



LWV Mpls VOTER

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November Topic: Minnesota School Funding

At the LWVMN Convention, delegates voted to produce a Briefing Paper on Education Finance and the new Minnesota Miracle proposal by Representative. Mindy Greiling. A committee was formed to accomplish the herculean task of explaining the complex education funding that currently exists. Committee members decided to include early childhood education as well and began interviewing early childhood experts in the State about the importance of birth-12 education.

The committee includes a broad spectrum of experience and geography. (See list at the end of this article.) One committee member, Kim Bolza-Andolshek, from the Pequot Lakes LWV and a school board member there, drives to Minneapolis to participate. She is a small business owner in her community and the parent of young children who sees the need for Early Childhood Education (ECFE) and educating parents. Interviews also are being conducted with school board members. Funding needs in small districts, suburban and urban are all unique.

*Productivity will be the key to
Minnesota's future growth.
Education is the key to productivity.*

~Tom Stinson, State Economist
University of Minnesota Professor,
Department of Applied Economics

Background

In 2003, Ric Dressen, Edina's Superintendent, chaired the 19-member Governor's Education Finance Reform task force charged with studying education funding reform. The groups final report indicated that education in Minnesota was underfunded by over \$1 billion. Unfortunately, the recommendations were not adopted. Several organizations including Parents United for Public Schools funded

the completion of the study. The coalition now called PS Minnesota was formed.

In 2007, U of M Professor Emeritus Van Mueller, an observer at the time of the first Minnesota Miracle bill under Governor Anderson and an education finance expert and consultant, wrote a letter to Governor Pawlenty, Senator Larry Pogemiller, Majority Leader, and Representative Margaret Anderson-Kelliher (now House Speaker) stating that "the current partnership between the State of Minnesota and Minnesota's local school districts is broken. The dependence on voter-approved local levies has increased and they no longer are used only for local option services. The use of property taxes to fund core education services is not fair. All Minnesotans benefit from investing in the education of all children. This is not a local issue." In fact, he added, "It appears that the use of the referendum has divided communities rather than provide a positive voice to questions of how we all can help build stronger schools. We very much need your leadership in fixing this broken system."

Professor Mueller believes that three steps are urgently needed:

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From the President

Deborah Jindra

LWV is where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement.



**Deborah Jindra
President**

Dark Nights, More Time to Think?

The change of season. Colder, darker nights and crisper air. A slowed down economy where household income for some has been severely reduced. Even people who haven't lost jobs or income have tightened their belts.

In Minneapolis, we're trying out a new way to vote. Change is everywhere. It was a hot topic during the Presidential campaign and continues to be something with which we all grapple.

The LWVMpls is definitely faced with change too. Donations and time to spend on volunteer projects is way down. We never did have deep pockets but now we also need to do more with fewer and fewer members. We keep hearing that change can mean opportunity and for me that prompts many questions. Can we use hard times to redesign our program and procedures? How can we best attract younger members who may not read our hard copy publications? How can we appeal to funders and the community at large with our studies and voter information?

First, we hope to make our website even more attractive and easy to use. More people are getting news and information exclusively from their computers. Perhaps we can attract new members by providing more interactivity and usability. We can extend our brand by posting more of our well-researched information on the web. Search engines may in turn bring new users to our site.

Secondly, our new *Program for Action Guide*, formerly *Goals for Good Government*, will now be available on our website. Ann Pugliese and Carol

Green and their editors have put in many hours to tighten up and streamline the presentation and make it "searchable." Great work team!

During our long winter here in Minnesota, take frequent looks at our website and those of the LWVMN and LWVUS for a wealth of information. See what the League does at various levels to lobby and raise our profile. Please give feedback and suggestions.

Plain Language Initiative

In April 2008, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Plain Language in Government Communications Act of 2008 (HR 3548) by the overwhelming vote of 376 to 1. The purpose of the bill is to enhance citizen access to government information and services. The bill requires federal agencies— within one year— to establish Plain Language as the standard style for government documents issued to the public, and for other purposes.

The Plain Language Act references the Federal Plain Language Guidelines. These guidelines describe how to plan and organize content and recommend ways to write more clearly, such as:

- ✓ Using active voice instead of passive;
- ✓ Avoiding jargon; and
- ✓ Writing short sentences and paragraphs.

What does all this have to do with us? We need to think about crafting our communications using Plain Language Principles. The content of our publications and web information should be clear and easy to understand. Being able to zero in on the "important stuff" is a time saver and can greatly increase use of our material.

