



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MILWAUKEE COUNTY

League Lines

JULY/AUGUST 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>

July

- 8 Wed., Board Meeting, 6 pm
1845 N. Farwell Ave., Milwaukee
Contact: Louise Petering, (414) 351-3617
- 22 Wed., 9 a.m., 11 a.m.
New Citizen /New Voter registration
Federal Courthouse, 517 E. Wisconsin Ave.
Contacts: Dorothy Sherman, 414-425-9527
Kit H. O'Meara, 414-226-9930
- 23 Thur., 9 a.m., 11 a.m.
New Citizen /New Voter registration
Federal Courthouse, 517 E. Wisconsin Ave.
Contacts: Dorothy Sherman, 414-425-9527
Kit H. O'Meara, 414-226-9930
- 23 **Thur., 6 - 8 pm, Govt. Accountability Bd. Hearing**
Early Voting, Common Council Meeting Rm,
7525 W. Greenfield Ave., West Allis City Hall
Contact: Louise Petering, (414) 351-3617

August

- 7 Bulletin Deadline
Contact: Louise Petering, (414) 351-3617
- 12 Wed., Board Meeting, 6 pm
1845 N. Farwell Ave., Milwaukee
Contact: Louise Petering, (414) 351-3617
- 12 Wed., 9 a.m., 11 a.m.
New Citizen /New Voter registration
Federal Courthouse, 517 E. Wisconsin Ave.
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Kit H. O'Meara, 414-226-9930
- 13 Thur., 9 a.m., 11 a.m.
New Citizen /New Voter registration
Federal Courthouse, 517 E. Wisconsin Ave.
Contacts: Dorothy Sherman, 414-425-9527
Kit H. O'Meara, 414-226-9930
- 24 Mon., Natural Resources. Comm. Mtg., 7pm
3002 E. Kenwood Blvd., Milwaukee
Contact: Jennifer Runquist (414) 332-5067

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Louise Petering

Summer and June 30th mean the end of the 2008-2009 League year, one filled with many elections-related activities, an office move, contracting for administrative assistance, formation of a development committee and initial planning for 2009-2010. As I stated at our Annual meeting on May 20th, it is the efforts of many volunteers, both League members and friends, that made all possible. Many thanks to Joanne Barndt and Sue Lindberg for arranging our annual meeting with a dynamic keynote by Police Chief Flynn. He has received our thanks and his remarks are reported below.

Begin the new League year on time! Update your membership now if the label on this bulletin indicates a paid-dues date of June 30, 2009. Paying now will enable us to get our 2009-10 directory out in the fall and focus our efforts

on program and advocacy. Two key programs are planned to kick off our fall activities.

The first is a September 23rd supper social preceded by (re)training of Special Deputy Registrars, those who help with voter registration after monthly naturalization ceremonies at the federal courthouse.



May 20th Annual Meeting Keynote speaker, City of Milwaukee Police Chief Flynn, and LWV MC member John Abelt and friend Mary Henry.

SAVE THE DATES

Sept 23

Special Registration Deputy (re)training, 4-6 p.m. followed by salad supper social

October 22-23

UN-Internatn'l Chamber of Commerce Events, Keynote Dinner 5:30p.m., Oct 22

League Lines Production

Kerry Thomas, Layout
Contact us at 1845 N. Farwell Ave.,
Ste 102, Milwaukee, WI 53202
Info@lwvmilwaukee.org
(414) 273-8683

The second is a two-day October event focusing on "The Role of Civil Society and the Private Sector Working with the United Nations" with a keynote dinner the evening of October 22nd by the permanent representative to the UN, Dr. Louise Kantrow. We have already widely publicized the event, purchased her plane ticket and set several meetings for her with groups in the Milwaukee area.

Remember to put the late afternoon and evening of September 23rd and the evening of October 22nd on your personal calendar. Watch our website and *continued on pg. 2*

"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

the Sept/Oct League Lines for opportunities to sign up for these events. Be sure to bring guests!

