



*The League of Women Voters Kansas City
-Jackson/Clay/Platte Counties*

Website: www.lwvkc.org – **email.** lwvkcjcp@yahoo.com

January/February 2015

PLEASE ATTEND – Upcoming Meetings

Saturday, January 17, 2015

Topic: PROGRAM PLANNING – Local and LWV MO

Facilitator – Linda Vogel Smith, President, LWVKC/J/C/P

SOCIAL TIME: 9:30 am PROGRAM BEGINS PROMPTLY AT: 10:00 am

Centennial Hall at the Community Christian Church **4601 Main** --- South Building

Parking is in the multi-level parking garage to the south of the Church

President’s Message Reflecting on 2014 Linda Smith

2014 was a significant year of LWVKC/J/C/P action on several fronts: **voter services, education and community mobilization** around key League priority issues.

Over 30 voter registration events were held between May and October 2014, including several high schools, community centers, the Sprint Center Campus, several churches, multiple libraries, community health centers, and Operation Breakthrough, among others. An outstanding team led by Sue Scholl and Delores Blaser, along with participation of twelve League members ensured that this essential voter service was performed regularly and efficiently, with particular efforts to reach young people and new voters. There is still much work to do, particularly to get registered voters to vote.

Our League worked hard to educate voters and the public about ballot on the August and November ballots. This included letters to the editor of the *Kansas City Star* and the *Independence Examiner* clearly stating LWVMO well-studied positions on several ballot issues, including our opposition to regressive taxes, the proposed MO constitutional amendment on teacher evaluation, the broadening of rights to carry guns in MO, and the very poorly-conceived proposal for early voting. Board Member, Cheryl Barnes, and I appeared on KKFI 90.1 FM radio show “Every Woman” to talk about the pros and cons of ballot issues which

were particularly pertinent to women. I appeared on the KCPT show “Up to Date” with Nick Haynes as part of a panel to discuss our position (opposed) to the proposed tax increase to pay for roads and bridges. Information on the League positions is available on our web site.

The monthly League meetings, held primarily at Community Christian Church near the Plaza, provided opportunity for learning more about important issues. These included: voter suppression and the status of this issue in Missouri, inequality and women in Kansas City, water supply and safety issues in Kansas City, money in politics, factory farming and other issues relevant to the League’s up-date study of agricultural issues.

In August, we were a co-sponsor of Women’s Equality Week in KC. This included co-sponsorship of the showing of the documentary “Speaking Truth to Power” and the appearance by Anita Hill and an event at the National Archives at which a short play “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Minor – Women’s Suffrage on the Prairie” about Kansans and Missourians working to get the vote for women. Jane McClain was lead for our League in planning and organizing these events.

In the fall, we joined with some 26 other organizations, with leadership from Grandmothers Against Gun Violence, to host a Community Forum on Gun Violence in our area. This forum was held at a local church and involved over 120 people in discussions of this serious problem in our area. The collective belief of the participants was that voting and informed voters are essential for changing the culture around guns and for reducing gun violence. Future activities are being planned with this group.

Our League has worked to stay connected to and be a part of the League at both the MO State level and national levels. Peg Prendergast, our past president, is a member of the LWVMO Board, ensuring that our voice is heard at that level. She has worked actively to help develop LWVMO level positions on important ballot issues which we can then promote at the local level. Peg and I participated in the LWVUS national convention in Dallas in June, where we were able to make contacts and learn the views of other leagues on a range of important issues, including but not limited to human trafficking, money in politics, the concept of a livable wage, and more.

Your League Board (both current and former) works very actively throughout the year. Caroline Arnold, who was elected Treasurer this past May, is doing a great job. Donna Hoch and Dixie Brown are doing a wonderful job on membership development (we are actually growing in numbers!!). Peg Prendergast is the editor of our bi-monthly newsletter *The Voter*. She also completely updated our web site this year. Anitra Steele is serving as Secretary, producing excellent minutes on a timely basis. Charles Steele serves as Vice President and provides leadership for forums. Board Member Sue Scholl has played a key role in managing voter registration. Former Board Member Margie Richcreek provides leadership on transportation issues and is providing “moderator training” for future forums. Former Board member Delores Blaser has again organized interviews with elected officials. Board Member Pauline Testerman is heading up the nominations committee for our League’s election of officers and board members which will occur in May. Board Member Cheryl Barnes has important skills in writing and public affairs which she applies to good effect in our work. Board Member Carolyn Weeks plays a key role in keeping us connected with the

Independence community, helped arrange our 2014 holiday lunch and works on the membership committee to develop new members; see her 'conversation with new member' articles in the Voter. Board Member Pauli Kendrick provides essential historical perspective and knowledge of the political scene to help guide our thinking and is chair of the Education Committee. Member Jane McClain, as noted above, was lead for planning and arranging events during Women's Equality Week. And, former Board Member Joan Mills continues to help with arranging venues for events. League Member Tony Voss, answers our League's telephone and gets messages to the right person, plays an important role.

