

January 2017



THE VOTER

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

www.lwvkc.org – email. lwvkjcp@yahoo.com 816-464-1800

Join us for our next meeting

Saturday, January 21, 2017

Community Christian Church 4601 Main; Kansas City, MO 64112

9:30—Social Time 10:00—11:30 – Meeting

MEETING TOPICS

Program Planning for 2017

State and Local

Information Item

Marijuana – Paula Prentiss of NORML

Co-Presidents' Message – Donna Hoch and Linda Vogel Smith

Now that the 2016 elections are behind us, we need to stop, take a deep breath or two, think, and talk together about what we, as a League, should work to achieve during 2017. This includes not only our working to make our democracy better through building the base of educated voters but also determining how we might work more effectively with others. Our experience this past year working with numerous other local groups was a positive experience for us and, hopefully, for the other organizations as well. Collaborative efforts included several events

during Women's Equality Week, voter registration, and efforts to defeat Amendment 6 to Missouri's Constitution. Groups we worked with included: What U Can Do, AAUW, NAACP, the Philip Randolph Institute, CCO, Alpha Kappa Alpha, the Greater KC Women's Political Coalition, the Heartland Coalition Against Gun Violence, the Johnson County Kansas LWV, and others.

In 2016 we worked to expand our outreach through the media. This included messaging through the Spanish-speaking media and through radio, notably KKFI community radio. For the first time, thanks to Jim White who gained approval of the KC Sports Authority, we had voter registration at Kauffman Stadium.

The easy thing to do would be to rest on our laurels and take a break, but we cannot. Issues didn't just go away at the end of 2016. There will be elections in 2017. We have a lot of work to do.

The following are some of the important issues on which there needs to be continuing effort in 2017:

- Money in politics - \$75 million was spent in the race between Senator Roy Blunt and Jason Kander. This was the most expensive race in Missouri's history. Top contributors to the Blunt campaign included banks and investment firms such as Goldman Sachs, lobbyists and lawyers. The Kander campaign received funding largely from liberal groups, law firms and teachers' groups. This issue has been identified by the LWVMO Board as the priority for LWVMO lobbying and educational efforts in 2017.
- Voter suppression, particularly implementation of the Missouri Constitutional Amendment and related legislation that requires, beginning in June 2017, having a government issued photo ID to vote at polling sites. This issue is not over.
- Ethics and elected officials. Although Missourians overwhelmingly approved a constitutional amendment reinstating campaign contribution limits, real ethics reform (curtailing the flow of free trips, meals, event tickets and more by elected officials) has not been touched. Maybe this year, that could happen.

- **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.

Re-emerging issues on which the League may or may not wish to be involved locally:

- Local control of KC police. An initiative petition has been prepared that would ask voters to change state law, not the state's constitution to allow local control of the KC police.
- A giant infrastructure bond proposal is being developed by the KCMO City Council for action by voters in April 2017. The proposal calls for \$800 million general obligation to address a huge backlog of infrastructure problems.
- A streetcar expansion plan petition, developed by Clay Chastain and his supporters) has, reportedly, obtained enough signatures to be considered by the City Council at its legislative meeting in January for them to decide whether this should be placed on the ballot.
- **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. We already have a local League committee that is working to address this issue. How or should we move forward on this?

MAIN AGENDA ITEM FOR JANUARY MEETING PROGRAM PLANNING PROCESS

Every two years, Local Leagues participate in planning the MO State LWV program for the next two years. This program planning process is an important League tool for identifying issues for study by our and other Leagues. It gives members and leagues a chance to balance the pros and cons of issues and provides a pathway for Leagues to make changes or not in the existing state program (see below of action options).

The Program of the League is a three-part process – program planning, study and consensus development, and action.

