



LWVMpls VOTER

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February Topic: 2010 Legislative Session Preview

At noon on February 4, Speaker of the House Margaret Anderson Kelliher will open what promises to be a contentious 2010 legislative session. For a start, there is the \$1.2 billion deficit in the current biennium (FY2010-2011). Recall that policymakers took action last session to resolve the \$6.4 billion deficit for FY 2010-2011. Those actions included a House/Senate-passed tax bill, Gov. Pawlenty's veto of same, and his subsequent unallotments of programs like General Assistance Medical Care and the delay of 27% of school funding in order to balance the budget.¹

The plot has thickened on this scenario since Ramsey County Judge Kathleen Gearin ruled on December 30, 2009, that the governor overstepped his authority when he unilaterally slashed our state government's budgets last June. While the governor has declared the judge to be partisan, Fred Morrison, University of Minnesota law professor and an expert on Minnesota constitutional law, said it was "a classic separation-of-powers case," and opined that Judge Gearin made a strong argument that the unallotment power "is not meant to be used as a weapon by the executive branch to break a stalemate" with the legislature.²

Adding to the fun is the fact that everyone is up for election in November, 2010. Gov. Pawlenty's apparent run for President on a platform of "no new taxes" could make negotiating difficult, and Judge Gearin's opinion has added another variable to that script.³ The clutch of legislators from both parties who have jumped into the gubernatorial contest will make things interesting. At this writing five DFL and three

Republican legislators have declared, but others may join them.⁴

It was clear last fall that the Legislature will have to act quickly on our new \$1.2 billion deficit when they convene, for we will be more than half way through the fiscal year by February 4. To their credit, legislators have been meeting on this issue over the past five months, though it's hard to detect any major areas of agreement at this writing.

The elephant at the Capitol will be this \$1.2 billion deficit and how to balance the budget while protecting education and health and human services, which together make up about 75 percent of the General Fund.⁵ LWVMN will be encouraging legislators to "use all the tools in their box," i.e., we will support selected tax increases as well as carefully selected budget cuts.

Cont. on p. 3

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From the President

Deborah Jindra

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

Late in December, I participated in an event at the Central Library focusing on Climate Change. LWVMpls was one of the sponsors along with the Library Foundation of Hennepin County, 1Sky, Amnesty International USA, Oxfam America, and the Will Steger Foundation. The event included a showing of the documentary, *Age of Stupid*, from director Franny Armstrong. Oscar-nominated Pete Postlethwaite stars as a man living alone in the devastated world of 2055, looking at old footage from 2008 and asking: Why didn't we stop climate change when we had the chance? It focuses on missed opportunities in the present from a future that appeared pretty bleak.

There were also live hook-ups with the Will Steger Youth Delegates of Expedition Copenhagen, who reported on their experiences at the Copenhagen Summit. Julaine Heit admirably led the post-film discussion and Mary Miller, Melissa Metzler and Kate Donahue took time out of their busy pre-holiday schedules to assist. There was a great turnout and a wonderful discussion of the issues.

This event fit in very well with our LWVUS topic on Climate Change later this spring. If you haven't looked at the League's national website, take a few minutes to look over the great information there about what we can do to slow this global calamity. There seem to be a lot of people who want to ignore the facts and carry on with our standard operating procedure. From my perspective, it is very clear that we need to change our ways to slow down global warming. Rather than being a frightening issue this should be an opportunity for us to invest in new technology and more thoughtful ways to manage our lives. We should not base our economy on waste and pollution or take the attitude that we can spoil

the planet because we are powerful. *The Age of Stupid* made the point that people all over the world want the typical American lifestyle. How do we reconcile wanting everyone to have better lives without sending the environment into a tailspin?



**Deborah Jindra
President**

There are so many ways we can contribute to making this world a better place. Being informed and lobbying our elected officials is one of the most effective. As the Minnesota legislative session convenes, we know there is much unfinished business from last year. Complicating the picture is the open governor's seat. It will be interesting to see if anything can be accomplished in such a politically charged atmosphere.

We will be looking at issues in the Legislature in our unit meetings and in this issue of *The Voter*. Remember the importance of contacting your elected officials about what matters to you. I hate to think that only the loudest voices have the most clout. Let's make sure ours are the most informed and get the attention of those who can make government work for us.

