme prevents incessant “tinkering” with words and phrases and forces us to keep ourselves current on public policy issues. These face-to-face discussions pull on our collective wisdom and that improves our decision-making.

- The decision to KEEP is usually the easiest one. It results from member discussion: Does the word-ing still ring true? Do we believe action on the issue is important right now?
- The DROP decision is often the hardest. We worry that if we abandon a position, we won't be able to have a voice if the issue suddenly surfaces.
- UPDATE isn't that easy either – we can't work on very many updates at one time and while we do an update, we have to park our position and remain silent when the topic goes “live” in the public.

The best Program planning begins at home with members by re-reading our current position statements. They're on the websites of each level of League. Then we assemble at meetings to discuss the positions. Here's the place to champion some change that you think is needed. Echoes of these meetings can be carried into chapter meetings or maybe even a new Program blog. Your chapter may want to submit specific changes or a new study idea for consideration by the delegates at the spring LWVGC Annual Meeting. And chapters can even push Program recommendations up the line to state and national levels of League. It all begins – and ends – with YOU.

LWVGC jump-started planning in a new way this year. An ad hoc committee was appointed to assess our League's Program – KEEP, DROP, UPDATE – and to recommend streamlined wording where position overlap seemed to be present. Some repetitiveness had crept into our positions as a result of the recent mergers. Becoming a county-wide League had created new commonalities for us to consider. In some cases, state and national League positions looked more useful for advocacy than our older local positions.

You can review the Program Review Committee's suggestions before our program planning meetings. Click on the “Our League” link at the top of our home page, LWVGreaterCleveland.org. Then click on “Member Resources.”

Come learn what has been suggested and add your own input. See you in January.

– Janice Patterson

The man who says politics is no business of his has no business.

– Pericles

The Election is Over, but Our Work for Democracy Continues

First – what’s ahead. At the top of our agenda is our push to get Congressional redistricting reform done in Ohio – whether it’s through legislation or a ballot initiative. LWVO has been working for years to put a stop to gerrymandering in this state, and in 2015 Ohio voters overwhelmingly approved a ballot issue to create a bipartisan process with fair rules for drawing STATE legislative districts.

In the year-plus since then, our Fair Districts = Fair Elections coalition (visit FairDistrictsOhio.org to learn more) has worked with politicians from both major parties to extend that same fair process to our U.S. CONGRESSIONAL districts. Legislation introduced in both houses of the Ohio General Assembly and proposals by the Constitution Modernization Commission can be read on the Fair District’s website, but the passage of a fair plan may not happen as soon as we would like (before the next census and redistricting) or at all. So we have to be prepared to pursue a citizen initiative campaign again – which means we have to gear up to gather signatures. You can learn more by visiting www.LWVOhio.org.

Next, we must continue to work against voter suppression in Ohio and across the country. Here in our state, voters faced confusion over state rules and legal challenges to those rules at the same time they worried about their names being purged from the rolls, about long lines at early voting sites, about possible rejection of their provisional or absentee ballots over minor errors, and about the security of their ballots.

To protect and expand voting in our state, the League wants to safeguard voter registration lists and restore the registration of those who were wrongly purged, develop a portable registration system, reduce the use of provisional ballots, develop state funding to replace old voting machines, and expand the number of locations for early voting.

Across the country, the LWVUS will continue to fight voter suppression measures popping up in several states. We will continue to fight strict voter photo ID laws, onerous voter registration restrictions, voting-roll purges, cuts to early voting, and unnecessary reductions in polling locations.

Here in Greater Cleveland, we will be working on all of these efforts at the same time we meet to consider local and state program planning, host public policy forums, lobby state and federal office-holders promoting League positions, and work on making our own League work more efficiently and inclusively.

We urge you to join our efforts. We need volunteers to work on behalf of the League and American citizens.