These members could always use your help, don't be afraid to pitch in and let us know your interest and area of specialty. As you can see, there are many opportunities to be involved with our League. Just coming, as you can, to meetings is important. Voter registration, forums, speaking on issues

HOLIDAY LUNCH

Submitted to The Examiner by Carolyn Weeks



Posted Dec. 27, 2014 @ 12:01 am Independence, Mo.

The League of Women voters of Kansas City, Jackson, Clay and Platte Counties chose as the venue for its recent 2014 holiday luncheon Vivilore in Independence. It was a beautiful setting for the event.

Guest speaker Mayor Eileen Weir reflected on her experience as mayor since her election, noting particularly her commitment to listening carefully to the people of Independence to guide her leadership and action. In her welcome of Mayor Weir, League President Linda Vogel Smith spoke of the League's important role in furthering the process of democracy through hosting non-partisan candidate forums. Mayor Weir was one of the candidates who participated in such a forum, hosted by the League and The Examiner prior to the mayoral election earlier this year.

Dr. Bridget McCandless of Independence was present to accept the Rachel Farr Fitch Award of the League of Women Voters of Missouri, presented by League member, Carolyn Weeks. The award honors the memory of the late Rachel Farr Fitch who was a League member and a major leader in efforts to improve health for Missourians and who played a key role leading to the establishment of the Missouri Health Foundation.

McCandless is president of the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City. She was being honored by the League for her work in establishing and leading the Shared Care Clinic of Jackson County for over a decade. This clinic provided essential multi-disciplinary coordinated health care of low-income, uninsured adults suffering from chronic disease.

McCandless, in her acceptance remarks, spoke eloquently about the ongoing crisis in health care for the poor in Missouri due to decisions made by elected officials not to expand Medicaid coverage. She clearly made the case that this absence of health care coverage incurs a high cost over the longer term for Missouri through reduced productivity of people as well as higher welfare costs

Please BRING THIS TO THE JANUARY 17 MEETING

LWV-MO State Program Review: The January regular members' meeting is, traditionally, the program planning meeting. Our responsibility at this meeting is to review the current LWVMO state program and policies and decide whether there should be changes. Our options, as outlined, by LWVMO are: 1 make no changes, 2 amend wording, 3 update item, 4 restudy item, 5 new item, 6 delete item, or 7 concurrence. Whatever we decide at our meeting will be conveyed to LWVMO for consideration. A summary of the LWVMO state program positions that we are to consider at our meeting are attached.

We need to consider what issues we might recommend for the LWVMO state program. Possibilities might include:

Money in politics – how big is this issue in Missouri and is it a cause for concern? This would complement LWVUS efforts.

Gerrymandering – based on the 2020 census, there will likely be significant redistricting. What steps might the LWVMO take to ensure that gerrymandering is minimized? Some states (e.g., California, Oregon and Washington) have established models to reduce gerrymandering for political purposes. A study of these models and the experience of those and other states might help establish a better process for Missouri and help ensure a good outcome following the 2020 census.

The foregoing are only two ideas that we might consider. You may have others.

Issues for Local Study. Our local League's Board has decided that, at our January 17 meeting, we will also endeavor to select 3-5 issues that we could focus upon locally and the manner in which we would do so. What we might do on any particular issue could range from a formal study of an issue to small educational events (e.g. a table talk event). Some ideas of possible issues that we could consider at our meeting are, but not necessarily limited to, the following:

Money and politics. In light of recent Supreme Court decisions, this issue is clearly a priority issue for LWVUS. That said, it may be useful for us to gather data on the impact of big money on our local elections in order to enhance our efforts to educate the public about this issue.

Election Administration Improvement. A national commission, appointed by President Obama, has studied the broad question of how well election administration is performed in the United States. That said, there could be ways of improving the administration of elections in our geographic area. There are questions about why there are very long lines in some polling places and virtually no lines in others. Concerns have been expressed about campaign literature being left in polling places. Other questions/concerns may prevail.