Heavy topics for mid-winter! Let's also remember to plan for 90th Anniversary celebrations and a spring fundraiser where we can kick up our heels. I know Leaguers are well-rounded and can multi-task like no one else. Save the planet, change a politician's heart and party like crazy. Tall order but we do it all with a smile and a nod to our foremothers.

Legislative Issues, cont. from p. 1

There will be other issues fighting for air, come February 4. Among those LWVMN will be promoting:

- The Absentee Ballot Reform Bill and the Early Voting Bill
- Protecting education funding, early education through post secondary
- Protecting/restoring health care funding for our most vulnerable, including GAMC funding
- Constitutional amendment to change our judicial selection process to the appointment/retention election system, per LWVMN's position on Judicial Selection
- Protecting the environment from unregulated sulfide mining,⁶ among other things
- Closing the gun-show loophole that allows purchase without a background check at gun shows
- Reducing trafficking of young women and men for prostitution
- Easing the homeless situation of far too many Minnesotans, young, old and families
- Monitoring immigration issues; watching for proposals harmful to immigrants, waiting for the federal immigration bill to materialize

After the session begins, LWVMN lobbyists will be reporting on our issues bi-weekly in the *Capitol Letter*, available at www.lwvmn.org.

¹ Budget Bites, <http://www.mncn.org/bp/2009unallotmentbrief.pdf>

² "Pawlenty digs in..." *Star Tribune*, Jan. 1, 2010, p. 1, <http://www.startribune.com/politics/state/80427142.html?elr=KArksUUUoDEy3LGDIO7aiU>

³ Pawlenty is appealing the decision. According to former State Sen. Steve Kelley, if Pawlenty agrees to a tax increase, "it would essentially be the end of his presidential campaign." Ibid, p.8

⁴ MinnPost on Gubernatorial Candidates http://www.minnpost.com/stories/2009/06/29/9821/gubernatorial_candidates_ins_and_outs_and_maybes_of_the_race

⁵ <http://www.mmb.state.mn.us/doc/budget/report-pie/general-july09.pdf>

⁶ Information on sulfide mining: <http://www.preciouswaters.org/>

~Gwen S. Myers, LWVMpls
LWVMN Action Co-Chair

Passing the Torch

The *Voter* has a new editor. Sharon Emery recently joined the League and worked as a writer, copy editor and page layout editor for the *Star Tribune* – primarily with the Travel, Taste and Home & Garden sections. She was drawn to LWV because she wants to take a "more participatory role in community life." She has also been a volunteer oral history interviewer for the Center for Democracy and Citizenship and media contact for Minnesota Works Together. Sharon has been "interning" with Ginny Craig for our last few issues.

Let's welcome her and give a hearty thanks to Ginny, who has done a terrific job as *Voter* editor since 2007. Prior to that, she led the redesign of our LWVMpls web site. Kudos to Ginny for a job well done and welcome aboard Sharon. (We all promise to get our articles in on time!)

Citizens League: Collaboration to Improve Water Quality Needed

The public, businesses, and government must collaborate if Minnesota is to solve the water quality problems that plague the state's lakes, rivers and streams, according to a new Citizens League report, *To the Source: Moving Minnesota's Water Governance Upstream*. Minnesota has made significant inroads in lessening pollution from "point



sources" such as industrial wastewater, but many of our everyday activities on land contribute to runoff that pollutes water bodies. This runoff is from a

myriad of "nonpoint sources," such as roads, parking lots, farmland and lawns.

The traditional model of government simply consulting with citizens at meetings or soliciting comments on government plans will not result in the kind of broad-scale improvements that are needed.

The Citizens League report recommends that state government convene a collaborative process to determine long-term water priorities and then support local governments in achieving those goals by providing more usable data and tools. Much of the work of protection and restoration must take place in local watersheds, where local governments, including watershed districts and other special districts, build the capacity of citizens, businesses and organizations to address water issues.

The model recommended by the Citizens League will require changing everyday behaviors that affect water quality and improving processes for public collaboration. The report describes several instances in which collaboration between government, businesses, and citizens improved natural resource problems.

The report is available at www.citizensleague.org/publications/reports or by calling 651.293.0575.

