



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MILWAUKEE COUNTY

League Lines

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2009

Calendar

414-273-8683

<http://lwvmilwaukee.org>, e-mail: info@lwvmilwaukee.org

For the most up-to-date information on events, see <http://lwvmilwaukee.org>

January

- 1 Happy New Year!
- 14 Wed., 6 pm Board Meeting
1845 N. Farwell Ave., Milwaukee
Contact: Louise Petering, (414) 351-3617
- 17 Sat., Health Care Luncheon
11:15 am social, 11:45 am luncheon
Wisconsin Club, Mitchell Room
900 West Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee
Contacts: Ruth Snedic, (414) 771-7690 & Louise Petering, (414) 351-3617
Mail reservations by Jan. 10 (form inside)
Online reservations by Jan. 12
- 21 Wed., Unit Discussion Meetings
Program Planning
1:15 pm St. Matthew's Church
1615 Wauwatosa Ave., Wauwatosa
Contact: Gloria Weiskotten, (414) 354-9783
6:30 pm Shorewood Public Library
Community Room South, Shorewood
Contact: Barbara Hussin, (414) 351-0819
7:30 pm Natalie Kleman's home
8801 W. Oklahoma Ave., #111, West Allis
Contact: Ruth Snedic, (414) 771-7690
- 26 Mon., 7 pm Natural Resources Committee
3002 E. Kenwood Blvd., Milwaukee
Contact: Jennifer Runquist, (414) 332-5067
- 28 Wed., 9 & 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.
New Voter/New Citizen Naturalization Ceremony
Federal Courthouse, 517 E. Wisconsin Ave.
Contact: LWV Milw. Co., 414-273-8683(VOTE)
- 29 Thur., 9 & 11am
New Voter/New Citizen Naturalization Registration
Federal Courthouse, 517 E. Wisconsin Ave.
Contact: LWV Milw. Co., 414-273-8683(VOTE)

February

- 9 Mon., Bulletin deadline for March-April League Lines
Contact: Louise Petering, (414) 351-3617
- 11 Wed., 6 pm Board Meeting
1845 N. Farwell Ave., Milwaukee
Contact: Louise Petering, (414) 351-3617
- 11 Wed., 9 & 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.
New Voter/New Citizen Naturalization Ceremony
Federal Courthouse, 517 E. Wisconsin Ave.
Contact: LWV Milw. Co., 414-273-8683(VOTE)
- 12 Thur., 9 & 11am
New Voter/New Citizen Naturalization Registration
Federal Courthouse, 517 E. Wisconsin Ave.
Contact: LWV Milw. Co., 414-273-8683(VOTE)
- 17 - Tue., 7 am- 8 pm Spring Primary Election
- 17 - Tue., Election Night Reporting
- 18 - Wed., Unit Discussion Meetings
Topic: Election Administration Consensus
1:15 pm St. Matthew's Church
1615 Wauwatosa Ave., Wauwatosa
Contact: Gloria Weiskotten, (414) 354-9783
6:30 pm Shorewood Public Library
Community Room South, Shorewood
Contact: Barbara Hussin, (414) 351-0819
7:30 pm Natalie Kleman's home
8801 W. Oklahoma Ave., #111, West Allis
Contact: Ruth Snedic, (414) 771-7690
- 23 - Mon., 7 pm Natural Resources Committee
3002 E. Kenwood Blvd., Milwaukee
Contact: Jennifer Runquist (414) 332-5067

Note: The League International Relations Committee's Great Decisions weekly Monday discussions run Jan. 26 through Mar. 16. The UW-Milwaukee Tuesday lecture series runs Jan. 20 to Mar. 10. See the article inside.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Louise Petering

Happy New Year! Wisconsin experienced two smooth, relatively error-free fall elections. Thanks to all of you who worked to assure voters of their rights and helped with the League election-related projects that Anne Baynton reports on below. We can look forward to a less hectic spring election cycle. State offices on the ballot are Superintendent of Public Instruction, Justice of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals (District 1 in Milwaukee County), and Circuit Court Branches (11 in Milwaukee County). Municipal elections are on tap too. Once again, we will hold candidate forums and report election results.