A new writing style and an improved website can't be the only changes but I'm open to all suggestions for making our organization sustainable. While too many changes can be disconcerting, I'm trying to stay positive. There is an old proverb that says a change is as good as a rest.

The 2010 Census Count is Only Six Months Away

The Minneapolis Complete Count Committee (CCC), an action team of community leaders from across the city appointed by the Mayor and the City Council, has been working to get the word out about the upcoming 2010 Census. Now with Census Day less than six months away, Committee Members are working harder than ever to ensure that everyone in Minneapolis is counted. The CCC has established a speakers' bureau of community leaders and promoted the Census in the Somali community, high rise communities, and at community meetings and events. KMOJ and Lalnvasora radio stations featured announcements and interviews regarding the Census.

"We need to do this work early on so that it will benefit people who need awareness about why the Census is safe and important for their community. Also, it takes a long time to build trust around the Census, especially in immigrant communities that have never participated in the Census and may have suspicions about how information is used," explains Complete Count Committee Co-chair, Saeed Fahia.



There is a lot at stake in the 2010 Census. It's estimated that every 100 people missed in the Census count leads to a \$1 million loss to the people of Minneapolis over the next decade. That means a lack of funding for schools, social services, transportation, businesses and more. In Minneapolis, that \$1 million would be enough to:

- ✓ Place nearly 350 people into full time employment
- ✓ Prevent 2,000 foreclosures
- ✓ Provide gap funding assistance for 40 rehabilitated affordable housing units
- ✓ Provide more than 10,000 medical or dental visits for uninsured patients at a community clinic
- ✓ Help at least 25 new businesses get started by providing low interest loans, creating hundreds of new jobs

An accurate census count is also critical in making sure Minnesota retains its full congressional representation. Based on current population trends, the state demographer is projecting a loss of one congressional seat in Minnesota.

"We need to make our numbers count for the good of the community," says Bishop Richard Howell of Shiloh Temple. VJ Smith of MAD DADS explains, "It's not only our vote that counts, but our actions and our plans for the future that count, that's why we need to participate in the Census."

However, there are many barriers and challenges to achieving accurate representation in the Census. Many fear that the information they share during the Census may be shared with immigration, welfare, or housing agencies, but in fact, sharing Census responses with others is a federal crime. By law, the Census Bureau cannot share individual information with anyone, including landlords and other government agencies and officials.

Census questionnaires will arrive in mid March. The process, even for people who have language barriers, should be much simpler and has been shortened to a simple 10 question form, which takes just a few minutes to complete. The Complete Count Committee is working with City, County, and Census Bureau staff to ensure that there will be Questionnaire Assistance Centers available throughout key communities where paid staff with appropriate language skills can provide information about how to fill out the census form.

In order to achieve a strong count, leaders from different ethnic groups, communities of faith, public institutions, and grassroots organizations are working together as the Minneapolis Complete Count Committee. For more information:

www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/2010census/

www.2010census.gov

Jeff Schneider, City of Minneapolis 2010 Census Contact, 612.673.5124

December: Do Your Own Thing

One of my favorite meetings of the League year is the “Do Your Own Thing” option in December for units. I think of this as a family get-together, but with better conversation.

Leaguers spend most of the year looking at serious issues, usually with fairly proscribed information. However, December is the time to get creative. One of our board members recently asked what other people do for December and it occurred to me that we haven't shared some of these great events with the rest of League.



Unit 53 has had so many interesting guests over the years. I'm not sure if it is because of the great cooks in our unit or our December location at a beautiful downtown loft, but we have attracted some wonderful guests:

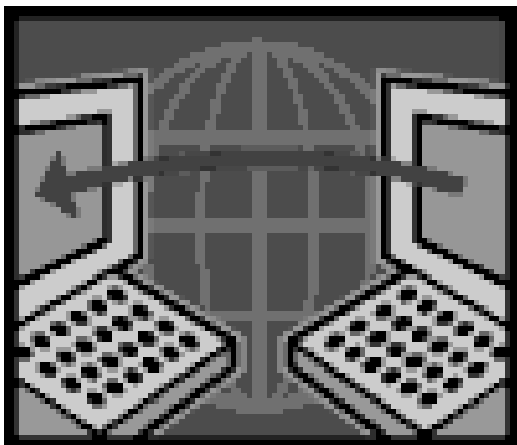
- ✓ Mary Altman, the Minneapolis Public Art Coordinator,
- ✓ Anita Duckor, head of the Friends of the Minneapolis Public Library
- ✓ Atina Diffley, from Gardens of Eagan and a leading proponent of organic farming who talked about sustainability.