And remember to RENEW your membership! On June 10th, Sarajane Kennedy oriented our board and leaders for the 2009-10 year. It's your turn to get oriented by attending the September and October meetings described above.

LWV WI Education Network Annual Meeting

Louise Petering

Kudos to the Manitowoc League for competently and graciously hosting the state annual meeting. Milwaukee County delegates, Glenda Alexander, Carolyn Castore, Joann Kreimendahl, Kit O'Meara and I represented you during program & budget deliberations and were all mightily impressed by Saturday luncheon keynoter and Manitowoc mayor, 22 year-old Justin Nickels. But back to program! Delegates passed the proposed budget and grassroots-suggested and state board-recommended program for a 2009-11 study "issues related to selection of Supreme Court justices, including: election vs. appointment; public financing of Supreme Court races." In addition, we adopted a new position on election administration that includes support for early voting. (July 23 presents an opportunity for your voice to be heard regarding early voting – see the calendar and watch for an email notice). Finally, we voted to participate in coalitions on two statewide Action Campaigns in 2009-11, specifically a) Universal/affordable health care and b) Local and State government itemized agenda to deal with climate change and promote sustainability.

Sustainability of League also was discussed. While the state executive director has succeeded in getting grants that support League educational efforts, we need to keep in mind that an increase in membership would also do a lot to sustain League. The more members we have the more dollars support our local and state organizations and League efforts for coordinated programming by Leagues around Wisconsin. Do your part; introduce friends and co-workers to the League. Ask them to JOIN us in "making democracy work."



Representing LWVMC at LWV WI Ed Network May 28 & 29 Annual Meeting, from L. to R., are Glenda Alexander, Louise Petering, Carolyn Castore, Kit O'Meara and Joann Kreimendahl.



Connie Threinen addressing delegates to the LWV WI Ed Network Annual Meeting. Connie received the Meg McClain advocacy award.

Police Chief Flynn Keynote at Milwaukee County Annual Meeting

Milwaukee Police Chief Flynn delivered a forceful keynote at our May 20th Annual Meeting. He believes safe, viable neighborhoods result from community based crime control and problem solving rooted in reliable data. These lead to safe neighborhoods with diminished residents' fears, emergence of local leaders (one cannot expect leadership to emerge in an intimidating environment) and business investment. Like residents, businesses want a safe environment, one that assures their capital and workers are secure. In contrast, neighborhoods with broken windows and abandoned spaces indicate disorder and generate a climate of fear and economic decline. (continued on pg. 3)



League members and friends enjoying themselves at the Social before the May 20th LWV Milwaukee County Annual Meeting



I. Membership Committee member, Gloria Weiskotten, and rt., Vice President Sue Lindberg at our Annual Meeting Social

I. Natural Resources Committee member, JoAnn Kreimendahl, and rt., Natural Resources Committee Chair, Jennifer Runquist

A crime-ridden neighborhood leads to store closings and fewer entry-level jobs. Businesses refuse to locate in unsafe neighborhoods, jobs become more distant, and residents must spend more time and money getting to work. And stolen cars prevent residents from readily getting to work. (With data, he supported the Police Department's relatively new "car stop" policy that it has resulted in a 33% decrease in car thefts.

While discussing a recent northwest side rape, the Chief expressed frustration that Milwaukee doesn't count its many assets. Also, the media, especially TV, neither emphasize the positives of Milwaukee nor inform citizens of the proactive efforts of the Police Department.

Chief Flynn believes that crime causes poverty. Unlike Chief Flynn, David R. Riemer recently wrote that poverty leads to crime. Are both correct?

ACTION

Chair Ruth Snedic

State

The State League asked members to contact their Assembly representatives to advocate for language in the budget bill that would protect property tax exemptions for affordable and accessible nonprofit rental units. The Assembly took it out of the budget and sent it on to the Senate. We are now being asked to contact our state senators to put this language back in the bill.

