



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

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

VOTER – March 2016

**PLEASE ATTEND – Meeting
SATURDAY; March 19, 2016**

TOPIC: Peace Journalism

**Could “Peace Journalism’ be a model for a more civil and
informative Presidential Campaign Process?**

**Speaker: Professor Steven L. Youngblood
Director, Center for Global Peace Journalism – Park University**

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

**COMMUNITY CHRISTIAN CHURCH
4601 Main St., Kansas City, MO 64112
South Side of Building**

Co-President's Message -Linda Smith/Donna Hoch

The Presidential Primary Campaign has been raucous, including moments of incivility that are unbecoming of individuals who believe they have the capacity to lead our country. Who or what is at fault for this dismaying situation? There is enough blame to go around – candidates, the media, political pundits, talk show hosts, and we the people because we are putting up with this.

Are there solutions that could help our democracy work better by focusing on the real issues that our country and the world face? Could a set of voluntary principles or ethics be adopted that could promote a more “peaceful” campaign process? A model that might be considered for that purpose is “Peace Journalism.” What is Peace Journalism? It is... “when editors and reporters make choices that improve the prospects for peace. These choices include how to frame stories and carefully choosing which words are used to create an atmosphere conducive to peace and supportive of peace initiatives and peacemakers, without compromising the basic principles of good journalism.” (Source: The Peace Journalist, Vol 2 No.2 – Oct 2013).

Professor Steven Youngblood, our speaker on March 19, is the Director of the Center for Global Peace Journalism at Park University. He has taught Peace Journalism in Cyprus, the Republic of Georgia, Kenya, the Bronx NY, Ireland, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Jordan, Costa Rica, Turkey, South Africa and Uganda. He is the author of “Peace Journalism Principles and Practices,” to be published in the fall of 2016.

Previously, Youngblood coordinated and taught a U.S. State Department sponsored project in Turkey titled “Reporting Syrian Refugees: Building Communities of Understanding.” He has also directed and taught a comprehensive Peace and Electoral journalism project (sponsored by USAID and the State Dept.) in Uganda. He is a two-time Fulbright Scholar (Moldova 001, Azerbaijan 2007). He has been recognized for his work by the State Department, Rotary International and the UN Association of greater Kansas City (World Citizen of the Year).

We have challenged Professor Youngblood to address how the principles of Peace Journalism might be applied to reporting and related engagement in the political processes in our country. Additionally, we hope that he will share his views on how an initiative could be launched to bring about constructive change, including all branches of journalism, including published via newspapers and magazines, television and radio (broadcast) and their digital media versions.

This is a tall order; but there is no better time than the present to have a conversation on this issue.

Membership Report We welcome the following new members:

- Gordon Risk, MD, Jackson County
- Elizabeth Johnson, Lee’s Summit
- Katherine Delki-Calkins, Kansas City
- Anne Calvert, Kansas City
- Carl Bettis, Kansas City

Member Interviews

Carolyn Weeks

New member Profile – Dr. Gordon Risk

Dr. Risk’s medical specialty is psychiatry. H received his medical degree from Howard University, Washington, D.C., followed by graduation from the Karl Menninger school of Psychiatry, the Topeka Institute for Psychoanalysis. He is Board certified in psychiatry by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology. He has served the greater Kansas City area in many capacities: as staff psychiatrist at the Menninger Clinic; staff psychiatrist at the Wyandotte Center; as Clinical Director at the Rainbow Mental Health Facility; Medical Director of the Wyandotte Center and consulting psychiatrist the Counseling, Health and Testing Center, University of Missouri, Kansas City; and Consulting psychiatrist at Counseling Service, University of Kansas Medical center. Until his retirement in 2015, he was in private practice in Prairie Village.

One of his primary concerns is the ongoing problem of voter suppression. The League’s studies of and position on social policies (transit, education, health, mental health, immigration,) natural resources and voters services interest him. Dr. Risk volunteers at the Missouri Department of Conservation’s Discovery center where he leads science field trips.

Dr. Risk have a clear confluence of interests. We look forward to his participation in future studies and in vigorous discussions.

LWVMO Legislative Priorities 2016

The League of Women Voter of Missouri supports:

- Voting laws that encourage and protect all citizens’ fundamental right to vote
- Comprehensive health care and mental health
- Funding of safe transportation; roads, bridges, and public transportation
- Legislative actions that promote ethical and responsible government.

Tax Policies that provide stability and adequate funding for all state services

KNOW YOUR LEAGUE

Where does the League stand on current issues?