- ✓ Kathleen Schuler, Senior Policy Analyst for the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

If you're looking for an idea, how about someone who is changing the face of the city? The business section of the *Star Tribune* or your neighborhood newspaper may profile someone who is dedicated to building a better community and would be willing to share expertise or give interested Leaguers a preview. For example, Seth Bixby Daugherty, a Food & Wine magazine best chef in 2005, launched Real Food Initiatives, a small nonprofit organization that restructures school lunch programs. That is someone I would brave a snow storm to hear.

If you have a great meeting planned, let others know how it went and what you learned. Share some of the highlights with the rest of our membership. We'll post photos on the website if you like and highlight your unit.

~Deborah Jindra



Remember, you are just a few clicks away from a treasure trove of information about LWV, LWVMN and LWVMpls. Much more than we can offer in a monthly paper newsletter! Visit:

**National at
www.lwv.org**

**State at
www.lwvmn.org**

**Minneapolis at
www.lwvmpls.org**

School Funding Cont. from p. 1

1. The State needs to define in operational terms what is an adequate education that meets constitutional muster (e.g., “general and uniform thorough and efficient,” etc.) provided to all Minnesota students;
2. This programs costs should be determined; and
3. A fair and just revenue stream should be designed to provide a stable source of state and local support.

During the last session, Senate and House Democrats, did not agree on education funding and were divided about the Minnesota Miracle bill authored by Rep. Mindy Greiling and written by the Coalition of PS Minnesota (Public School Minnesota). Governor Pawlenty seemed to support Greiling’s bill, but the Senate Education Finance committee, chaired by Sen. LeRoy Stumpf, did not. There has been more micromanaging of the Education Finance bill by the Senate. There is no clear plan from the Senate, as there was from the House committee.

The LWVMN is part of the PS Minnesota coalition, which includes many educational organizations.

Minnesota -- the “brain power” state, the bright Star of the North—spends less on public elementary and secondary education than the U.S. average. Over the last decade, Minnesota’s public school current spending has gone from significantly above the U.S. average to modestly below.

~ Minnesota 2020, September 29, 2009

The LWVMN Briefing Paper serves as a teaser for members to become more knowledgeable about the current broken system. It is hoped that members will lobby their state senators and representatives to embrace a new financing system based on researched needs, not political factors.



The LWVMN Education Funding Committee includes:

Pat Sullivan, Edina LWV, and a retired educator, Chair

Lonnie Skrentner, Edina LWV, currently running for the Edina School Board & on the Action Committee lobbying for the Education Finance bill

Kathy Cerra, LWVMpls, on the action committee following Early Childhood and K-12 educational funding

Kim Bolza-Andolshek, Pequot Lakes LWV and School Board

Shari Dion, Roseville School Board member

Geneva Middleton, Eden Prairie LWV, retired educator and volunteer with English as a Second Language

Geneva McMillan, Eden Prairie LWV, retired principal, school board member and superintendent of schools

Kay Kessel, LWVMpls, retired educator and LWVMN education finance lobbyist

~ Kay Kessel

For more information, visit the LWV Minnesota website

<http://www.lwvmn.org/>

Development Corner

Thank you to the following members and friends of the LWVMpls who have contributed since the last issue.

90th Anniversary Campaign Don and Marion Hall

Mary Lou Loud
Karen Michael
Barbara Koropchak
Shirley Ungar

New Renewal Process Offers Convenience for Members and Sustained Support for LWVMpls

This year, we have an innovative way to renew your membership in LWVMpls. The process is a response to requests for an easier renewal process. We are encouraging a sustainable automatic membership investment. To accomplish this, we will use your credit card to bill you annually. This year, you will supply us with the credit information you want to use and the amount of financial support you wish to provide the League. We will continue to use this information until you wish to make a change.

This process will be more convenient for you, as well as a vast time saver for the League. It is, however, optional. If you wish to continue your current process of membership payment, please feel free to do so. Contact the office or click **Donate** on the website and type "Membership" in the comments box to renew.

~Kelsey Johnson
Membership Chair

Thank You!

Newsletter Support: Margit Berg, Barbara Wallace, Eileen Regan, Julia Wallace, Pat Kovel-Jarboe, Sharon Emery

Office Support: Marilyn Dean



Looking for Lively Conversation?

November Unit Meetings: If you are interested in attending a unit meeting, please call one of the following contacts for more information.