While the election-related and other articles in this bulletin document the *continued on pg. 2*



Winter Social hosts JoAnne and Michael Barndt visit with Santa as dozens of Leaguers and guests enjoyed an evening of friendship and laughter.

"The League of Women Voters is where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement. Join LWV - where leaders are actively engaged in effecting change at the local, state, and national levels."

President, continued from pg. 1

mitted work of League members, our December Winter Social demonstrated that we also know how to party. Good food and conversation, a blazing fireplace and a visit from Santa bearing gifts awaited us at the home of Joanne and Michael Barndt. Thank you, Joanne and Michael, for your hospitality. Missed the festivities? Watch for this fun event on our 2009-10 calendar.

Ring in the New Year by bringing a guest to the Jan. 17 general meeting at the Wisconsin Club featuring international business consultant Joseph Geck. In keeping with our LWVUS emphasis on health care, he will speak on "Health Care Costs and Quality: How the U.S. Competes in the Global Marketplace Given the U.S. Health Care System." Reserve soon for this event. Wednesday, Jan. 21 marks the unit discussion meetings where we will begin program planning for the 2009-2010 Milwaukee County and Wisconsin League study and advocacy emphases. See you there.

PROGRAM PLANNING

Program Vice President Sue Lindberg

Every year, local Leagues participate in local and state program planning. At January unit discussion meetings, members make recommendations to the local and state League boards to readopt existing positions, to review/restudy those positions or to adopt a new study.

It is imperative that members do their homework. I have included a brief summary of LWVWI and LWVMC positions in this bulletin. *Complete LWVWI positions are online at www.lwvwi.org; complete LWV Milwaukee County positions are available online at www.lwvmilwaukee.org.* Our local and state positions result from research-based member agreements and authorize us to take a stand on policies and legislation. In this yearly review, we measure current public policy issues against our established positions to determine whether action is warranted. In the last round, we adopted the current state study of election administration and local study of lending practices.

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION CONSENSUS

State Study Co-Chair Kit Halloran O'Meara

Elections, Elections, Elections. Well, November 2008 is definitely behind us. Overall, it went smoothly in Milwaukee County and beyond -- amazingly smoothly. Thank you to all who sent in surveys of the activity witnessed at polling places on Election Day. Your observations will help shape post-election interviews with municipal clerks.

Many questions and suggestions have surfaced since Nov. 4. Our Feb. 18 discussion units will provide an opportunity to guide the Election Administration state study to consensus based on your experiences and reports from clerks and poll workers. Consider the questions in the guide below while preparing for unit discussions:

DISCUSSION/CONSENSUS GUIDE

A. Early Voting vs. Absentee Voting

Faced with long lines and other problems with in-person absentee voting in the days before the election, a number of officials have suggested that Wisconsin move to an early voting system.

In true early voting, voters check in to verify their registration or to register, obtain and mark their ballots and insert them in the optic scanner machine to be counted. Any problem with a ballot triggers a machine rejection, allowing the problem to be corrected. This is very efficient compared to early absentee voting.

Early absentee voting means checking registration, applying for an absentee ballot, obtaining and marking the ballot, filling out and checking the envelope for the absentee ballot (with signatures of both voter and election official) and checking the sealed envelope against the poll list. There is no immediate count of the absentee ballots.

In November, 20 municipalities counted absentee ballots in a central location. The rest were delivered to their proper ward to be counted whenever time permitted. The process: the name on the absentee ballot envelope was read aloud, the ward on the ballot was verified with the ward on the outside of the envelope, a voter number was written on the envelope and ballot and checked off the list of numbers, then the ballot was straightened out and inserted in the machine to be counted. If the machine rejected a ballot, it *sometimes* took two or three people to determine the voter's intended choices and to reconstruct the ballot - if possible, using the same number.

