



Bulletin

League of Women Voters
of Greater Omaha
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League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha

A non-partisan political organization open to all persons 18 years of age or older

January 2009

Volume 51 No 6



League Program Planning for 2009-2010

Monday, January 12, 2009, 7 p.m.
At the home of Kathy

We need your ideas! Please join us!

CALENDAR

- Monday, January 12, 7 p.m.: League program planning for 2009-2010. Wine and cheese at home of Kathy
- Tuesday, January 13, 6:30 p.m., League Office: Social Policy Committee meeting. See page 3.
- Tuesday, January 27, 7 p.m.: Great Decisions Discussion, U.S. and rising global powers. See page 2.
- Monday, February 2, 12:15 p.m., League Office: LWVGO board meeting.
- Tuesday, February 3, 7 p.m.: Great Decisions Discussion, Afghanistan/Pakistan
- Tuesday, February 10, 7 p.m.: Great Decisions Discussion: Energy and the global economy. See page 2.
- Thursday, February 12, 11:30 a.m., Field Club, 3615 Woolworth Ave.: League birthday luncheon. Speaker Janis McMillen, our liaison to the LWVUS. See page 2 and flyer
- Tuesday, February 17, 8:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., State Capitol: Legislative Day
- Tuesday, February 17, 7 p.m.: Great Decisions Discussion, the Arctic
- Tuesday, February 24, 7 p.m.: Great Decisions Discussion, U.S. and Egypt
- Monday, March 2, 12:15 p.m., League Office: LWVGO board meeting.
- Tuesday, March 3, 7 p.m.: Great Decisions Discussion, Global food supply
- Monday, March 9, 11:30 a.m.: General meeting. Dundee Presbyterian Church. Free potluck luncheon.
- Tuesday, March 10, 7 p.m.: Great Decisions Discussion, Cuba after Castro
- Tuesday, March 17, 7 p.m.: Great Decisions Discussion, Universal human rights
- Monday, April 6, 12:15 p.m., League Office: LWVGO board meeting.
- Saturday, April 18, Seward, Nebraska: LWVNE Convention.
- Saturday, April 25, 9:15 a.m., Champions Run, 13800 Eagle Run Drive.: Annual Meeting. Luncheon speaker to be determined.
- Monday, May 4, 12:15 p.m., League Office: LWVGO board meeting.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Linda Duckworth, President

Happy New Year! Let us hope the dire predictions we keep hearing about 2009 will be tempered, softened somehow by smart choices made by our elected officials and citizens. League is good at creating opportunities for people to get involved in decision-making, and I'm pleased to say we recently provided just such an opportunity when we got word the Obama transition team was asking groups to meet and discuss health care in the U.S. We had mental health advocates, nurses, doctors, and others from the health care industry in attendance, and it was a fruitful evening. We all agreed we are willing to meet again, and if we convene another meeting I'll let you know via e-mail. Many thanks to Jonah Deppe for organizing and chairing the meeting, and for taking thorough notes of the discussion.

I want to say thank you to all the members who served as volunteers at the Council of State Governments conference last month. We heard a lot of compliments about the friendliness of Omaha, and since we were on the front lines, I'd say they meant us! More volunteer opportunities await you, of course. There is the upcoming exhibit at the Omaha Children's Museum (see page ??) about the presidency, and if you aren't able to volunteer you should still see the exhibit. There is also the chance to serve our state on a board or commission. I recently sent out by e-mail information about Nebraska's Environmental Trust Board as well as the Environmental Quality Council, both of which have openings. If you missed that information let me know and I'll fill you in.

And then of course there is work to be done on our own board. Hedy Ahlvers and her nominating committee have already begun thinking about the coming year's slate of officers and board members, and there's no need for you to be shy if you're interested in being involved. I have to say my intense involvement of the past couple of years has been an unforgettable and very enjoyable experience; obviously League attracts Omaha's most interesting people!

MAKE A GREAT DECISION FOR 2009!

Have you heard the raves about the Book Discussion group? Do you enjoy lively conversations about current national and international issues? Why not sample the Great Decisions program with the LWV-GO book group?