Yours in League,

– Marcia Goldberg and Susan Murnane, co-presidents

Glossary of Terms

| | | |
|--------------|---|---|
| CCBOE | = | Cuyahoga County Board of Education |
| CMLS | = | Cleveland-Marshall Law School |
| CMSD | = | Cleveland Metropolitan School District |
| GOTV | = | Get Out The Vote |
| NOVA | = | Northeast Ohio Voter Advocates |
| RNC | = | Republican National Convention |
| RCV | = | Ranked-Choice-Voting |
| VBM | = | Vote By Mail |
| VR | = | Voter Registration |

Do You Want to Make Democracy Work?

New members are critical to LWV-GC's health to recruit, train, and develop new leaders. The Nominating Committee is actively seeking members who can bring new ideas and energy to the Board, committees, and chapters.

We are at a crossroads. We are fortunate to have had strong leaders to guide us through our merger -- but it is not healthy to impose on the same people forever. Another factor is that we are now so large that many areas of responsibility are too big for one volunteer to manage effectively. Board members must increasingly rely on assistants and committees. Taken together, the natural solution is to mentor successors who can bring new ideas and energy to the Board as existing members step into supporting roles. This sets up a cycle of renewal that will ensure LWV-GC remains viable and relevant in the decades to come.

Why should you consider a leadership position? The League is a respected organization, and an LWV leadership position is an impressive credential. The League is also a unique academy, a chance to develop your abilities and discover new talents. Social media journalism has forever changed the way voters acquire information about candidates and issues. Do you want to be part of providing trusted tools for voters to evaluate and use that information?

Which Board positions are open? There are twelve elected members. Each year, six people are elected to two-year terms. The Board appoints additional members to meet specific needs. This year, we will seek to fill at least some Board seats with new people.

We are now recruiting and interviewing candidates for Vice-President, Secretary, Chapter Liaison, Outreach, Advocacy, and Program. Three appointments are also up: Membership & Leadership Development, Voter Service Co-Chair, and Business Affairs. Finally, we are identifying people in the pipeline for 2018's election of co-Presidents, Treasurer, Voter Service, Membership, and Funding & Development.

You may want to learn the ropes working on a committee. A short-term project is a great way to get your feet wet. There are needs at the local, county, state, and national level. Could you head a petition drive? Would you enjoy editing a newsletter? Ever want to research an issue and see it result in a position?

Are you ready to grow with us? Ready to discover and develop your talents? Ready to Make Democracy Work? Now more than ever, we need you! Please call me or a committee member: **Paulanita Barker, Patricia Carter, Linda Lissauer, Joanne Siegla, Blanche Valancy, Kathy Woodbridge.**

– *Conda Boyd, Chair*, 440-899-2987, conda_boyd@yahoo.com

2016 Voter Service Update

LWVUS reports that the League's 2016 online voters' guide was a "huge success." VOTE411 had nearly 6 million sessions from Jan. 1 through Nov. 8 (Election Day), and more than 2.7 million of those sessions included candidates' biographies and responses. That represents a 279% increase in sessions nationwide to voters' guides on VOTE411 as compared to 2012, the last comparable election.

LWVUS is working to make improvements to the guide. Our League, which loaded all local candidates and tax issues, has replied to the LWVUS survey about the guide, but if you have any suggestions for improvement, please email me at lwvgreatercleveland@gmail.com.

Looking at the 2016 Google analytics for the guide, LWVUS reports that it cost 1 cent per user in Ohio to publish and distribute the voters' guide on VOTE411. As word spreads about this website, the cost per user should decrease as the number of users increases. Links to some of the Google analytics are posted on our website under the Voter/Citizen Info tab. Use is broken down by municipality, not county, but the graphics alone tell the tale of use across the state.

– *Marcia Goldberg*

Ohio Primary Election Reforms—Someday?

Ohio primaries should open up considerably and help to fix a lot of what ails our elections. At least that's what we'll be contributing to the statewide consensus effort happening now through Jan. 31, 2017.

Although the members who assembled on Dec. 3 couldn't agree on the main purpose primaries serve, they did agree that primaries for largely administrative offices (state and county officers and local governing bodies) ought to be nominated via nonpartisan ballots. Members also agreed that the main goals ought to be to increase voter turnout, to improve competitiveness, to lessen polarization, and to better enfranchise independent and minor-party voters.