Proponents of early voting believe it will reduce administrative work, increase accuracy and reduce lines both during early voting and on Election Day. Critics cite added costs to municipalities for new machines and for staffing and question how running totals would be protected from leaks or tampering and what would stop an early voter from voting again on Election Day. Government Accountability Board Director Kevin Kennedy has started a review of best practices in other early-voting states.

Suggested further reading: "A Better Vote," NY Times 11/9/08 and "Voting Alone," Washington Post 11/5/08.

DISCUSS: What are the advantages and disadvantages of early voting vs. in-person absentee voting?

CONSENSUS: Should Wisconsin move to a true early voting system?

If so: What precautions should be included?

What aspects of absentee voting should be retained?

Should the state provide additional resources to municipalities for early voting, possibly based on the percentage of absentee/early voters in the last presidential election?

COMMENTS:

continued on pg. 3

B. Expanding Access to the Polls

Review the paper the state League provided in the spring and decide what measures would be the most effective and suitable to Wisconsin to expand access to the polls. Rate the following in preferential order:

- Expanding voting hours _____
- Weekend election day _____
- School holiday election day _____
- Election day state holiday _____
- Internet voting _____
- Voting by mail _____
- Early voting _____

CONSENSUS: Rank these options in order of importance in improving access. 1 is most important, 10 is least important.

COMMENTS:

C. Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS)

Matching, Non-matches and Purging

Wisconsin Atty. Gen. J. B. Van Hollen's pre-election lawsuit last fall sparked considerable public discussion about the implications of checking new voter registrations on the statewide registry against driver's license or social security information. On Aug.6, state computer software was in place to match new voter registrations against Wisconsin Dept. of Transportation or national Social Security records. On Aug. 23, such crosschecks became mandatory for all new voter applications.

Since then, local municipalities have run the data checks and tried to clear up the non-matches. Many non-matches were found to involve data entry errors or simple differences like a missing middle initial or variance in name format or spacing. The purpose of these crosschecks was to improve the quality of the data in the state voter rolls. It was never intended to determine a person's eligibility to vote.

Fortunately, in Wisconsin, those who discovered on Election Day that their names were improperly struck from the voter registration list were allowed to re-register and cast their ballots.

The Wisconsin Government Accountability Board is in the process of setting standards, procedures and a timetable for retroactive reviews of new registrations made between Jan. 1, 2006 and last August. The board's view is that state checks assure uniformity and efficiency (municipalities can only check one name at a time), while reducing the administrative demands on local officials. Board procedures were expected to be adopted at its Dec. 17 meeting. Check its website for updates: www.elections.state.wis.gov.

D. Four-Year Voter Record

The government accountability board is also due to decide in December whether the state or local municipalities will do the voter record maintenance required by Wisconsin statutes – purging the registration lists of those who have not voted in four years. Staff is recommending that the state do this maintenance for the municipalities using the state's voter database. The League should monitor this

process so it does not unnecessarily purge voters from the registration lists. It is current law, but is it fair to excise people from the voter list simply because they didn't vote lately?

We will forward a consensus question if new information arrives after newsletter press time.

E. Process for Post-Election Disputes

In "From Registration to Recounts," the authors indicate that had US Sen. John Kerry won the presidential race in Ohio in 2004, Wisconsin would likely have been the state with a bitter post-election fight, for Kerry's margin here was 0.4% while Ohio's was 2.1%. Had that happened, the authors envision two ensuing problems – one concerning the institutions responsible for post-election disputes and the other involving the timetable for resolving disputes.

Discuss this issue and provide comments.

Instructions for reporting

Please collect local League results and forward them via e-mail to the state office no later than Feb. 20.

ACTION

Chair Ruth Snedic

We solicited nominations from our members for the state board.

Congress is on hiatus until early December.

Budget talks continue at the state level, where government is having problems making ends meet. Gov. James Doyle predicts a \$530 billion budget shortfall.

ACT NOW! Voice Your Opinion on Mass Transit!

Editor's Note: For details see the Natural Resources Article "Full Speed Ahead..." on page 7.

