



The Voter Newsletter

January 2012

www.lwvddh.org

published by LWV Dearborn-Dearborn Hts

120 N Military Dearborn, MI 48124 313-278-6476

After the right to vote was established for American women, in 1920, the League of Women Voters worked to inform the influx of new voters. LWV has since become a resource for ALL voters. Men and women with diverse backgrounds and viewpoints rely on our non-partisan candidate guides and forums as well as our well-studied positions on local, state and national issues.

A Month of Saturdays ❄️ *A Month of Saturdays* ❄️ *A Month of Saturdays* ❄️



HAVE AN IMPACT ON ISSUES!

LWV joins the public conversation on current events and important topics because of YOUR INPUT!

This is our time to ensure the LWV keeps a relevant and active public profile. It will help if you review the **Impact on Issues*** book before the meeting so we can discuss potential recommendations/revisions.

Q. Do you see an issue that needs an updated position?

Q. Is there a current HOT TOPIC that isn't covered?

Also, a new proposal on criminal sentencing is explained on p3. Please plan on sharing your ideas. Plan on getting to know your league a little better this year.

Refreshments provided.

Meet us in the church lounge, main floor of Christ Episcopal Church, 120 Military, Dearborn.

*Impact on Issues online here:

http://www.lwv.org/files/ImpactonIssues_2010-2012.pdf

How Safe is Our Water?

LWV-DMA Mtg
Saturday, Feb. 4th
10 am



Professor Xi from UM will be the guest speaker. We will also consider our regional drinking water supply from the City of Detroit.

St. Andrew Lutheran Church
6255 N. Telegraph (north of Maple)
Bloomfield Hills. see p4 for more details



HOT TOPIC-PRIVATIZATION.
LESS GOVERNMENT,
MORE BUSINESS.

Join us on Saturday,
Feb 11th at 9:30am

Good Times Caffe, 22180 Michigan Ave.

They have reserved the large room as a courtesy. They have a breakfast menu, as well as pastries, snacks and drinks.

Bring a friend and bring your ideas to our Privatizing Public Services Round 2.

This issue affects us all on the street level, whether national, state or local policy.

see p3 for more information.

MEMBERSHIP

Open to any U.S. citizen.
Dues are \$60 per year payable
July 1st to LWVDDH.

Print and mail membership
form as well as online payment
is available on our website,
www.lwvddh.org

MEETINGS

Many of our meetings are held
at Christ Episcopal Church,
host to the local league office:
120 N. Military at Cherry
Hill, Dearborn, MI.

Handicap Accessible.

Check our online calendar to
confirm location and details
for upcoming events,
or contact our office
by phone/email.

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MISSION STATEMENT

The LWV, a non-partisan
political organization,
encourages the informed and
active participation of
people in government, works
to increase understanding of
major public policy issues,
and influences public policy
through education and
advocacy.

"The Voter Newsletter" is included
in membership. Others can
subscribe for \$10 per year. We are
also transitioning to an email alert
for those who opt out of the printed
newsletter. Contact us at 313-278-
6476 or lwvddh@mailcity.com.

President's Message - Mary Bugeia

Welcome to 2012. I hope during the December holidays you were able to spend more time with family and friends. Thankfully, I was able to connect with several relatives and friends that I had not seen in a while.

Recalling our December 11th meeting, **I wish to thank Mona and Abed Hammoud for hosting our gathering.** I also thank everyone for contributing to our feast. Abed provided us a glimpse of the work he is doing as a U.S. District Assistant Prosecuting Attorney. The unit covers white collar crime, bank fraud, investment fraud (especially against senior citizens). Abed helped draft new laws applying to mortgage fraud, forgery, real estate documents, notary laws, and extending statute of limitations.

Our League calendar is filling with activities for this New Year, especially Voter Service tasks. Meetings are taking place to update our **Who's Who of elected officials for 2012.** Next, we will be learning how to utilize a voter service tool developed by LWVUS called **VOTE 411.** The web-based system promises to be an effective way of collecting candidate and voter related information. Our Michigan league has purchased the system and is extending permission to use it to all local leagues.