As for the actual structure of Ohio primaries, members were unanimous in their dislike of the current semi-closed partisan system, principally because of the currently unenforced statutes requiring pollworkers to challenge crossover voters and requiring signed statements of loyalty to the newly selected political party. Members want those statutes repealed ASAP, as they infringe upon voter sovereignty. A truly open primary, they agreed, would be even better.

Members were also open to considering several alternative systems. They expressed most interest in a nonpartisan "top-two" system and the newer, less-tested alternative: "Ranked-Choice-Voting (RCV)," aka "Instant Run-off Voting." A future VOTER or eNews article will explain how such an election would work. On Dec. 3, members experienced RCV first-hand by ranking (and eating!) their preferred candy bars (Peppermint Patties won!).

All members present agreed, however, that before LWVO jumps on any bandwagon to work for one of these reforms, the details, anticipated improvements, unintended consequences and practical track records of each particular "reform" must be carefully examined. Stay tuned for early spring word from LWVO on whatever new positions we may have reached.

— Lynda Mayer

Winter and Spring Public Policy Forums

We are among the hosts of a series of locally focused forums planned for early in next year. Our partners are Case Western Reserve University, local library systems, and *The Plain Dealer/Cleveland.com*. The forums are being held all over Northeast Ohio and are free and open to the public. Here are the next three forums:

Tuesday, Jan. 31, 2017

"The Proposed Merger of Cleveland and East Cleveland. How Could This Happen? Should It?"

Moderated by Nick Castele, Ideastream

CWRU Campus, Tinkham Veale University Center, 7-8:30 p.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 21, 2017

"Will Cleveland's Eastside Gentrify? Can It Be Done Equitably?"

Moderated by Steven Litt, *The Plain Dealer*

Cleveland Heights Main Library, 2345 Lee Road, 7-8:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 21, 2017

"The Impact of State Budget Cuts on Northeast Ohio Communities"

Moderated by Brent Larkin, *Cleveland.com*

Parma Snow Branch, Cuyahoga County Public Library, 2121 Snow Road, 7-8:30 p.m.

— Michael Baron

Voter Service Activities 2016

Presidential election years always heighten interest in voting, and LWVGC took on more voter registration projects than usual. From the RNC downtown, to CSU, to Cleveland school open houses, to Cleveland high schools, the Hispanic Convencion, Neighborhood Family Practice, Asian Support Group and food pantries, our volunteers registered voters, dispensed Vote by Mail applications and bookmarks that promoted www.Vote411.org and our website. We partnered with Northeast Ohio Voter Advocates (NOVA) at some of these events. Some volunteers called people on the Purged Voters list to encourage them to register.

Chapters on both sides of town worked together to sponsor candidate forums for state senate, state representatives, the state school board and council districts. The National Council of Jewish Women/Cleveland co-sponsored the east side candidates' forum with the Hillcrest, Cleveland Heights, and Shaker chapters. Videos of both forums were made available through our website and watched by hundreds of people.

The following volunteers deserve recognition for their service: **Patricia Carter, Becky Thomas, Pearl Livingstone, Andrew Kohn, Blanche Valancy, Adele Cohn, Roz Peters, Claire and Mick Banasiak, Conda Boyd, Trudy Hutchinson, Jean Seasholtz, Marry Warren, Kathy Woolner, Leigh Tucker, Tucker Handley, Brenda Brown, Susan Murnane, Marcia Goldberg, Sue Hofelich, Jacquie Davis, Joanne Siegla, Penny Jeffrey, Janis Ford and Marilyn Whiteman.** A special thank you to Bay Village chapter for obtaining the lawn signs they made available to all the chapters. I apologize if I have missed anyone. We appreciate all your hours which gave LWVGC the opportunity to increase our visibility in the community and spread the word about our electronic voter guide www.Vote411.org.