Support mass transit. Citizen input is important in the process of building a transit network that fits the needs and expectations of our community and region. Let the governor (governor@wisconsin.gov), your state legislators (www.legis.state.wi.us), and county board and common council representatives know your views on proposals to invest in clean, efficient transportation.

Legislation is needed in 2009 that will provide:

- 1) A stable, dedicated, adequate funding source for transit by removing existing transit costs from the property tax, and instituting a sales tax.
- 2) A structure for funding and regional coordination of transit by creating a permanent Regional Transit Authority .

For more information contact:

Transit NOW: www.transitnow.org, or call 262-246-6151

LEAGUE MEMBERSHIP

Chair Chris Weber Spornick

This is the time of year for reflecting on all that we are blessed with – and remembering two facts that motivate

continued from pg. 3, Membership

those of us in League: our blessings are in part due to our civic-minded forebears; second, equal opportunity is not a reality in our nation or world. Many of us give thanks for family, friends, good health, employment, retirement, shelter, food, music, the ability to travel, shop, manage our affairs, use tools and appliances. As we give thanks for our liberties, we remember those without them. We are grateful for the freedom to worship (or not), to assemble for the presentation of grievances, to participate in our political process - even to run for political office. We give thanks for the liberty to choose where to live, what work to do and what leisure to pursue. We remember that Leaguers are concerned about basic rights of privacy. We value the in-depth study of issues - from those that affect us locally to those of national and international concern - and advocate better communities for all. We are privileged to discuss and come to consensus, then petition to foster improvement. We have power in our unity.

So those of you who still need to renew membership, please take care of it soon. Next year, invite someone new to our functions. Ask a friend or colleague to join you at our Jan. 17 luncheon or Jan. 21 program planning unit discussions.

HEALTH CARE: NATIONAL ADVOCACY PRIORITY

Member Rich Lindberg

Health care costs how much? What do we get for our money and how do companies compete internationally, given these costs?

Joe Geck will be keynote speaker at our Jan. 17, 2009 Wisconsin Club luncheon meeting, discussing the cost and quality issues of our health care system in the United States compared to other industrialized countries. In researching health care issues as a consultant to companies that compete in the international marketplace, he discovered that many US-based companies underwrite health care costs for their workers while those expenses are borne by government or private/government hybrid systems in other countries. Not only do Americans pay more per person than anywhere else, Joe found, but our country ranks lower in the quality of care than most other industrialized nations.

LOCAL STUDY: LENDING INDUSTRY PRACTICES

Committee Chair Dorothy Dean

Have you read your credit card agreement's fine print lately? The contract agreement between you and the credit card company contains a provision for "universal default". What that means is if you are late with a payment on a second credit card, your car payment or some other payment, the first credit card company can increase your interest rate, fees and minimum monthly payment or reduce your line of credit.

The contract that allows this is one-sided - The credit card

issuer can change terms at will, but the card holder cannot. Such provisions have consumer advocates worried about the amount of credit card debt carried by Americans.

Aggressive marketing by credit card companies is a factor in the huge increase in credit card debt over the past 20 years. Not long ago, credit card companies were more selective in their process of making cards available to consumers. Now, cards are being heavily promoted through the mail, on the Internet and to groups of consumers like high school and college students.

Americans now owe about \$850 billion in credit card debt. The worry is that this will be another financial meltdown like the subprime housing market.

What does it mean to use credit responsibly? Should credit card issuers and servicers be held to stricter standards? Can high school and college students learn responsible use of credit by using a credit card? Just how does the credit card industry fit into the larger lending industry?