The Great Decisions Global Affairs Education Program is a project of the Foreign Policy Association (FPA). Information about the program is available at www.fpa.org -- and from many League members who have joined discussion groups through League, their church, or another organization.

The LWV-GO book group will discuss one essay each Tuesday evening from January 27-March 17, 2009. March 24th and 31st will serve as "catch up" dates in case inclement weather leads to cancellation of any meetings. The 2009 schedule is

- January 27: U.S. and rising global powers
- February 3: Afghanistan/Pakistan
- February 10: Energy and the global economy
- February 17: the Arctic
- February 24: U.S. and Egypt
- March 3: Global food supply
- March 10: Cuba after Castro
- March 17: Universal human rights

Every LWV-GO member is welcome to attend any or all of these discussions, regardless of previous book group participation. (You don't have to commit to every week or every topic.) League members are also encouraged to invite friends to attend the Great Decisions discussions. Contact Anne Shaughnessy (390-9316; amps2008@msn.com) for additional information.

Discussions begin at 7p.m. Please call Helen to let her know you'll attend.

LWVGO Birthday Luncheon

Come early to the February birthday luncheon and meet our luncheon speaker Janis McMillen (our liaison to the LWVUS) and also meet our Making Democracy Work award winner (to be announced). We will hold a *meet and greet* at 11 a.m. just prior to the luncheon. If any elected city officials are in attendance, we'll include them in our receiving line as well.

Janis McMillen, Ph.D., of Overland Park, Kansas, is a 15-year member of the League and has held several positions on her local and state League boards, including two terms as local League co-president and two terms as president of the Kansas League. In 2008, she was on the LWVUS Bylaws Committee, and in June 2008, she was elected to the LWVUS Board of Directors. Her board responsibilities include chairing Education Fund activities. The title of her presentation is "Making Democracy Work: Meeting the Challenge."

We hope you will come to our *meet and greet* before the luncheon, help us welcome our new liaison to Omaha, and also help us congratulate our Making Democracy Work awardee.

SOCIAL POLICY REPORT:

The Social Policy committee met on December 10, 2008 and discussed issues relating to the League's Social Policy Program (local, state, and national) including Health, Mental Health, Education, Juvenile Justice, and Police Community Relations. The National Social Policy statement is to promote social and economic justice, secure equal rights for all, achieve universal health care coverage at a reasonable cost, promote the well-being of children, and combat discrimination and violence.

Discussion during 2009 will include:

- 1) Continued monitoring of Public Safety Auditor issue; i.e. newly introduced ordinance for Independent Citizen Advocate.
- 2) Study of Safe Haven Issue which brought attention to the difficulties parents have in obtaining mental health services for their children. Review outcome of Senator McGill and Senator Ashford's Children in Crisis Task Force and recommendations for legislation providing for a point of access for services and availability of crisis services.
- 3) Monitor changes in the health care system especially as relates to Medicaid and Medicare including the new federal administration's approach to providing health care.
- 4) Follow the progress of the establishment of the Learning Community board and impact on school districts involved.
- 5) Follow the Building Bright Futures Initiative and how it interacts with the Learning Community process in the Omaha Metropolitan area.

The committee will meet on January 13 at 6:30 PM in the League Office. We are trying to determine the best time for persons interested in one of the above issues. If you are interested in participating in the Social Policy Committee or any of the subgroups, contact Jonah Deppe at jonah.deppe@cox.net with the day of the week and time which would be best for you to participate.

On December 30, 2008 at 6 P.M., the Social Policy Committee hosted a Health Care Community Discussion in response to a request from the Obama Transition Team to provide them with input as they develop a Health Care Policy. Twelve persons and a moderator met at Lasting Hope Recovery Center to hold this discussion with the guide provided by Senator Tom Daschle, the new Secretary of Health and Human Services, and the Transition Team. Among the persons participating were representatives from Alegent Health, Lasting Hope Recovery Center, Nebraska Department of HHS, and parents with a family member experiencing a mental illness. Each person completed a survey with questions relating to health care provision. A group submission of issues related to the questions discussed was submitted to the Obama Transition Team.