We also lobbied on the southeast WI Regional Transit Authority proposals in the Assembly. At this writing the state budget has been signed by the Governor and a 3-county Southeast Regional Transit Authority (SERTA) has been created for KRM Commuter Rail, funded by a rental car fee. The Governor vetoed the legislature's proposal for local funding sources for buses because the governance structure did not provide a truly regional structure. He encouraged the legislature to come back in the fall with a truly regional proposal. This funding is crucial to avoiding 35% cuts in transit service! See summary below.

A June 24 state League notice that the Senate version of the budget bill limits to \$31000 funding for Government Accountability Board investigations of public officials prompted President Petering to phone the 3 senators and 3 representatives on the Assembly/Senate conference committee to increase the appropriation and include recusal requirements from voting on any additional appropriation by any legislator under investigation.

Local

Along with several League members, President Louise Petering, attended the City of Milwaukee Steering and Rules Committee meeting June 15. Since public comment was not permitted, she handed Committee members a League statement expressing our concerns about leasing the City Water Works. Several board and other members provided input on our statement and it was OK'd by the board before giving it to the Committee

members. Louise emailed it to the council members and the mayor.

DOYLE'S VETO SETS NEW COURSE FOR TRANSIT

Budget Veto Message: "Get Regional"

Kerry Thomas, Natural Resources Committee member

With the stroke of his pen, Governor Doyle altered the course of transit in SE Wisconsin. He stated during interviews after his budget address that "if we are going to invest in transit, it must be regional so that we are able to support job connections and economic growth." Doyle delivered a partial transit win when he approved the three-county Southeastern Regional Transit Authority (SERTA) as a starting point of a regional transit network, but vetoed urgently needed dedicated funding sources for buses. He demonstrated his commitment to transit in February when he included a plan in his state budget for an RTA in SE Wisconsin that would enable local communities to have dedicated funding and regional coordination for bus systems and KRM Commuter Rail.

What Now? Stay Focused on the Prize

Clearly challenges remain. The next immediate action is to stay focused on the ultimate prize (integrated regional bus and rail transit) and build legislative consensus in the region on a transit solution that will meet: the diverse transit needs in the corridor, the goals of the Governor, and the criteria of the Federal Transit Administration. State legislation is required to enact a dedicated local funding source for transit and the next opportunity to accomplish that is when the next legislative session starts in September.

What is in the final budget?

Although Governor Doyle approved the creation of the three-county Southeast Regional transit Authority (SERTA) that will be responsible for managing and funding the local share of KRM Commuter Rail, he stated in his veto memo that he was vetoing the Milwaukee Transit Authority and funding for Racine and Kenosha buses (through SERTA) because they: *"do not provide a framework for regional cooperation on providing transit services. Regional cooperation in the southeast region is vital for the continued prosperity of Southeastern Wisconsin. These provisions do not move in the direction for the regional cooperation and leave serious concerns about the ability of the Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee Commuter Rail Link to move to completion. By vetoing these provisions, I am allowing the creation of a transit authority that can move forward with a planning process on the rail link while eliminating provisions that hamper regional cooperation. I encourage the legislature to bring forward a proposal with a stable revenue source dedicated solely to transit across the region, in order to move regional transit forward."*

See summary of Doyle's vetoes and what remained in the final budget at www.transitnow.org.

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What is the impact of the vetoes?

The vetoes eliminated the means for local communities to provide a funding source and regional cooperation for buses in Milwaukee, Racine, and Kenosha. Each system now faces dramatic service cuts and possible fare hikes in the coming months and years if dedicated funding solution is not found.

The vetoes also impact the KRM project by eliminating the bus funding and local transit connections that are important to a competitive bid for federal New Starts funding (over \$100 million) and project approvals, and to KRM's success in connecting people to jobs and spurring economic benefits. The KRM New Starts application is due in September and must be submitted by SERTA. The current temporary RTA will dissolve by September 1st, 2009 as SERTA is established.