~Sherri Knuth

Women and Water Rights: Rivers of Regeneration

An exhibition of art and related programs that build awareness, provoke action and pose solutions for the need to understand water as a universal human right

Feb 23 - March 25, 2010
Katherine E. Nash Gallery
405 21st Ave. S.
University of Minnesota, Minneapolis

March 6, 2010, 1:00 p.m.
Special Events: Artist, Storytelling Workshop and Performances

The League of Women Voters Minneapolis along with many partners including the Freshwater Society, Healthy Legacy Coalition, Clean Water Action and the Women's Environmental Institute are sponsoring a series of forums on water in March, April and May 2010. The forums are being held in Minneapolis and will be free and open to the public. The forums will be solutions based, giving citizens information about how and why they should take action to protect water resources.

Protecting our Water-Protecting Our Health: Contaminants in Our Water Supply

March 6

9:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.

**Wiley Hall, University of Minnesota
225 19th Ave. S.**

9:30-10:00: Healthy Legacy Coalition and Freshwater Foundation information tables

10:00: Moderator: Peter Starzynski, Coordinator, Healthy Legacy Coalition

Speakers: Kathy Lee, Hydrologist and Biologist, US Geological Survey; Dr. David Wallenga-Institute of Agriculture and Trade Policy (health issues); Paul Gardner, Minnesota State Representative

Following this event, participants are encouraged to attend the *Women and Water Rights: Rivers of Regeneration* art exhibition and events at the nearby Katherine E. Nash Gallery (see notice on previous page)

Urban Land Use and Water Quality

April 6

6:30 – 9:30 p.m.

**Lake Harriet Methodist Church
50th and Chowen Ave. S.
Minneapolis, MN**

Performance: Danza Mexica Cuauhtemoc and Ce Tempoxcalli Dancers

6:30: Healthy Legacy Coalition and Freshwater Foundation Information Tables

7:00: Symposium, Moderator Sherri Knuth, LWVMpls

Speakers: Lois Eberhart, City of Minneapolis, water quality issues; Jean Wagenius, Minnesota State Representative; TBA, Minnehaha Watershed District Representative

**May 8 Forum:
To Be Announced**

Development Corner

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

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
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| Goldberg, Paula | Pluimer, Peggy |
| Green, Carol | Premer, Ruth A |
| Greenberg, Susan | Pugliese, Ann |
| Greener, Jean | Reinhart, Susan |
| Hegg, Catherine | Robinson, Robyne |
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| Higinbotham, Joan | Schaefer, Jennifer |
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Thank You!

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90th Anniversary Planning: Karlynn Fronek, Joan Niemiec

Hiring Committee: Alice Moorman, Jan Midtbo, and Mary Katherine Johnson, Barb Kimer

Program Planning Mailing: Kate Donahue

We're on Facebook!

LWVMpls now has its own Facebook page. Become a fan! If you're already a fan, invite your Facebook friends to become fans too.



Looking for Lively Conversation?

If you are interested in attending a unit meeting in the future, or if the time your current unit meets has become inconvenient, 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, 7:00 p.m.
Contact: Jennifer Johnson, 612.377.6084

Unit 49

Contacts: Gerry Sell, 612.823.3248
Marilyn Kelly, 612.824.6404

Unit 53

Third Tuesday, Social, 7:30 p.m., Meeting, 8:00 p.m.
Contacts: Elaine Lindstrom, 612.377.3262
Sally Pundt, 612.377.3529

Planning Meeting Participants Develop Focus for Coming Year



Despite the cold outside, program planning went ahead as scheduled at St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church on Jan. 9. The planning process offers an opportunity for members to prioritize program and action items for the following year. See the March Voter for outcomes of the meeting.



Left: Secretary of State Mark Ritchie was a surprise guest and spoke to the group.

Below right: Deb Price offers the LWVMN perspective on planning.

Below left: Office Administrative Manager Sharon Chapman kept everyone organized.



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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!

Wed., Feb. 17

7:00 p.m.
Board Meeting
LWVMpls Office

Feb 23-March 25, 2010

*Women and Water Rights:
Rivers of Regeneration*
Katherine E. Nash Gallery
405 21st Ave. S.
University of Minnesota

Mon., March 6

9:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Water Quality Forum 1
Willey Hall, University of Minnesota
225 19th Ave. S.

Tues., April 6,

6:30-9:30 p.m.
Water Quality Forum 2
Lake Harriet Methodist Church
50th and Chowen Ave. S.



Commemorative 90th Anniversary 2010
Calendars are available from the LWVMpls
office at a reduced price of \$5.00.

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

Download an order form at www.lwvmpls.org