The questions the group responded to included:

- 1) From your experience - what is the biggest problem in the health care system
- 2) How do you choose a doctor or hospital? Sources of information? How should public policy promote quality health care providers?
- 3) Have you or your family members ever experienced difficulty paying medical bills? What do you think policy makers can do to address this problem?
- 4) In addition to employer based coverage, would you like the option to purchase a private plan through an insurance-exchange or public plan like Medicare?
- 5) What should an employer's role be in a reformed health care system?
- 6) Have you gotten the prevention services (flu shots, cholesterol screening, etc) that you should have? If not, how can public policy help?
- 7) How can public policy promote healthier lifestyles?

These are all issues that can generate much discussion, and we may have a continuation of Health Care Community Discussions.

NATURAL RESOURCES

We have been monitoring progress on cleaning up the contamination found at the former Nebraska Ordnance Plant Superfund Site near Mead Nebraska. Investigation of the site began in the early 1980's, and in 1998 work began to control migration of the contamination by capturing, extracting, and treating the contaminated groundwater. The most prevalent contaminants are TCE and RDX.

As the majority of the contamination resulted from military activities, the lead agency in charge of the cleanup is the Corps of Engineers. Extraction wells installed by the Corps are monitored regularly as well as various other wells including those installed by MUD to the east of the site. The USEPA and NDEQ assist with the sampling of these wells.

Five Open House meetings were held in Ashland during 2008, and no doubt more will be scheduled in the future.

For more information concerning the Mead Project you may visit the website: <http://www.nwk.usace.army.mil/projects/mead/projectindex.html>.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION UPDATE

Please take a minute to look at your information and let me know if any updates are needed or any information is missing. Note that much League information is sent out via e-mail. If your current e-mail address is not shown, please let me know. Updates should be given to Kathy Dewell, and can be made via e-mail to lalleykat@tconl.com or by phone to 330-7142. It's important that we have your current contact information in order for you to be aware and take full advantage of all that League has to offer, so please take a minute to check your information.

MEMBERSHIP

Please contact your friends about joining the League of Women Voters. It's a great way to make a difference - Your community needs leaders like you to participate in order to be a strong, safe and vibrant place to live! Dues are \$60 for a single membership and \$90 for a family membership. If you or someone you know would like to join, please complete the information below.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State & ZIP: _____
Phone: _____
Email address: _____

____ I want to join the League of Women Voters with an **individual, one year membership of \$60.**
____ I/we want to join the League of Women Voters with a **household, one year membership of \$90.**

____ Enclosed is a contribution of \$_____ to support the League's work of mobilizing citizens and influencing public policy through advocacy and education.

Please send your membership information to the address listed below. Checks should be made payable to the League of Women Voters.

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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At the home of Kathy
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See page 1

ANOTHER VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

We are partnering with the Omaha Children's Museum in the upcoming exhibition, **Headed to the White House**. We're helping to plan events in conjunction with the exhibition, such as an inaugural ball for families and a children's town hall event for the local 2009 elections.

League members are encouraged to become volunteer docents to assist specifically with this exhibition at the museum at 500 S. 20th St. There will be training sessions mid-January and then the exhibit will open on January 17. They'll need volunteers every day of the week except Monday, when the museum is closed.

Orientations and trainings are scheduled for
Saturday, January 10 10:30am-12:30pm
Monday, January 12 9-11am
Thursday, January 15 6:30-8:30pm

Only one orientation and training is required and if these dates don't work accommodations can be made.

Please call Helen Fisher at 397-2027 if you're interested in helping with this educational project. For more information go to www.ocm.org.

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK

It is not too late! If you act NOW you still have time to nominate a deserving individual for our third annual Making Democracy Work Award. Visit our website (www.omahalwv.org) for further information and an application form.

EMAIL DELIVERY OF LWVNE VOTER

Please let the LWVNE office know if you are willing to receive your Voter by email OR if you need a hard copy. It is important to have as many people as possible receiving the State VOTER by email. They need your name and email address. Send them to the LWVNE office, 140 N. 8th Street, Suite 215, Lincoln, NE 68508 or <lwv-ne@inebraska.com>. If you have already replied, you don't need to send your information again.