If these questions interest you, please contact Dorothy Dean at the League office (414-273-8683)

VOTER SERVICE

Committee Chair Anne Baynton

As we all know, the most recent election was historic. Many people worked hard to help ensure that the elections ran smoothly and securely. The following League members worked on Election Day:

Diane Steigerwald worked as an observer for election protection at bilingual polling sites, and as a deputized election official to help voters register and understand the ballot. Dorothy Dean and Chris Weber processed absentee ballots for the City of Milwaukee. Barbara Eisenberg, Kit Halloran O'Meara, and Gloria Weiskotten served as poll workers in Milwaukee. Joann Kreimendahl was a poll worker in Menomonee Falls. Barbara Hussin and Ethel Lieberthal worked at the polls in Fox Point. Roy and Dawn Anderson helped canvass Shorewood and Milwaukee's East side. Sarajane Kennedy worked at the polls in Wauwatosa on Election Day and registered more than 60 voters there. Michele Derus was a poll worker and registrar in Whitefish Bay, where 81 new voters cast ballots in the two wards she served. Doris Chortek served as an inspector at the River Hills polls. Dorothy Sherman, in conjunction with volunteers at the First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee, helped disabled people from Goodwill get to the polls, register and vote. Carolyn Castore helped organize election protection efforts, utilizing poll watchers and lawyers.

At last count, 18 of our local members completed the League polling place checklist in Milwaukee County municipalities and 36 members and League friends reported election results to news services (See election night reporting, below.)

Some of these people worked on behalf of League, others worked on behalf of other non-partisan organizations. Their

continued on pg. 5

continued from pg. 4, Voter Service

stints included half-days, entire days and sometimes, half the night too. We salute you all for helping make democracy work.

Because there were far more early votes by absentee ballot this fall than usual, and because those ballots were not tallied until Election Day, it created tremendous stress and strain on municipal clerks and poll worker crews to get all those ballots counted while dealing with Nov. 4 voters.

In recognition of these difficulties, Wisconsin's Government Accountability Board is considering whether to make Wisconsin a true early-voting state. That would mean that pre-Election Day votes are tallied at the time they are cast. Wisconsin's current system doesn't allow that.

NEW CITIZEN/NEW VOTER

Ruth Snedic

Our voter registration activities for US naturalization ceremonies are back on track.

We thank our many volunteers who serve - three ceremonies on Wednesday and two on Thursday once a month. We couldn't register new citizens Oct. 22 and 23 because those dates fell within Wisconsin's Oct.15-Nov. 4 legal blackout period for off-site registration of new voters. We alerted these new citizens that they could register instead with their municipal clerk or at the polls Nov. 4 and provided our New Citizen/New Voter booklets.

Every November, a special naturalization ceremony is held at the International Folk Fair. This Nov. 22nd at the Fair, 383 people became new citizens. Most of these new citizens received the League's New Citizen/New Voter primer from Natalie Kleman, Sister Paula Marie and me. Unfortunately our efforts to set up voter registration tables in advance of the ceremony failed. We will work on this for future ceremonies at the Folk Fair. Several of those who attained citizenship Nov. 22 expressed regret that citizenship came a little too late to vote in the Nov. 4 presidential election.

To continue registering new citizens, our League Special Registration Deputies must apply for retraining with Wisconsin's Government Accountability Board. Please return your completed application form from the Board by its Jan. 9 deadline to assure inclusion in a training session. Once again, we plan training here in Milwaukee.

ELECTION NIGHT REPORTING

Coordinator Louise Petering

As you watched election returns on Sept. 9 and Nov. 4, were you thinking of who actually had their feet on the ground at municipal and county clerks' offices waiting for returns so results could be phoned to news agencies? I wager you did not picture 36 League members and friends waiting at clerks' offices in Milwaukee, Dodge, Jefferson, Ozaukee, Racine, Sheboygan, Walworth and Washington Counties. Yes, 36 "stringers" worked at the above locations for the two elections. A few reporters stayed at their posts until 3 am. Nov. 5th and one stayed until 5:20 am. Now that speaks of the kind of com-

page 5

mitment that helps League stay fiscally sound. Income from Election Night Reporting provides us with income beyond the \$5 we retain for individual dues. Because \$55 of every \$60 individual membership goes over to the Wisconsin and US Leagues, election night reporting is critical to our fiscal health. Thank you, reporters.