We applied for and received a LWVUS grant to conduct an energetic **Youth Registration Project.** Barbara Adams initiated the application and Betsy Cushman and Joe Borrajo agreed to help lead the process. Other helpers are: Mary Bugeia, Judy Carty, Dennis Kirchoff, Judy Patrick, and Chris Sullivan, who will be contacting area high school principals to arrange registration events.

Our main meeting this month will be **Saturday, January 21, at 9:30 am,** in the lounge of Christ Episcopal Church to conduct **National Program Planning.** This is an opportunity to re-acquaint ourselves with established LWVUS positions. We will review the various positions and discuss their relevance today. You may decide to initiate advocacy or recommend updating a position, or suggest a new study. We recently completed "The Federal Role in Public Education" and are in the midst of studying "Privatization of Public Services". ***So, please plan to attend and join in this important discussion.***

Judy Patrick will be holding a meeting at 2pm, on January 24th, to consider ways to increase our fundraising efforts. You are welcome to join us in the office to share ideas, or call Judy (313-563-4334) to make suggestions.

The LWV Detroit Metro Area is hosting an informative meeting about our regional water supply. The Detroit Water and Sewerage Department supplies safe drinking water to millions of people in SE Michigan. The meeting will be **Saturday, February 4th at 10 am** at the St. Andrew Lutheran Church. To car-pool, we will leave the office at 9am. Call 313-278-6476 to ride with us. *See p4 for more details.*

On **Saturday, February 11** we will continue our discussion about the **Privatization of Public Services.** As municipal revenues decline, more and more services are being turned over to private agencies. Which services do we want to protect, can we ensure proper oversight, how to avoid corruptive behavior? Read more about this topic on p3. **Meet us at Good Times Caffe' on Michigan Avenue at 9:30am.** Bring a friend!

We look forward to seeing you at one, or all, of these events.

Contracts, Deals, Layoffs, Cuts! Privatization Round 2

If you've been following the trend, you might have read articles about building/property sales, job losses and business contracts to handle public services. Consider the potential benefits and perils of privatization at our **"Hot Topic" Roundtable on February 11th**.

All levels of government are under pressure to cut down on services as a cost-saving measure, or simply on principle. What have you noticed? What difference does it make?

Our November Roundtable gave us a good start, but now we need to pin down some specifics on this topic. What is the proper role for the private sector? What concerns do you have about oversight and corruption? After the public system has been dismantled, will the public be vulnerable if the provider falters or jumps ship? What can we learn from existing successes and failures? Join us for a guided discussion.

Bring a friend Saturday at 9:30am, Saturday, Feb 11th at Good Times Caffe (next to Buddy's) on Michigan Ave. Refreshments can be purchased. (We will be in the meeting room.)

Transparency, Accountability, Environment, Cost, Quality, Economic Impact, and Public Well-being are top considerations in our national study, "Privatization of Public Services".

We will talk about specific examples and aim for principled conclusions as we prepare for the next Round. In Round 3 we will be voting on consensus questions, listed here:

<http://www.lwv.org/content/consensus-questions-introduction>

LWVUS New Year's Resolutions.

Promote voting rights, voter education, fair elections, and the Clean Air Promise.

Find out more about each of the five resolutions for 2012 on the LWV blog:

<http://www.lwv.org/blog/election-year-2012-resolutions>

Our Program Planning Meeting on January 21 includes a briefing on LWV US Positions.

The League has position in these main categories:

- Representative Government
- International Relations
- Natural Resources
- Social Policy

These positions cover topics such as voting rights, tax policy, health care, arms control, air quality, agriculture and immigration.

You can find a summary of each section here:

http://www.lwv.org/files/IoI10-12_PublicPolicyPositions.pdf

We want to notify you that the LWVDC (Washington, D.C.) will sponsor the following proposal for concurrence at Convention 2012 in June:

"Sentencing Policy

(1) The LWVUS believes alternatives to imprisonment should be explored and utilized, taking into consideration the circumstances and nature of the crime.

(2) The LWVUS opposes mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses."

A study published this month has revealed that up to 41% of young people in the United States have been arrested by age 23 for something other than minor traffic violations. The United States is the largest jailer of citizens per capita in the world, with enormous economic and social costs. Much imprisonment is due to harsh mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses. After imprisonment, having a criminal record carries a lifetime of daunting obstacles to succeed as a productive citizen.

