

Summer 2010

Members celebrate 90 years at annual meeting

Former Ohio schools superintendent Susan Tave Zelman (*pictured, right*) brought anniversary greetings to the League from her new job at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting June 7 at the annual meeting at the Northwest Public Library.

Zelman – now senior vice president, chief advisor, and system consultant of education policy at CPB – outlined new initiatives in public broadcasting and urged the League to partner with local public radio and TV stations to help spread its important nonpartisan voter service and citizen education programs. Members turned out for the potluck dinner and birthday celebration to hear Zelman discuss the imperative of public education and a free press.

At the business meeting afterward, members [adopted a study of regional planning and land use](#). Ellen Haider and Judy Brachman were appointed to lead the study committee. Haider was also feted as [Member of the Year for 2010](#), while Cathy Elkins thanked volunteers for the League's Meals on Wheels program.

Members also adopted a budget for the fiscal year that began July 1, approved a bylaws amendment combining the operating and educational fund treasurers into a single position, and made minor changes to [program positions](#).

Janyce Katz looked back on her two years as president as a rewarding and busy time, saying that she was privileged and honored to lead the organization into its 90th anniversary year. She recognized outgoing board members Lucy Buzzee, Diane Gosser, Rose Luttinger, Janice Patton, and Audra Teague. [New officers and trustees were elected to the board](#) (see also page 5). While the League will not have a president in the coming year, the three vice presidents – Mim Brierley, Scott Britton, and Barbi Crabill – will form a management team to preside over the organization.

Mary Kaul was elected to chair the Nominating Committee with Jean Byrd and Jane Young.

A new era for *The Voter* – a new strategy for communication

You may notice a few changes in this issue of *The Voter*. Cheryl Markino, a tireless volunteer who for years has produced the newsletter, has left the position because of family obligations. The League was fortunate to have such a talented, committed volunteer in Cheryl to take on the responsibility of meticulously editing and proofreading copy, designing the layout, and meeting deadlines 10 times each year. Thank you, Cheryl!

As we develop a new communications strategy – and hope that someone (maybe you?) will volunteer to take on the task of *Voter* editor – we

have scaled back the publication schedule. The newsletter may only be published quarterly or every other month. If you are reading this online, you will notice links embedded in the text that, when clicked, will automatically take you to the website for additional information. We also plan to supplement the newsletter with more regular e-mail communication.

If you are interested in serving as *Voter* editor, or if you have suggestions for a member communications strategy, or if you want to update your e-mail address, contact Amy Pulles at vote@lwvcolls.org or (614) 837-1089. Stay tuned!



FIRST PERSON TRIPPLICATE

Note: The regular column "From the President" will be replaced this year by "First Person Triplicate" and rotated among the three vice presidents. This edition is by Scott Britton, vice president for advocacy.

Have you seen those disaster movies where Earth faces cataclysmic destruction unless the best scientific, government, and corporate minds come together to develop a solution? In movies like *Armageddon* and *The Day After Tomorrow*, we see the stereotypical warring countries, egotistical scientists, greedy corporations, and cocky hero-types all put aside their differences and work together to save the day. And they *always* save the day.

After April's Gulf of Mexico explosion on the *Deepwater Horizon* triggered one of the most massive oil leaks in the planet's history, I thought – naively, it turns out – that we might see such a coming-together of multi-national corporations, government, Coast Guard soldiers, and scientific experts. I had hoped that the political spin would go out the window, that territorial natures would dissolve, that posturing and partisanship and positioning would be put aside in order to fight a disaster that is doing incalculable harm to our environment and our economy. Sadly, this has not been the case. The players haven't put aside their differences; the hero hasn't swooped in to save the day.

The tragedy has turned the nation's attention to our insatiable dependence on oil, but the League of Women Voters has been a leader on this issue for decades. Following the 2008 National Convention, the League redoubled its efforts at the local, state, and national level on everything from global

climate change to energy conservation to protection of natural resources. The League has [argued against construction of new coal-burning electricity plants](#), partnered with Oxfam America to support funding of adaptation measures in developing countries, promoted the ["Sisters on the Planet" documentary](#), and [lobbied for the American Clean Energy and Security Act](#), which passed the House and now awaits action in the Senate.

At National Convention in June, the League released the [Toolkit for Climate Action](#), a comprehensive and educational guide to mobilizing voters on this important issue. The buzz is now all about October 10, 2010 – [10/10/10](#) – an international day of action to focus attention on climate solutions.

In this edition of *The Voter*, you will find more perspectives on this year's National Convention in Atlanta from your Metro League Convention delegates: Mim Brierley, Barbi Crabill, and Ann Henkener. You can catch up on the business items – but not the cake – you missed if you couldn't attend the annual meeting in June, where we heard about the Corporation for Public Broadcasting from Susan Tave Zelman. And you can read about a valuable exercise in public discourse on the complex and daunting topics of the federal deficit and the national economy, where ordinary citizens came together in Columbus and across the country to discuss – in a civil, rational manner – a subject of critical importance.