How do we do this? We review the current State program which is detailed in the 2015-2017 “Guide to State Action.” A copy of the summary section of that guide is appended to this document. Based on that review, we can then do any of the following:

1. Make no change
2. Amend the wording in a manner that does not change the scope of the item.
3. Update an item – this requires a mini study which may or may not change the existing position.
4. Restudy an item - this requires a new study and new consensus.
5. Propose a new item – requires study and consensus by local leagues
6. Delete an item – removes position from state program
7. Propose an item that our League has studied and reached consensus on to be submitted, subject to agreement by the LWVMO Board, to other Leagues for their possible concurrence at the LWVMO State meeting.

By February 23, 2017, our League must send to the MO State Board a completed Program Planning Form (which they have provided to us) that embodies our responses on the State Program and policies.

The MO State Board will process the forms from all MO Leagues and decide what to recommend for the State Program. These recommendations will be considered at the MO LWV conference later this year.

MARIJUANA

Paula Prentiss, who represents NORML KC (a regional chapter of the National Organization for Reform of Marijuana Laws) will speak to us about that group's activities. The stated mission of NORML is to repeal the prohibition of marijuana laws at the local, state and federal levels by educating communities about marijuana and hemp and their potential medical and industrial use, while promoting the responsible use of marijuana by adults.

For LWVKC/J/C/P MEMBERS INFORMATION:

At the May 2015 LWVMO State meeting, we and other Leagues concurred with the Columbia League position on Medical Marijuana. The background from the Columbia Consensus is as follows:

“Support legislation which allows marijuana for medical treatments when approved by a physician. Support moving marijuana from Schedule 1 on the Controlled Substance Act List to a schedule that allows physicians to prescribe it. Support measures to allow patients to legally obtain marijuana for medical use. Support the continuation and expansion of research on the effects of the marijuana plant on the human body. Support adequate funding for effective prevention education and treatment programs and an emphasis on marijuana abuse treatment programs in preference to punishment and incarceration. Support the use of drug courts and law reforms that reduced penalties for processing small amounts of marijuana. Support treating possession as one of the lowest law enforcement priorities. Support efforts to keep marijuana out of the hands of our children, to remove the criminal element from the distribution process, and to advocate measures to manage the production of marijuana in order to control its purity and strength.”

LEGISLATIVE INTERVIEWS

It is a goal of our local League to contact each of the 32 state Senators and Representatives that represent our area and talk with them about their plans for the upcoming legislative session. Questions have been selected. This is not a time to lobby on our positions but rather to start a relationship with the legislator.

You can participate in this process. (see below)

We are asking the interviews to be complete between Jan 7 and Feb 6 if possible. The Legislative session begins on January 4 so you will need to make an appointment to see them when they have returned to their home district. If you are unable to schedule appointment you may do a telephone interview; however, face to face interviews are preferred. The following districts are in our 4 counties: Five State Senate Districts: Numbers-- 7, 9, 11, 17 & 31. Twenty-seven State House Districts : 12, 13, 14,15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21,22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27,28,29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 55.

Peg Prendergast 816-213-4687 and Delores Blaser 816-942-6040 have developed the packets with the contact information and questions. If you would like to participate in this outreach, please call Delores Blaser and see if you can join someone who has been assigned to a legislator.

DECEMBER MEETING CANCELLATION – PLANNING A NEW EVENT

A couple of hardy members, our speaker (Dave Helling) and the caterer arrived at Community Christian Church for our December 17 holiday lunch. Because of the icing conditions on the roads we had to cancel and regret that it was not possible to catch those who did come before they left home. We will, in the future, pay closer attention to the weather forecasts. We apologize to those who braved the weather to be at the lunch/meeting.

Dave has been very gracious about the weather snafu and said he would be willing to plan another event with us.

We are thinking about having a chili supper along with conversation with Dave Helling. This would be “free” to those who paid for the December lunch. Others would be asked to make a donation for that meal. Plans are edging forward. We will keep you posted

The caterer, at our request, delivered the meals to two shelters so that others could eat. Because we paid for the food with your money, your \$15 payment is now seen as a tax-deductible donation to the League. We will send each of the 41 people who paid for the lunch a letter to that effect.