Unit 1

Second Monday, 7:15 p.m.
Contact: Lindsey Thomas, 612.824.4489

Unit 11

Second Tuesday, 7:30 p.m.
Contacts: Jan Midtbo, 612.926.0954
Judy Walter, 612.927.5847

Unit 25/29

Second Tuesday, 7:00 p.m.
Contacts: Jane Starr 612.378.2590
Harriet Johnson 612.331.5669

Unit 48

Third Monday
Contact: Jennifer Johnson, 612.377.6084

Unit 49

Contacts: Gerry Sell, 612.823.3248
Marilyn Kelly, 612.824.6404

Unit 53

Contacts: Elaine Lindstrom, 612.377.3262
Sally Pundt, 612.377.3529

Ten Things You Can Do To Protect Water



We can all have an impact on the quality of the water in our many lakes, rivers and streams. Share these tips with your friends and neighbors and let them know what you are doing to protect our waters.

1. Use only what's needed when watering your lawn. Most lawns need only one inch of water each week, either from rain or from watering. Step on your grass—if it springs back, it does not need water.
2. Fix leaky faucets and toilets. Five drips a second from a faucet can waste 15,000 gallons of water in a year. That's enough to fill a backyard swimming pool!
3. Take shorter showers or install a low flow showerhead. The average 5-minute shower uses 5 gallons of water per minute, that's 25 gallons of water per shower. Low flow showerheads use about *half* the amount of water.
4. Run your dishwasher or washing machine only when they are full.
5. Reduce the amount of fertilizer and lawn chemicals you use. These chemicals become part of storm water runoff and end up in our lakes and streams.
6. Dispose of household waste properly. Don't put items such as bug spray, insecticides, and motor oil in the trash, the sewer, or on the ground. Household hazardous waste sites take these items.
7. Consider planting native plants in your yard or installing a rain garden. Native plants require less maintenance and watering and reduce mowing. Rain gardens allow rain to seep naturally into the ground and filter pollutants from storm water.
8. Reduce hard surfaces and storm water runoff by using permeable paving such as porous asphalt, pervious concrete, paving stones, or grass pavers (hollow pavers that let grass grow through and water infiltrate).
9. Dispose of left over medications properly. Dissolve pills in water and add flour to liquids, mark out any information on the container, and place in your trash. Since many of the ingredients in medications are not treated by wastewater treatment facilities, they are being found in the Mississippi River and have been linked to harming fish.
10. Join or organize a lake or river clean up in your community or join a citizen water quality monitoring group.

~Freshwater Society

Potential Members Are Everywhere—Will You Do Your Part?

A little reminder that bringing a new member in can be something that we all work towards. Sometimes it's as easy as asking the nice lady in the coffee shop if she likes being active in the community. I would like to encourage all of us to take a moment to think of two or three people we think would be an asset to our organization, or would appreciate our engaging conversation.

Really it is easy. Asking is the first step. Tell them what we are all about, all the wonderful things we do, and what you enjoy most about the League. Next, invite them to a meeting. Lastly, follow up, ask

them what they thought—would they like to come to another meeting, or be a part of a reputable community organization?

A new member is a true asset to the vitality of our League. Please try it out before your next unit meeting, or other meetings, e.g., the Healthy Legacy Water Policy. (And remember, men can join too!)

~Kelsey Johnson
Membership Chair

League of Women Voters Minneapolis
81 South 9th Street, Suite 335
Minneapolis, MN 55402
Phone: 612.333.6319
Fax: 612.333.6310
Email: vote@lwvmpls.org
Website www.lwvmpls.org

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MISSION

The League of Women Voters,
a nonpartisan political organization,
encourages informed and active
participation in government, works to
increase understanding of major policy
issues, and influences public policy through
education and advocacy.

Deborah Jindra, President
*Ginny Craig, **VOTER** Editor*

We're on the Web!
www.lwvmpls.org

Upcoming Events Save the Date!

Mon., Nov. 2
Healthy Legacy Water committee meets with
Rep. Wagenius. Call the office for location and
time.

Tues., Nov. 3
Election

Mon., Nov. 9
7:00 pm
LWV South Tonka, Wayzata/Plymouth and
Easter Carver City: Census Event with Mark
Ritchie South Shore Community Center 5735
Country Club Drive Shorewood.

Wed., Nov. 18
7:00 - 9:00 pm
Board meeting
LWV Office

Fri., Nov. 27
National Day of Listening. See StoryCorps.org
Start your oral history of LWV for the 90th
Anniversary!



Commemorative 90th Anniversary 2010
Calendars are available from the LWVMpls
office.

Calendars have been redesigned but still
have lots of room to keep track of your busy
life. Get yours now! Buy extras for gifts.

Download an order form at www.lwvmpls.org