– Penny Jeffrey, Chair, Voter Service Committee

LWVGC Voter Service 2016 GOTV

- LWVGC registered voters in downtown Cleveland July 18-21 during the RNC. We registered 25 voters, completed 15 Vote by Mail (VBM) applications and created a “BUZZ” of visibility at this event attended by citizens from throughout the U.S. and abroad. **Susan Murnane** led with **Patricia Carter**. Thanks go to **Marcia Goldberg, Claire and Mickey Banasiak, Andrew Kohn, Lynda Mayer, Clark Nelson, Terri Martincic** (a non-member and great volunteer who viewed out website and wanted to help our efforts), **Rosamonde Peters, Carolyn Sugiuchi, Jane Blackie, Shavonne Lestovich** (a new enthusiastic member who wanted to help), and **Paulanita Barker**. Many enjoyed it so much that they volunteered for several shifts on more than one day. We felt well-protected by police officers from all over the country including Wisconsin, Utah, California, Florida, Washington, and Akron and talked with Cleveland's own Police Chief Calvin Williams. Susan presented at the Cleveland Public Library on Tuesday. Patricia attended a TEDx Salon on Wednesday that focused on the Cleveland RNC 2016 and featured Lee Fisher; Sharon Brossard of Cleveland.com; Dr. Edward Horowitz, chair of CSU's School of Communications; and Dr. Richard Perloff, CSU's former School of Communications chair. This event was attended by students, state and community leaders, and RNC attendees and featured lively, engaging discussion on topics such as new ways to organize Presidential debates and ongoing problems with our current processes.

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LWVGC Voter Service *continued from page 6*

- Activity at voter registration tables at Cleveland State University August 29-31 was very rewarding, and we registered 154 voters and completed 113 VBM applications.
- The September 15 CMSD Open House at John Adams High School was well attended. The number of voter registrations (five) and VBM applications (three) were low, but we learned from talking to parents that they already had registered or checked their valid registration. The greater value came from speaking with students who would be 18 years old on election day, answering their questions and concerns about registering, letting them know that every valid vote is counted, and encouraging them to participate in their community. We urged them to attend Cleveland City Council meetings when possible and to get to know the candidates before voting.
- Voter registration tables were set up in several locations on the CSU campus from September 7-26, including the Student Center Atrium, Rhodes Tower Lobby, and on the street in front of the Music and Communication Building. We registered 64 voters and 23 VBM applicants. On September 27, the last day for registration to vote in the November election, CSU's Cleveland Marshall Law School requested a voter registration table in its lobby. There were three voters registered and one VBM applicant. The law school also provided a laptop for those who wanted to check on their registration and the location of their polling place.
- **Patricia Carter** worked with the John Adams and Glenville High School librarian during several trips to the high schools and submitted 20 VRs and 6 VBM applications (a correction from previous report) to NOVA for tabulation and transport to the CCBOE. The schools later called the LWV representative and reported five more voter registrations and asked for help in getting them to the Board of Elections.
- **Jean Robejsek** contacted Patricia regarding **Lisa Wong's** request for LWVGC to assist the Asian Support Group on Payne and Superior Avenues on October 26 with information on how to fill out VBM ballots and submit them. A CCBOE staff member also attended the session.

– Patricia Carter, Voter Service

A free society is a society where it is safe to be unpopular.

– Adlai Stevenson

Save These Dates in 2017

Saturday, January 21, 2:00 - 4:30 p.m.
Saturday, January 28, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.
Sunday, January 29, 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.
All Above Chapter Program Meetings - see Page 1

Tuesday, January 31, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.
Tuesday, February 21, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.
Tuesday, March 21, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.
Public Policy Forums - see Page 5

See the LWVGC website (www.lwvgreatercleveland.org) under **News and Events/Calendar** for more information about Upcoming Events.

VOTER Co-Editors
Wendy Deuring
Anne Engel



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LWV of Greater Cleveland
50 Public Square, #938
Cleveland, OH 44113
216-781-8375
LWVGreaterCleveland.org