The days of election reporters at municipal clerks' offices are numbered. More municipalities will be reporting electronically to news agencies, so our League is looking for alternate funding sources. Please forward suggestions for fund-raising to Karen Jansen, treasurer and development committee chair, at Info@lwmilwaukee.org.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Chair Ned Maxwell

Updating the 2008 "Great Decisions" series for 2009 was the topic of our Dec. 2 meeting at Ned Maxwell's house. We discussed how the Great Decisions stance on United Nations' participation in countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan and China related to the LWV positions. We emphasized the relationship between the League stances against hunger and poverty, and how U.S. defense policy and European integration affects these worldwide problems.

We decided to meet at Wauwatosa Public Library for the upcoming eight-week discussion group series, which is tied to lectures at University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee. The lectures begin Tuesday Jan. 20, 2009 on topics whose order is still undetermined, including: the US and rising world powers, Afghanistan and Pakistan, energy and the global economy, the Arctic age, Egypt in the 21st Century, global food supply, Cuba after Castro, and universal human rights.

League discussions on lecture topics take place on Mondays at 6:30 p.m. at the Wauwatosa Public Library's second floor conference room, corner of Wauwatosa and North Avenues, beginning Jan. 26, 2009. For more information, contact www.fpa.org or www.greatdecisions.org or Ned Maxwell at (414) 258-9222.

LWV MILWAUKEE CO. REPRESENTED AT STATESWOMAN FETE

Secretary Joann Kreimendahl

State Sen. Judy Robson was named the Wisconsin Women's Network 2008 Stateswoman of the Year Award. It was my pleasure to attend the Oct. 26 program at Monona Terrace in Madison. Sen. Robson, who was Senate Democratic Leader from 2004-2007, has been instrumental in promoting several issues vital to Wisconsin residents and led the fight for passage of the Compassionate Care for Rape Victims bill. Sen. Robson, in her acceptance speech, credited League of Women Voters for its contributions to her political career.

The keynote speaker was Georgia Duerst-Lahti, a professor of political science at Beloit College and a frequent guest on Wisconsin Public Radio. She spoke about women in politics—their difficulties and successes. Women who are running for public office are judged differently from men. They

continued from pg. 5, Stateswoman

must be smart—but not too smart—and are frequently judged on the three H's—husband, hairdo and hemline.

LWV-WI is a member of the Wisconsin Women's Network. The network is a coalition of organizations and individuals advancing the status of women and girls in Wisconsin through communication, education, and advocacy. Their website is www.wiwomensnetwork.org.

HOUSING TRUST FUND MULLED IN WAUKESHA

Program Vice President Sue Lindberg

About 50 people turned out for the Creating Communities Campaign kickoff Dec. 2 at Steinhafel's Furniture Superstore in Waukesha, which focused on Waukesha County's affordable-housing crunch. Heather Dummer Combs from Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee explained how advocates got a housing trust fund established in Milwaukee County. Don French from Habitat for Humanity of Waukesha County talked about efforts to establish a Housing Trust Fund in Waukesha County.

NATURAL RESOURCES

TRANSPORTATION

Committee Member Louise Petering

The League's Nov. 9 essay in Milwaukee Journal Sentinel urged the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) to agree on a framework for efficient regional transit operations and recommend an adequate and stable funding source for regional transit. Because of limited space, the opinion piece did not refer to League positions that were the basis for our letter. Those positions, available online on the national (lwwus.org) and state (lwwwi.org) websites, are summarized here.

League positions are derived through member consensus and placed in one of four categories - Representative Government, International Relations, Natural Resource and Social Policy. The transportation position is found in the "meeting basic human needs" section of our Social Policy category. This may seem strange, until you consider League history.

The LWVUS transportation position grew out of early concerns for equal employment and housing opportunity - articulated in our Social Policy positions. By 1972, air quality concerns to reduce vehicular pollution were synthesized with those earlier concerns for equal opportunity into a new transportation position. League first used this position in backing an amendment of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1972 that authorized financing some urban mass transit costs with highway trust funds. League again used the position in 1974 to prevent stalling or cutting of federal assistance to mass transit systems. Since then it has been used to back local and regional moves to improve mass transit and support other alternatives such as express lanes for buses and carpools.