Human Trafficking. At the June 2014 LWV national convention, concurrence was provided with the Human Trafficking position of the League of Women Voters of New Jersey. Would a study of this issue in our area be useful?

You may have additional ideas for us to consider. If you don't see your favorite issue in the ideas set forth above, come to the meeting to talk about it.

Conversation with new member

Carolyn Weeks

After **Yvonne Jameson** finished her degree in political science at University of Nebraska, she moved to Kansas City where she was a member of KC/LWV until 1966.

As a busy family and career responsibilities increased, time for League activities diminished. Fortunate for us, she's made the big loop and is back, a member once again.

She has generously shared her journalism abilities with Kansas City during her business career and volunteer activities. She says " I've spent most of my professional life in working with words." She's been Public Information Officer for the Kansas City Parks and Rec. Dept.; editor of a teen magazine Young America Today; edited a corporate newsletter for ISC Industries; spent four years as public relations manager for H&R Block; joined the Kansas City Symphony marketing staff as public and audience development manager; and worked for Unicorn Theatre as its development director.

Her special interests are art and theatre. She has served on the boards of Westport-Roanoke Community Center Advisory Council, Camp Fire, Kansas City Chorale, Musical theatre Heritage, Summerfest Chamber Music Ensemble and Unicorn Theatre.

While working full time at H&R Block she went back to school and earned a Master of Liberal Arts degree from Baker University and is an accredited member of the Public Relations Society of America and has a fundraising certification from UMKC's Bloch School. Her hobbies are attending plays and concerts, cooking, producing a 4-page monthly newsletter for the residents of 333 Meyer West Condominium, serving on the All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church's Music Committee.

UPCOMING ELECTIONS

Its election time again! The "big ticket" election is the KCMO Mayoral and City Council election. Other communities within our area will also have elections, consistent with the overall Missouri election calendar. Following are pertinent dates as listed on the KC Election Board site:

January 13, 2015 – Last day for candidate filings

January 27, 2015 – Last day to certify ballot items to Kansas City Election Board

February 24, 2015 – In-person absentee voting opens

February 24, 2015 – Kansas City Election Board mails mail-in absentee voter applications to permanently disabled

March 11, 2015 – Last day for voter registration to vote in the April election

April 7, 2015 – Primary election. Winners move on to June election

June 23, 2015 – General Election

Our League is working to identify opportunities to host or co-host candidate forums in the run-up to the elections. If you know of opportunities call Charles Steele, who is leading this effort. He can be reached at: 816 836-4031; email anitrasteel@yahoo.com

EDUCATION -

Delores Blaser

The MO Legislature passed HB 1490, MO Learning Standards on May, 2014 which created the process to a MO alternative to Common Core State Standards. Common Core was initiated by a group of bipartisan governors and the Council of Chief State School Officers in 2009, who were concerned about United States students who were behind in math and language arts achievement compared to students in developed countries. MO Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) became part of the 45 states initially. DESE had been developing plans for implementation until HB 1490 was passed.

Important definitions:

Standards outline the expectations for what students should master by the end of each K -12 grade level in math and English Language Arts. A school, school district or state can have higher additional standards.

Curriculum is made of the materials and resources that a teacher uses to teach the standards. States chose standards, but curriculum is up to administrators, teachers and school boards.

Benchmarks standardize academic achievement across state lines to help ensure that students are being held to similar standards.

HB 1490 provides a structure and timeline for review of the English language arts, social studies, science, and mathematics expectations that are part of the Missouri Learning Standards. The law calls for standards in these content areas to be updated by October 1, 2015 and implemented beginning in the 2016-2017 school years. The MO Legislature delayed Common Core testing for two years in June 2014.

Work group members appointed by 14 elected legislature positions and education organizations, have been created to develop new standards, which may result in re-adoption of Common Core. These meetings began in Sept. 2014. The public can attend in Jefferson City, but the public cannot speak.

The MO Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) website: MO DESE, has HB 1490 original filing content and the changes in bold that the Legislature inserted. HB 1490 and the changes are issues that critics of Common Core desired.

More information: HB 1490 at www.modese.gov Common Core at www.corestandards.org

Pathways to the Common Core: Accelerating Achievement, Calkins, Ehrenworth & Lehman, 2014

A Parent's Guide to the Common Core – Grade 3,Grade 4,Grade 5,.....Grade 6, Kaplan, 2014

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Dixie Brown

I need to express my apology to Dixie Brown and the membership committee that their report is missing. Dixie sent her report and I read it and 'thought' I saved it; however, I've searched high and low and cannot locate it. I can tell you they have been extremely busy processing new members and getting renewals updated. Stay tuned for next report.