After all, it's ordinary citizens coming together who can literally save the world. The League's grassroots structure, its focus on careful, balanced study, and its commitment to good-government advocacy make us – not *just* the scientists, the corporations, or the government itself – a critical part of the answer to the daunting challenges facing our community, our country, and our planet ... now and into the future.



The Metro Columbus Voter (Vol. 42, Issue 1) is the newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Metropolitan Columbus. The newsletter is available online at www.lwvcols.org. A hard copy is mailed upon request to members of the League who do not have ready access to the Internet. Membership in the League is \$60 annually for individuals, \$90 annually for households, \$40 annually for those on fixed incomes, and \$15 annually for students. Items for the newsletter may be submitted to vote@lwvcols.org or mailed to the League at P.O. Box 130, Blacklick, OH 43004.

Reflections: 49th National Convention



The League of Women Voters of Metropolitan Columbus sent a full complement of three delegates to National Convention in Atlanta in June: Mim Brierley, Barbi Crabill, and Ann Henkener. Learn more about what happened at Convention in their reports below.

Civil rights take front stage . . . then and now

By Barbi Crabill, Vice President for Voter Service

A 90th anniversary, a League history lesson, the civil rights movement, as well as good-old-fashioned grassroots politics all took center stage at this year's League of Women Voters National Convention. As a grassroots movement, all members of the League, through their delegates to Convention, actually make League policy. This year, Mim Brierley, Ann Henkener, and I had the privilege of representing the Columbus Metro League.

It was very moving for me to hear John Lewis, whom I had met when I worked in Atlanta in 1971. A

leader in the civil rights movement in the 1960s and '70s, Lewis is now a Congressman from Georgia. In his address to the Convention delegates, he said that change comes when people like those involved in the civil rights movement and in organizations like the League of Women Voters are not afraid to "get in the way." He said the historic activism of the League of Women Voters in all areas of civil rights, civil liberties, voting rights, and other issues of civic engagement has had a positive effect on people's lives, and he is pleased to see that the League is still "gettin' in the way!" His closing remarks to the delegates: "Keep on gettin' in the way!"

As a relatively new member of League, I was inspired watching the former national presidents talk about the accomplishments during each of their terms and listening to their insights into what is going on today. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

Significant to me was the concurrence and resolutions process, with adoption of very exciting resolutions preceded by caucuses to educate and inform the delegates on the issues on which they would be voting. As a League member, I am always impressed with the civility of the arguments and the passion with which delegates made their arguments for and against.

Changes and updates to current League positions included:

- Updated the LWVUS position on [Arms Control](#) that was originally adopted in 1983 and reflected language and thinking of the Cold War era.
- Updated the LWVUS position on [Selection of the President](#) to support the use of the **National Popular Vote Compact** until the abolition of the Electoral College is accomplished.
- Added to the LWVUS position on [Equality of Opportunity](#) to support **Marriage Equality** for same-gender couples.

I think that other members should be encouraged to attend state and national conventions to get the bigger picture – Ohio and Columbus aren't islands unto themselves. There are many engaged Leagues out there at the local and state levels, several of which bring their issues to convention where they have to explain it and provide detailed background information and research, advocate for it in the halls, and defend it on the floor. I think members of our local Leagues who are interested in advocacy should definitely be encouraged to attend these conventions.



Delegates ‘pony up’ to make two new studies possible

By Ann Henkener, Secretary

I was impressed by the passion of the Leagues presenting an issue in a workshop or a caucus. Whether it was saving the Great Lakes or assuring the right to vote to disenfranchised citizens, the sincerity and hard work in preparing the sessions was amazing.

I was also impressed that the entire delegation voted to do not one but two studies in the next two years. The study of the role of the federal government in education was recommended by the board, and it was approved.

The issue of federal, state, and local governments’ privatizing services and functions that previously were done directly by the government was not a recommended study – not because LWVUS thought it was not important, but because it hadn’t had a sufficient number of local Leagues recommend it during program planning. Nevertheless, those Leagues that felt passionately about the topic convinced the delegates that it was worthwhile to study two issues.

And then, rather than leave it up to LWVUS to figure out where to get the money to do the study, the delegates contributed over \$3,000 on the spot, and many people volunteered to send in money for the study. The delegates also voted an additional 10 cents of PMP during the first year of the two-year budget to pay for the additional study. Anyone who has been to Convention knows how difficult it is to raise the PMP, but the delegates put their money where their mouths were and provided funding for the study.

I enjoy advocating for the League – but to do that with authority, we need to study issues first, and we will be tackling two complex but important issues in the next two years.

League continues to inspire, make democracy work

By Mim Brierley, Vice President for Membership

It feels right to be back on Board. I’m excited to have an opportunity to be active as vice president for membership. The position comes with the added

challenge of serving on a newly formed Management Team with Advocacy VP Scott Britton and Voter Service VP Barbi Crabill to oversee League operations in 2010-2011. We have worked out a plan to share the duties of president while also managing the activities of our committees. We ask your help to make this a successful year for the Metro League in all the board committees.