Next Steps: Move Quickly, Coordinate and Collaborate Regionally

We applaud the legislators that worked with remarkable determination to advance to the transit package that was delivered to the Governor. And now we encourage them to act quickly and collaborate regionally to build on their hard-won accomplishments. To get the ball rolling the Governor met with legislators last week and agreed to provide a proposal for bus funding by the end of July.

Let's make sure adequate, stable transit funding and a regional transit framework are in place this fall so communities have the means to save their transit systems, make KRM successful, and spur job growth and economic development. We cannot afford to wait!

LEAGUE MEMBERSHIP

Chair Chris Weber-Sponnick

It's that time of Year when the world falls in love.....

Ooops! Wrong time of year for holiday songs but it IS the time of year to pay your League dues. Membership count and involvement are critical to success of our mission. So, please send your dues - if you have not paid - to 1845 N. Farwell, Suite 102, Milwaukee, WI 53202. It will save volunteer time and League money.

It's that time of year when League dues are due.....

Member Note – Progressive spirit and League member *Dilys Spransy* passed away June first. Trained in early childhood education, Dilys was an early advocate of Head Start and a peace activist. It is with her spirit we League members continue our efforts to build better communities. A sympathy card has been sent to her family expressing our appreciation for her contributions to our community and League.

NEW CITIZEN/NEW VOTER

Dorothy Sherman, Coordinator

Thanks to all Leaguers who have come to the federal courthouse in May and June for the naturalization cere-

monies and to register new voters. We registered 79 excited, new citizens in May and 54 new voters in June with only one day of ceremonies. Our volunteers gave out over 400 pamphlets! Thanks to Ruth Snedic, Joann Kreimendahl, Kit and Tom O'Meara, Kathy Slamka, Beverly Katter, Sr. Paula Marie Jarosz, Donna Fowler, Christine Bauer and Dorothy Sherman for their wonderful enthusiasm and "making democracy work!" Donna is from the Ozaukee County League of Women Voters. At this time, the only Wisconsin site for taking the citizenship oath is in Milwaukee so we really appreciate volunteers from surrounding counties.

Please help out by volunteering to either register or pass out voter pamphlets on July 22 or 23rd and August 12th or August 13th.

We have scheduled a training session for new Special Registration Deputies (SRDs) and those needing re-training for September 23rd. To let Dorothy know if you are interested in becoming a SRD or wish to meet the re-certification requirement for re-training of current SRDs, please email Info@lwvmilwaukee.org.

PROPOSED PRIVATIZATION OF MILWAUKEE'S WATERWORKS

Dr. Jennifer A. Runquist, Chair Natural Resources Committee

The Comptroller of the City of Milwaukee, Martin Morics, met with Natural Resources Committee Members Helga Guequierre, Louise Petering and Jennifer Runquist on March 30, 2009 at Milwaukee City Hall, to discuss his proposal that the City of Milwaukee lease its water utility to a private company. Mr. Morics is trying to find ways to add to city revenues, because revenues are down.

State aids are down \$70 million; property tax and other revenues are down because of the contracting economy, while personnel costs continue to rise. The City's budget is 80% personnel costs; the police department's are 97%. Further, the City's pension fund losses will require added monies. The City has many unmet demands for infrastructure such as road repair. At its current maintenance rate, it will take about 150 years to make needed road repairs. Finally, a levy limit prevents property tax increases beyond a certain rate (2-3%).

The Milwaukee Water Works provides Lake Michigan water to the city and several outlying municipalities. Its two water filtration plants represent an asset that might provide a revenue stream to the city if it were leased to a private company. Currently the Water Works provides no income to the city and on some occasions the city may have to provide funds to the Water Works (WW). Money made by the WW is kept by the utility for maintenance. The City's water rates are low and many aldermen do not want to raise the rates even though the Public Service Commission would allow it. The suggestion to lease the WW was first made in October 2009 before the economy failed drastically. The city's financial situation is now

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considerably worse than it was when this proposal was first made. Market recovery would put the city back where it was in October - still in need of revenue to fund city services.