Six Education Stories To Watch in 2015

JANUARY 03, 2015

As the senior member of the NPR Ed team with 25 years on the education beat, here are the top stories that my expert sources and I believe will be ones to watch in 2015.

1. Standardized Testing Under Fire

The concern about too much testing really took off in 2014 and it's likely to grow, with more organized opposition at the local, state and national levels. The new tests tied to the Common Core, developed by the federally funded consortia, PARCC and Smarter Balanced, will continue to be targets. A moratorium, like the one teachers' unions have called for, will gather steam.

NPR Ed - Education Predictions for 2015

Two unlikely allies of the testing slowdown could be Bill Gates, who's already on the record calling for a reduction in testing, and education secretary Arne Duncan, who has said that too much testing is hurting a much-needed consensus on how to improve schools.

Teachers and their unions have blamed Duncan for pushing high stakes testing with little or no evidence that it improves instruction or truly measures teachers' or students' performance.

2. More Troubles For The Common Core

More (Republican-led) legislatures will call for long, drawn-out reviews, or the outright repeal, of the Common Core State Standards. Some states may simply "re-brand" the core to satisfy opposition groups, while adopting almost identical standards.

Still, in most states, the implementation of the Common Core will continue. And the more it guides instruction, the harder it will be for opponents to get rid of it completely.

3. In Congress, Deeper Divisions

Republican leaders have already said that there will be no new money for "Race to the Top," one of the Obama administration's signature programs.

And it appears there won't be money for a major expansion to federally-funded early childhood education, despite its being identified often as a "priority" by both parties.

The Republican-controlled Congress will also fight the administration's college rating system, which the president's proposals call for putting in place by fall 2015.

4. Focus On Campus Behavior

College presidents and lawmakers in Washington and the states will focus a lot more on drinking and drugs on campus, especially as they relate to rape and sexual assault. Already, the issue has mobilized students and advocacy organizations that blame college administrators for hiding their heads in the sand and not doing more, like banning alcohol on campus.

5. Teacher Evaluation, Training, And The Vergara Fallout

This past year, the Vergara ruling in California reinvigorated the debate over teacher tenure, especially termination and due process rights.

In 2015, critics of teacher quality will take on unions in more states, beginning in New York. This will also draw more attention to colleges of education, which this past year came under fire from the National Council for Teacher Quality in a scathing report. NCTQ and Vergara supporters argue that low-income and minority students are more likely to be subject to poorly trained and incompetent teachers.

6. The Ferguson Effect: New Scrutiny For School Police

Highly publicized incidents like the death of 18-year-old Michael Brown, or 12-year-old Tamir Rice, have involved confrontations with police off school grounds. But it seems likely that school resource officers — uniformed police assigned to schools in some communities — are going to get a lot of attention. Encounters between young people and law enforcement often begin on campus. A huge body of research has emerged about how and why black teenagers in particular are disproportionately punished in school, often for minor infractions, and how those experiences affect their futures. The relationship has come to be known as the "school-to-prison pipeline." Ferguson could provide an impetus for administrators to re-examine the role of the police in keeping their schools safe.

UPCOMING EVENTS

1st Mon	Monthly	LWV KC Board Meeting	KC North Library
Saturday	Jan. 17	LWV Program Planning Meeting	Centennial Hall – Community Christian Church
Saturday	Feb. 21	Kansas City Budget Tentative: Troy Schulte	Library – Community Christian Church
Saturday	Mar. 21	National Commission on Voting Rights	Library – Community Christian Church
Saturday	Apr. 18	Program Focus – Living Wage	Library – Community Christian Church
Saturday	May 16	Annual Meeting	TBD
		LWV MO – State Convention	

Legislative Interviews

Delores Blaser

LWV KC/JCP member are conducting MO legislator interviews with as many of the 32 MO House and Senate districts in the Kansas City area. The interview questions are: campaign finance reform, early voting, Common Core education standards, the legislator's top priorities and sponsorship of bills. The 2015 MO legislative session began Jan. 7, 2015. If you have not completed your Legislative interview there is still time. Contact Peg Prendergast or Delores Blaser if you need assistance.

2014-2015 CALENDAR

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Pauline Testerman	Carolyn Weeks