The Transportation position relied upon for our Nov. 9 newspaper opinion piece reads: *Access to Transportation - The LWVUS believes that energy-efficient and environmentally sound transportation systems should afford better access to housing and jobs and will continue to examine transportation policies in light of these goals.*

To follow the issue locally, search RTA at the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel website, www.jsonline.com. Our essay was posted Nov. 8.

BIKE RACKS ARE COMING TO MILWAUKEE COUNTY TRANSIT

Natural Resources Committee Member Barb Eisenberg

After more than two years and several versions of a proposal to bring bike racks to public buses, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors passed the plan on a 16 -3 vote. The equipment is slated to appear on buses in spring 2009.

FULL SPEED AHEAD FOR GREEN TRANSPORTATION!

STATE ACTION NEEDED NOW

Kerry Thomas & Louise Petering, Natural Resources Committee

Please Note: Transit will be the subject of League Unit Discussion Meetings in April.

A recent historic vote by the Southeast Wisconsin Regional Transit Authority (RTA) has positioned critically needed transit advances in our region within grasp. To seize the opportunity, the governor and legislature must authorize the RTA or communities in SE Wisconsin to carry through with the RTA's recommendations.

Their authorization will lay the foundation for a clean, efficient regional transit network in SE Wisconsin. Such a network will efficiently link people to jobs, reduce energy use and global warming emissions, as well as strengthen the economic base of the region's cities and neighborhoods.

On November 10, after two years of discussion and study, the temporary RTA wisely came together in a 6-1 super majority vote and recommended two key things: 1) make the RTA permanent and 2) institute a stable and adequate dedicated transit funding source of up to a 0.5% sales tax coupled to removing existing local transit costs from the property tax. The RTA's recommendation now goes to the governor and legislature for action.

The window of opportunity is short. **Act NOW.** A dedicated funding source and permanent operating authority will:

Reverse recent slashes in local bus services and provide the necessary foundation for a well-coordinated regional transit system. In the past 7 years, bus service in Milwaukee has been cut 16% while fares have risen 30% due to increased costs and lagging federal, state and local

continued on pg. 7

funding. Additional service cuts of 35% are projected by 2010. A recent report by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee showed that between 2001 and 2007 in Milwaukee and Waukesha counties, at least 40,500 jobs became inaccessible by transit due to service cuts. Furthermore, they estimate that if current budgetary trends continue, at least 101,000 jobs once accessible by transit will become inaccessible by 2010 - a disastrous outcome for the regional economy.

Jumpstart the stalled KRM Commuter Rail project.

Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee Commuter Rail (KRM) can move forward only when a local, dedicated funding source and a designated operator (such as the RTA) are authorized. KRM is the proposed 33-mile commuter rail line between Milwaukee and Kenosha with 9 Wisconsin stops. KRM would connect Milwaukee to the Metra system of Chicago including 25 communities in NE Illinois. (For more information about KRM Commuter Rail go to www.transitnow.org, and www.krmonline.org.)

Lay a strong foundation for future transit enhancements such as the Milwaukee Connector, one that would use the long-dormant \$91 million in federal funds.

If no legislative action is taken, the RTA will dissolve in 2009, the KRM project will be at risk, local transit systems will continue their steep decline, hurting employers and workers and threatening our economy and environment.

The time to enhance transit and support job creation is now. Governor Doyle has included \$198 million for KRM capital costs and \$115 million for Milwaukee County bus capital costs in his stimulus package discussions with the Obama team. With a new federal administration, we must show the Federal Transit Administration that cities and counties in our region are on the same page and that we have the ability to provide the required, reliable, local, dedicated funding for KRM and local transit systems.

Transit is a powerful tool that can support communities and families and protect the environment – in the U.S. transportation accounts for 1/3 of global warming emissions.