Soon after annual meeting I was on my way to the LWVUS Convention. It was going to be my way of catching up with what League is doing to *Make Democracy Work* now. I looked forward to talking with other delegates about the issues that drive programming and projects in their Leagues. And this year I anticipated an anniversary celebration. Convention did not disappoint.

I came away better informed about voter service and advocacy projects, inspired by historical achievements, and invigorated by the 700+ spirited, determined-to-have-their-voices-heard delegates. They came from far and near to present, propose, discuss, debate, resolve, and vote on action dear to their hearts. Being a part of this enthusiastic group affirmed my belief in our venerable organization and its ability to achieve its mission in our changing society through many more years. At 90, the League of Women Voters continues to be forward-looking and persistent in its efforts to make democracy work. It makes me proud to be a member.

It was exciting to hear what other Leagues are doing to educate and engage young people in the election process. A campaign in Iowa will train 17- to 25-year-olds to “Be A Pollworker” in the fall. In Oregon an ambitious National Student/Parent Mock Election is in its third year of targeting kindergarten- through college-aged Americans and their parents online to educate them in the voting process – wherever they are in the world! A League member in California piggybacked student registration on an end-of-the-year celebration at her son’s high school stadium. I gave a silent cheer for Metro and its partners in the Franklin County Consortium for Good Government who are planning pre-election and Election Day activities for students and parents in Franklin County. Activities such as these not only broaden our

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CONVENTION REFLECTIONS

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League's image and extend our outreach and credibility in a diverse constituency, but they also attract new members, partners, and supporters.

Delegates from big city Leagues voiced concern about demands for action and voter service in multiple jurisdictions and voting populations – or just managing leadership, fundraising, membership, and volunteers in their organizations. Although Metro has faced comparable situations, we are fortunate to have a membership with varied experience, talent, skills, and interests to draw on when seeking solutions. The impression I took from this meeting is that our Metro Columbus League is one of the frontrunners in advocacy, voter service, and outreach among big city Leagues.

Two young presenters from the Brennan Center caught my attention in a workshop on redistricting. A visual to illustrate gerrymandering showed the bumpouts in Franklin County boundaries where suburban areas overlap into contiguous counties that mark political districts in central Ohio. In another session a panel of women judges discussed

roadblocks as well as successes in attaining their career goals. A North Carolina League presented a timely report on the history, demographics, citizenship status, and hiring practices in the state's immigrant population. I'm still processing all the information from these interesting and well-done sessions.

My inspiration was a panel of LWVUS past presidents invited to Convention in celebration of the 90th anniversary. Delegates were enthralled by the stories each told with individual style and wit about League achievements during their terms in office. Their stories and the accompanying video that illustrated their leadership role in national and international affairs brought the delegation to its feet for a standing ovation. I was reminded of the opportunities in League for volunteers to develop their own personal qualities of leadership for greater effectiveness in career and community service.

No telling the places you'll go and the things you will do as a member of the League of Women Voters!

Energy bill check-in

Doing your part for climate change

By Al Rosenfield, LWVO Energy Specialist

The League is committed to energy conservation; the position and a large amount of background material are posted at the [LWVUS website](#).

Individual members can do more. A good start is to check your electric bill. If it is more than about \$100 per month, you are using more electricity than the average Ohio household. Help to start conserving is available on [the Columbus Green Spot website](#). You can find even more ways to conserve at [the Energy Star website](#). This is just a small sampling of what is available on the web. It's good to remember that when you save energy, you save money.



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AmericaSpeaks about federal budget, nation's economy . . . and Columbus speaks too

More than a dozen area residents, including eight League members, turned out for a June 26 public forum hosted by the Council for Public Deliberation and cosponsored by the Metro Columbus League to discuss the federal deficit and the national economy.

The community conversation was part of a [National Town Meeting](#) that took place simultaneously in cities across the country, sponsored by a national nonpartisan nonprofit, *AmericaSpeaks*.

As part of this experiment in civil discourse, a representative sample of Americans in 19 cities came together to weigh in on strategies to ensure a sustainable fiscal future and a strong economic recovery. While Columbus was not one of those cities, League member Dave Patton, director of the [Council for Public Deliberation](#), chose to organize a

local conversation on the topic at the same time. Patton introduced the format for the three-and-a-half-hour meeting, and two trained table facilitators moderated the discussion.

While there had been some national controversy over the accuracy of the background materials, the limitations of the proposed solutions, and even the politics of the funders behind *AmericaSpeaks*, the Columbus conversation avoided that by focusing on civil discourse and resisting some of the artificial constraints of the national process. Participants left with a better understanding of the complex and thorny budget issues facing the country and with a greater respect for citizen deliberation.

[Preliminary results from the 19 cities](#) were presented to President Obama's bipartisan National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform.



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