Please use this link (www.lwvdc.org) to find educational information about the proposed concurrence on the LWVDC website.

Title: Sentencing Policy

Summary of concurrence: Alternatives to imprisonment and no mandatory minimum drug sentences.

Name of League position: LWVDC Criminal Sentencing

Location of League position: LWVDC.org

Did you know we have lots of opportunities for you to get involved with short-term projects, small tasks and active committees? For example, we are starting off the year with activities for Voter Service and we have programs in the works for February and March. **Most of our plans include you joining the effort!**

Sometimes we just need extra eyes to help edit a publication like Who's Who. Sometimes we need extra hands to help with the newsletter. Other times we need extra voices to make an impact on important issues. Would you like to be in on the action or offer support in some way? **Your help is welcome!** Send an email to lwvddh@mailcity.com or call 313-278-6476

It Happens Here – Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation

Kathy Gapa reported on the LWV Oakland Area Event for this article.

Theresa Flores was 15, living in Birmingham, MI when she became trapped in a sex-slave operation for two years. "It happens here," Flores says, "to white, middle-class teens who live in the suburbs. It's easy to think that because you live in a nice neighborhood, you're safe."

Flores was on the track team, had a nice house and seemed like an ordinary suburban girl, but at night, she was subjected to horrendous abuse. Compelled to keep her secret to protect her family from a scandal, she snuck out of the house - in compliance but against her will. This started with a crush in high school. Taking advantage of her affection, a 16 year old boy brought her to his house and raped her while others photographed the incident. The photos were used to blackmail her into cooperating, coerced into becoming a sex slave for the benefit of a criminal enterprise. She was finally free when her family moved, still unaware of her trauma.

Theresa Flores' story is typical of sex-trafficking victims that Nicole McGee, Special Victims Agent, FBI-Michigan deals with daily. Agent McGee spoke on October 17 for the LWVOA about the worldwide problem of human trafficking, including its prevalence within the United States. 40% of all forced labor-human trafficking...

Read the rest of this article with links and references here:

<http://lwvddh.blogspot.com/2012/01/it-happens-here-human-trafficking-and.html>



Find out about YOUR Drinking Water

Along with speaker Professor Xi, an assistant professor of environmental health sciences at UM, we will be discussing our regional water supplier, DWSD. Did you know that this department is a not-for-profit entity? Rates are based on cost of service only, with no other source of revenue. DWSD has more than 2000 employees.

Detroit Water and Sewerage Department, a part of the City of Detroit, is governed by 7 Commissioners, appointed by the Mayor. Four represent Detroit Residents and three represent municipalities outside of Detroit.

"Today, DWSD provides water service to almost one million people in Detroit and three million people in 126 neighboring Southeastern Michigan communities throughout Wayne, Oakland, Macomb St. Clair, Lapeer, Genesee, Washtenaw and Monroe counties." http://www.dwsd.org/pages_n/about_dwsd.html

Join us on Saturday morning, 10am on Feb 4th at St Andrews Lutheran Church, 6255 N. Telegraph (north of Maple) Bloomfield Hills. Call 313-278-6476 to car pool from the LWVDDH office.

Opinion by Joe Borrajo – Privatization

The cachet of "privatizing services" is it saves money, but is that true? In the mid 1990s, Dearborn sought to save money by erecting the Yule-tide decorations on city hall grounds through a contractor instead of employees. Cost: \$50,000.00. Turns out the contractor sent a single worker to supervise the same city employees that weren't suppose to be used for the task of decorating the grounds. The task took a matter of a few days, but \$50,000.00 could've paid the salary of an employee for a year.

Besides the money proposition, "privatization" also raises the question of the quality of services rendered. The process of out-sourcing responsibilities can lead to the problem of inferior work requiring remedial effort that translates into cost-overruns, left for the taxpayer to cover. Likewise, communities can be expected to accommodate "privatization's" development with a costly infrastructure and upgrading that explicitly serves the recipient of the community's asset with little return to the taxpayer.

Furthermore, the subject of "privatization" rarely broaches the matter of community/taxpayer "assets". Putting valuable assets, a measure of the wealth and value of a community, into the hands of corporation developers and speculators is a forfeiture that weakens the very foundation of a community, leaving it open to having the quality of life negatively impacted. "Privatization" can leave a mark comparable to what the problematic issue of "eminent domain" has done to injure stable residential communities.