A vibrant regional transit network can:

- Provide affordable, reliable and energy-efficient links between jobs and workers.
- Provide an alternative to the high cost of vehicle ownership (the vehicle, fuel, insurance, maintenance) that consumes family and business budgets.
- Encourage compact development: research by the Center for Transit-Oriented Development finds that walkable, transit-oriented communities produce 43% fewer greenhouse gas emissions than conventional suburban development.
- Reduce individual carbon footprint: switching a commute by auto to transit can reduce CO₂ emissions an average of 20 pounds per person per day.
- Reduce urban sprawl that eats up open space needed for recreation, water table recharge, natural areas, and farms for food.
- Reduce congestion that wastes time and fuel.

INVASIVE SPECIES LEGISLATION FOR THE GREAT LAKES ECOSYSTEM

Natural Resources Chair Dr. Jennifer A. Runquist

Invasive species, such as zebra and quagga mussels, which filter fish food out of the water, and the sea lamprey, which decimated lake trout, have caused great damage to the Great Lakes ecosystem. The University of Notre Dame's Center for Aquatic Conservation estimates that invasive species cause \$200 million/year in losses to the commercial and sport fisheries, wildlife watching experiences and increased operating costs for industries, power plants, and municipalities needing access to freshwater. Communities are removing colonies of zebra mussels from water intake pipes, stocking fish that once were plentiful for sport fishing, and removing rotting algae blooms..

Most aquatic invasive species enter in the ballast water of ocean-going ships, which dump their ballast when they load or take on cargo. A single ship may need millions of gallons of water as ballast to keep it balanced. This ballast does not have to be treated or filtered to prevent foreign species from entering lake water. Since the St. Lawrence Seaway opened in 1959, the Great Lakes have become home to more than 185 non-native species. Closing the seaway might be warranted, since the benefit from ocean trade is far outweighed by the impact and cost of these invasive species.

Proposed legislation in Congress, developed over the last six years, provides workable standards enforceable by the Coast Guard. Ships would be required to install ballast treatment systems. The national ballast water discharge program is 100 times more stringent than international standards and provides a framework for federal-state coordination that assures uniformity for shippers. A new federal rapid response program coordinates efforts between federal and state agencies to ensure new species are detected quickly. Treatment systems on vessel operating only within the Great Lakes are not required unless the Secretary of Agriculture requests such measures to stop the spread of infectious diseases from lake to lake.

Meanwhile, Minnesota has approved strict standards for ships that discharge ballast water into Lake Superior. Their new permit process will cover both ocean-going vessels and ships that remain within the Great Lakes. Michigan has had ballast regulations in place for several years, though only for ocean-going vessels.

Unfortunately, disagreements have delayed enactment of national ballast legislation. The US House of Representatives passed it in a 395-7 vote, but the measure ran into trouble in the US Senate. Barbara Boxer from California, who chairs the Environment and Public Works Committee, is concerned that citizens have no right to sue over violations. It remains to be seen whether differences can be reconciled and the matter settled by the incoming 111th Congress.

Join the League of Women Voters - Today! Non-partisan, non-profit since 1920!

Milwaukee Co. Dues [Circle One]: \$60 Individual \$75 Household (2 or more individuals) \$25 Student \$25 Limited Income
\$100 Sustaining (supports \$25 memberships) \$160 Centennial (supports action & activities)

Name _____ Home Phone (____) _____

Address _____ Work Phone (____) _____

City _____ WI Zip _____ e-mail _____

Website - <http://lwvmilwaukee.org> Email Address - Info@lwvmilwaukee.org

Involvement [Check One]: Active _____ or Supporting _____ Interests: Voter Service _____ Lending Practices _____ Government _____

International Relations _____ Environment/Natural Resources _____ Health Care/Social Policy _____ Other _____

Please Note: Circle your preferred means of contact, indicate your interests & involvement level, and mail this form with your check to the **League of Women Voters of Milwaukee County, P.O. Box 100785, Milwaukee, WI 53210; OR join online at www.lwvmilwaukee.org.** Tax-deductible contributions to the LWV Ed Fund may be directed to the address above. Thank you!



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF MILWAUKEE COUNTY

P.O. Box 100785
Milwaukee, WI 53210
414-273-8683
<http://lwvmilwaukee.org>

**Use the form in this bulletin to
RENEW NOW - if your dues
have expired. Thanks!**