MEMBERSHIP

We have several new members. We heartily welcome all of you. As we have over the past several months, we will publish brief profiles of these new members. Our inquiring reporter is Carolyn Weeks who has graciously contacted new members and written these biographical sketches based on what the new members have submitted and/or said.

WELCOME, New Member, Susie Watson (Carolyn Weeks)

Susie has followed the lead of her mother, a LWV member in Oklahoma City. After attending a LWV KC program presented by Steve Youngblood, professor of Peace Journalism at Park University, she decided to join the League. While attending the University of Central Oklahoma she started working at *The Daily Oklahoman* Newspaper in the Sports Department. She has a double major in English and Journalism. She has worked in Radio and TV and just finished a thirteen year stint at *The Kansas City Star in Circulation and Newspapers in Education*.

A woman of many interests, Susie is a member of Northland Clay County's chapter of American Association of University Women (past President); Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art; North Cross United Methodist Church; and is a 14 year participant in Spring classes at Southern Methodist University's Perkins School of

Theology. She also participates in two Book Groups and a Garden Club.

Susie has three adult children. Her oldest son Jeremy is Music Director/Conductor and Pianist at Musical Theatre Heritage Crown Center and father of her 19 month old-year old grandson. Another son Justin mirrors his mother's English & Journalism degrees from Luther College and daughter Jordan is a Registered Nurse living in Denver.

She was intrigued by the remarks of columnist Leonard Pitts at his appearance as guest of Heartland Coalition Against Gun Violence. He said "Politicians don't lead, people do. Use your voice--everywhere!" to stop gun violence. Her Letter to the *Editor in The Kansas City*STAR* entitled Dangerous Missouri pointed out a Wall Street Journal's national poll listing Kansas City as No. 10 in the nation's most dangerous cities. This appeared right before the election on November 8th.

Susie, your commitment to education and service fits with the mission of the League of Women Voters. Welcome

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Renewals are due by the end of January 2017 – we submit our membership numbers and names to LWVUS at that time.

If you have forgotten to renew please consider doing so. It is \$60 per individual and \$90 for a couple in the same household.

Send the following information to the LWVKC mailing address along with your check:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: Land _____ **Cell** _____

Email: _____

What interests you? _____

Mail to: LWVKC/J/C/P P.O. BOX 10416, Kansas City, MO 64171-10416

League Calendar

- January 4 - Missouri General Assembly Session Begins**
- January 29 League sharing table at Progressive Social Network event**
- February TBD Conversation with Dave Helling, KC Star**
- February 18 Monthly League Meeting – 9:30 a.m. at Com. Christian Church**
- February 25 League speaking at NORML meeting**
- March 8 Last day to Register to Vote in April Election**
- March 19 Monthly Meeting – 9:30 a.m. Com. Christian Church**
- April 4 Municipal election day**
- April 15 Monthly Meeting Comm. Christian Church**
- May 20 LWV ANNUAL MEETING –
Election of Officers and other business of the organization**

OFFICERS and BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Co-Presidents: Donna Hoch	816 322-8071	the hochs@hotmail.com
Linda Vogel Smith	816-741-6110	lindaavogel@me.com
Vice President: Charles Steele	816 836-4031	anitrasteele@yahoo.com
Secretary: Anitra Steele	816-836-4031	anitrasteele@yahoo.com

Treasurer: Caroline Arnold 816 333-6059 cmarnold@live.com

Cheryl Barnes, Communications
Dixie Brown and Pauli Kendrick, Membership co-chairs
Peg Prendergast, Special Projects
Nominating committee
Linda Smith, Newsletter
Sue Scholl, Voter Registration
Charles Steele, Candidate and Issue Forums
Pauline Testerman, studies
Carolyn Weeks, Member Development
Pat Goodwin, Voters' Guide
Evelyn Maddox, Voter Suppression

You will be pleased to notice our website continues to be updated.

Check it out at: <http://www.lwvkc.org>

Your suggestions would be appreciated.