In February, in our “special edition “of “The Voter,” we launched a new column called “Know Your League.” Our intent is to educate our members about the League’s policy positions (LWVUS, LWVMO and LWVKC/J/C/P) on selected current issues. These may include Missouri ballot initiatives, bills being considered by the Missouri General Assembly, matters before the KCMO City Council, and other elected local governing bodies. While you may read about these issues in “The Kansas City Star” or through other media outlets, these do not tell you the League positions. LWVUS public policy positions are published in:

**“League of Women Voters of the United States
Impact on Issues - 2014-2016
A Guide to Public Policy Positions”**

A .pdf Copy can be downloaded at WWW.lwv.org

LOCAL – LWVKC/J/C/P SUPPORTS CONTINUATION OF E-TAX IN KCMO

KCMO ETAX: On April 5, KCMO voters will make a decision on whether to continue the KCMO earnings tax of 1% of earned income. In 2011, the tax was extended with overwhelming support. It provides approximately \$230 million a year, most of which is used to fund police, fire and ambulance service. Residents of KCMO pay about half of the tax, while non-residents who earn their income in KCMO pay the rest. In Missouri, only Kansas City and St. Louis have this tax. Mr. Rex Siquefeld, a wealthy investor who lives in St Louis is heavily funding efforts to defeat approval of this tax in both cities. In Kansas City, an organization named “Citizens for Responsible Government” is opposing the tax. On the other hand, numerous groups are in favor of continuing the e-tax inasmuch as there is not now an alternative for paying the currently covered expenses.

LWVKC/J/C/P Took position in support of this tax in 2011. Our official position on “Finance” reached by consensus in 1984 is: “Support for adequate financing of city services. Support for budgeting procedures that facilitate citizen comprehension and City Council participation. Support for reliance upon progressive taxes.”

LWVMO Position: Supports “... an adequate, balanced, and progressive tax system to finance necessary governmental services, which emphasizes equity and fair sharing of the tax burden.”

Comment: The tax is a progressive one – it is levied on earned income; those who earn more pay more. The expenses of the fire department and of the police department are clearly necessary governmental services.

Following is the draft letter to the Editor which we submitted to *The Kansas City Star* on March 11:

“On April 5, Voters will decide whether the KCMO earnings tax should be extended. As stated in numerous articles in The Star, this tax (1% of earned income) of all employed city residents and those who live outside of but are employed in KCMO, is an essential part of the city’s budget to pay for services (e.g., police and fire department) which benefit the entire community. No other viable and equitable source of revenue to support these services has been found.

Whether one believes in the earnings tax or not, now is not the time to eliminate this revenue source. Doing so would be extremely disruptive and significantly compromise our collective efforts to ensure that the quality of life and economic and social advancement of Kansas City are secure.

The League of Women Voters of KC/Jackson/Clay and Platte Counties Missouri recommends a “yes” vote on Question 1”.

Selected issues before the Missouri General Assembly

Voter Suppression: The right wing of the Missouri General Assembly is again attempting to push through legislation that would require a government issued photo ID in order to vote. A bill has passed the House and has moved on to the Senate. This, if enacted, could disenfranchise as many as 220,000 people in Missouri. The bills are HB 1631 and SB 594, accompanied by a proposed constitutional amendment SJR53 and SJR 20.

LWVUS Position: "...believes that voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed."

LWVMO Position: Supports "voting laws that encourage and protect all citizens' fundamental right to vote. LWVMO is actively working to block this proposed legislation.

Action: The League is strongly opposed to such laws. In 1979, the League Convention adopted a bylaws amendment enabling the League to act "to protect their right to vote of every citizen" without the formality of adopting voting rights in the national program. In states where restrictive photo ID laws have been passed and been implemented, the League has actively sought out individuals who could have difficulty getting the required ID for voting purposes to provide assistance, including education about the requirements, transportation to voting sites, and help in obtaining and in some instances paying for underlying documentation (e.g. birth certificates).

Legislative Branch Ethics: Missouri is unique among the 50 states in the Union in that it has virtually no limits on gifts by lobbyists and others, even when there is a conflict of interest, to elected officials, on elected officials' receiving consulting fees from fellow legislators and outside organizations, and there is no effective requirement for financial disclosure. Governor Nixon has called for ethics reform. As of January 15, the House had passed four bills. These would close the revolving door of lawmakers becoming lobbyists; required candidates, elected officials and others to report their personal finances more often; ban officials from also serving as paid political consultants; and require that lawmakers disclose trips paid for by their parties. Those backing the bills believe these are a great step forward. The opposition contends that they do not go far enough. It is notable that none of the bills deals with limiting campaign contributions. The Missouri Senate appears to be effectively blocking any substantive ethics reform.

LWVMO Position: Strongly supports ethics reform, including a specific position on financial disclosure to expose potential conflicts of interest among public officials and candidates. The League strongly supports improvement in ethics but is cautiously optimistic that the Missouri General Assembly will actually pass meaningful laws in this regard.

Action by LWVMO: Actively tracking the assorted ethics bills and presenting testimony on them as opportunities permit.