What do you think? Currently studying this issue, we'd like to hear your ideas, especially if you have some references that will guide our consensus. Go here to comment: <http://lwvddh.blogspot.com/2012/01/opinion-privatization.html>

Recommended Reading:



Have you read "**Bridge**" from the Center for Michigan? *This news and analysis covers topics relevant to Michigan*, such as recently passed state laws that clear the way for merging municipal services. MI Secretary of State Ruth Johnson contributed an article about voting access and reform. Go to <http://bridgemi.com/> to read these and/or sign up to get Bridge by Email.

Former Gov Granholm and Dan Mulhern have published a book: "**A Governor's Story: The Fight for Jobs and America's Economic Future.**" Listen to this presentation, sponsored in part by a League in California. It opens with the Greenville's dramatic loss of a refrigerator factory, anecdotal of so many jobs lost. Video includes an interesting Q&A with ideas about surviving and succeeding in today's economy. <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/AGov>

Convenient Voting vs Voter Fraud?

A December editorial in the Press & Guide informed readers that David Robertson (R-Grand Blanc) authored Senate Bill 751 to increase oversight on absentee voters so that seniors with disabilities will no longer automatically receive a ballot. This would apply to voters inactive for the last 6 years.

<http://www.pressandguide.com/articles/2011/12/09/opinion/doc4ee254b6ce704340731340.txt>

Read what Michigan's Secretary of State Ruth Johnson has to say here:

<http://bridgemi.com/2011/12/guest-column-voting-reform-boosts-access-security/#.TwUuRjUeORh>

What does "Convenient Voting" mean to you?
Would you vote "absentee" if it was open to all?
Would you like to improve voter turnout?

The League has been promoting Convenient Voting to our state legislators in the past year and would like to see you join our cause and protect access to voting and reduce obstacles.

Call your state senator and representative to challenge efforts like these.

Example Message:

I am a voter in your district and I urge you to support no reason absentee and early voting in Michigan. Michigan voters - regardless of age, political party, gender or income - overwhelmingly support early and no reason absentee voting. The early voting and no reason absentee voting options will allow more citizens to participate in our democracy. Will you oppose restrictions and support convenient voting?

Don't know how to contact them? Look up phone and emails on our Who's Who.

<http://lwvddh.org/whoswho.pdf>

Note: we are working on the 2012 edition. Can you help? Send an email to lwvddh@mailcity.com or call 313-278-6476 and let us know. Betsy Cushman and others working with Voter Service would love to hear from you!

League of Women Voters Dearborn & Dearborn Heights

120 N. Military
Dearborn, MI 48124



Calendar of Events

Saturday, Jan. 21st at 9:30am

- *Considering LWV Positions*

Saturday, Feb. 4th at 10am

- *Regional Drinking Water*

Thursday, Feb. 2nd at 7pm

- *LWVDDH Board Meeting*

Tuesday, Feb. 7th at 1pm

- *Voter Service Mtg*

Saturday, Feb. 11th at 9:30am

- *Privatization Round 2*

Go to www.lwvddh.org for more calendar info

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If you enjoy the LWVDDH newsletter, perhaps you know someone else who would like to read it. Send them a link to read our latest newsletter - <http://lwvddh.org/news.pdf> or ask us to send them a printed one.

Did you know your LWVDDH Board members work on several projects at once in order to serve our community and have a vibrant local League?

For example, our dedicated Voter Service Committee is off to a great start with this crew: Barb Adams, Joe Borrajo, Mary Bugeia, Judy Carty, Betsy Cushman, Kathy Gapa, Dennis Kirchoff, Judy Patrick and Chris Sullivan. All on this list are also board members.

At month end and year end, we are amazed at the achievements and happy to have made a difference. We also learn a lot about local, state and national issues.

You can learn a lot and help our community thrive by attending our events and even volunteering on occasions. We hope you choose an upcoming Saturday Event.

Impact on Democracy

What do you know about redistricting? Here are a couple of informative links:

- http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/12/23/michigan-redistricting-challenge-detroit-justice-department_n_1167611.html
- http://house.michigan.gov/home_redistricting.asp