According to Morics, the utility is well maintained. His office requested proposals from financial firms for a full service contract to value the WW utilizing a team of engineers, lawyers, bankers & financial experts. Their proposal would describe how a team would determine the value of a WW lease of 50-99 years. Seventeen proposals were received by the Comptroller's Office. Eventually, after evaluation, Mr. Morics will take a subset of the proposals to the City Council Steering and Rules Committee for a vote on proceeding with his proposal. The decision is a Council policy decision - do they want to make money from the Water Works?

If the Water Works is leased, the city will not want to lose control of the asset. Therefore the lease needs to be carefully crafted regarding infrastructure maintenance, drinking water quality and other issues:

- a) permissibility of service area expansion given continental subdivide questions and the Great Lakes Compact
- b) physical plant & distribution systems maintenance standards & City inspection of the same
- c) water quality standards - required and desired – and audits thereof
- d) clear definition as to when the operating lessee is in default of the contract
- e) water rate controls (local in addition to PSC).

Probably water rates will go up so a business makes a profit; and most likely the PSC will okay increased rates, as other water utilities in the state have higher rates.

The valuation study will be somewhat pricey for the

city. Will the City get enough for the water lease deal to provide significant new revenue and will the private company be able to get financing for the deal? If Mr. Morics gets \$600 million for the city from the water lease "deal", he will invest the money in funds, such as infrastructure funds, which will provide a revenue stream to the city. The valuation process could take 8-12 months. Public hearings will be held and the Council File for the Water Works valuation study will include names of those wanting notification of relevant meetings.

We asked if this was his only option for generating significant new revenues. An increase in the city sales tax or revenues from nonprofits in the city (30% of properties) would help increase city revenues. Increased parking rates and/or property taxes do not appear to be options at this time. However, some of these are controlled at the state level. The mayor and department heads are looking at the cost drivers for the city's budget farther out into the future, in an effort to constrain costs. Fire and Police costs take a very large percentage of the property tax revenue. The financial situation seems bleak to Mr. Morics, and the mayor is talking about reducing city jobs by 1400. For 16 years the City of Milwaukee has not had a deficit and its pension fund is still 90% funded, even after the markets have fallen.

At this point it seems no consideration has been given to the concept of water as a public trust. Another way to benefit from this great resource might be to change laws so that the city could use profits from providing water to non-city users to fund other services to its residents. Many citizens have contacted their aldermen and recently Ald. Bob Bauman, President Willie Hines, Ald. Michael Murphy and Ald. Nik Kovac announced that the process of valuing the WW will be slowed in order to consider other means for enhancing city revenues. There are many good reasons for maintaining control of the WW and NR Members are relieved that our Aldermen appear to be moving in this direction.



LWVMC board members and leaders learn about League bylaws, policies and practices to get oriented for the 2009-10 League year. Experienced League member Sarajane Kennedy led the orientation.

From l. to rt. Brenda Bantz (Nom. Committee), Karen Jansen (Treas.) Katherine Kane (member), Joann Kreimendahl (Secretary), Barb Eisenberg (Nom. Committee), Anne Baynton (eclipsed), Louise Petering (Pres.), Sue Lindberg (VP), Joanne Barndt (LWVMC Rep to Milwaukee City Ethics Committee), Mel Bromberg (Director). Directors Carol Wichmann, Dorothy Dean, Helga Guequierre & Chris Weber Sponnick, and presenter Sarajane Kennedy not shown.



LWV-MC officers: L to R, Carol Wichmann (Director), Sue Lindberg (Vice President), Joann Kreimendahl (Secretary), Louise Petering (Pres.), Anne Baynton (Director), Mel Bromberg (Director), Chris Weber Sponnick (Director); Seated, Karen Jansen (Treasurer). Directors not shown are Dorothy Dean and Helga Guequierre.

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!



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OF MILWAUKEE COUNTY

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Renewal Reminder
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or send check with the
form inside to our office.