Death Penalty

There are at least three bills that address use of the death penalty in Missouri. One would eliminate it altogether. Two others call for the conversion of the sentences of those on death row to life without parole. Yet another proposal calls for the Missouri Supreme Court to review all death penalty cases within 30 days and to set a date for execution to occur within 60 days of the review's being completed.

LWVUS Position - at convention 2012, delegates voted to adopt a position supporting abolition of the death penalty. This decision was made in concurrence with a position adopted by the LWV of Illinois. Since that time states Leagues (Missouri has not taken this on) have used the position to support initiatives to abolish the death penalty in their states.

Gun Violence: HB 1397 introduced by Representative Stacey Newman, would establish guidelines for purchase of a gun in Missouri. Numerous other proposals would broaden access to guns in Missouri. For example, HB 1899 would remove the current ban on carrying concealed firearms in higher education institutions.

LWVUS Position: The LWVUS "... believes that the proliferation of handguns and semi-automatic assault weapons in the United States is a major health and safety threat to its citizens. The league supports strong federal measures to limit the accessibility and regulate the ownership of these weapons to protect citizens.

The League supports licensing procedures for gun ownership by private citizens to include a waiting period for background check, personal identity verification, gun safety education and annual license renewal. The license fee should be adequate to bear the cost of education and verification."

Action by LWVMO and LWVKC/J/C/P: The Missouri League has used the national position on gun control to oppose bills which would allow persons to obtain a permit to carry a concealed weapon. LWVKC/J/C/P has used the national position on gun control to support our becoming one of the founding organizations of the Heartland Coalition against Gun Violence and to support/participate in forums and other activities of the Coalition and of Grandparents Against Gun Violence in the greater Kansas City area.

ACT ON WHAT YOU BELIEVE

Demonstrating at Kansas City Gun Shows against gun violence and support universal background checks

On February 13, twelve hearty people (six were members of our League) joined together under Alice Kitchen's and M.J. McCall's leadership at the entry driveway of the Kansas City Expo Center near KCI airport. It was 26 degrees (F) but we braved the weather to hold up signs related to gun safety, the need for background checks for purchase of guns, the elimination of shadow purchasing. People who stopped to talk with our group were polite and, in some cases, appeared to be genuinely interested in what we were doing.

Join us and other concerned citizens

Saturday, March 19 1–3 p.m

KCI Expo Center located at Holiday Inn, (airport) 11730 NW Ambassador Drive, KCMO

This is billed as "Missouri's Largest gun Show"

Meet at the entrance to the Expo Hall. Look for a Star Umbrella, which one of us will be holding. Bring your homemade sign (e.g. background checks help, stop gun violence, and use guns safely). Be part of the collective action to support the movement to reduce access to unlicensed/unregistered guns.

People who belong to several organizations will participate. Questions? Contact Alice Kitchen: inthekitchenak@gmail.com 816-589-2047

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PROPOSED CHANGE - LWVKC/J/C/P FROM A 501(c)4 TO A 501(C)3 ORGANIZATION

Prompted by the fact that the St. Louis League and a number of Leagues in California have successfully changed their tax status from a 501(C)4 organization to a 501(C)3 under the U.S. tax code, a task group was established within our League to explore the possible benefits of our doing the same. In short, a 501C(3) organization is a non-profit that works for the public good that spends no more than 20% of its resources (money from its budget on lobbying). Donations made to a 501(c)3 are tax deductible to the donor. Because we are a 501(C)4 organization, donations made directly to our League are not now tax deductible.

The task group (Donna Hoch, Anitra Steele, Charles Steele) have consulted with the St Louis league, which has already gone through this process and with an attorney in California who has assisted, on a pro bono basis, Leagues in California as they have changed their status.

Making this change under the tax code would require a number of relatively modest changes in our League’s by-laws. Additionally, papers would need to be filed with the IRS.

Thus far, no downside to making the change has been identified. The task group will continue to work on this, and we will have an information session on it at the April 16 regular meeting. If there appears to be a consensus to move ahead, members will be asked to vote on this, including the needed by-laws changes at the May 21 annual meeting. The proposed changes will be set forth in The Call, our newsletter calling members to the annual meeting and setting forth all items to be voted upon at that meeting.

UPCOMING EVENTS –

Saturday March 19, 2016 9:30 am	Community Christian Church 4601 Main St Kansas City, Missouri 64112	Peace Journalism – See President’s article in this VOTER
April 5, 2016	Election Day – Municipal	Kansas City Vote on Earnings Tax
April 12, 2016	Jefferson City/Capitol	Women’s Equality Pay Day—Rally for equal pay, ERA and Voting rights for all American citizens
April 16, 2016	Community Christian Church 4601 Main St Kansas City, Missouri 64112	Topic: Voter Turnout
April 30, 2016	Columbia, MO	LWV Missouri Spring Conference
May 21, 2016	Community Christian Church 4601 Main St Kansas City, Missouri 64112	Annual Meeting Vote on By Law Changes Program