



LWVMpls VOTER

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June 1, 2009

LWV Minneapolis City Convention – the Grassroots of Democracy

Did you join the League of Women Voters to make a difference, become informed, or to meet other intelligent, lively people? The City Convention is the place where everything and everyone comes together.

Of course it's a business meeting, a time to elect our leaders, celebrate super volunteers, consider what issues are most important, see long time friends, and meet new League members.



Keynote Speaker Dr. David Wallinga to Address Healthy, Safe and Sustainable Food

On top of good food, good friends and important business, the City Convention provides a time to become informed. LWVMpls City Convention 2009 will continue the theme of thinking green and being healthy with a keynote speech by Dr. David Wallinga, Director of the Food and Health Program at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy.

There is more and more concern about healthy, safe, and sustainable food. We enjoy food that comes to our tables from all over the world. We

shop in everything from giant supermarkets, to local co-ops, to farmers' markets. Dr. Wallinga will help us consider how it's possible to find healthy food in our global economy and show us ten steps we can take to "forage" for that food.

He will help us learn to be a "locavore"; shop for safe fish, meat, and dairy products; find out where our food comes from; and vote with our forks to make healthy choices every day. A League member heard that "Dr. Wallinga knows everything." He may even give us some tips for transporting this information beyond the City Convention walls.

The convention is on Monday, June 1, at St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church overlooking Lake Calhoun, with a sumptuous salad buffet dinner (including dessert). You are that intelligent, lively person who joined a grassroots organization to make a difference. City Convention is the roots of democracy in action.

~Janet Mitbo

Find the convention flyer on page 7 and make your reservations today!

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From the President

Janet Gendler

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

As my two years as president wrap up, we're seeing interest in city government structure—our 2005 and 2006 study topic—ramping up. The Charter Commission has agreed to hold **public hearings**. A current proposal advocates creating a City Administrator position, abolishing the Board of Estimate and Taxation, and shifting the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board responsibility to the Mayor and City Council.

The City of Minneapolis website spells out the lengthy process to change the Charter. Public hearings are but one part in deciding whether or not proposed changes are on the November 2008 ballot. Link to the Charter Commission monthly calendar to see the four public meetings dates and locations (April 23, 28, 30 and May 7).

LWV is a non-partisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in all levels of government. LWVMpls **supports abolishing the Board of Estimate and Taxation**, with the Mayor and Council jointly setting the tax levy. There was consensus that **city staff should report to one authority, either the Mayor or City Manager**. LWVMpls has **no position on maintaining an independently elected Park Board**.

LWV speaks as one voice, using our positions formed with member consensus. But we encourage all to participate, and I urge you to speak on your position at one of the public hearings.

Want to find out more? Invite Councilmember Ostrow, a Charter Change proponent, to present his view. Invite a Park Board member to give an opposing argument. Reread our study document, *Minneapolis Government: a Balancing Act*. It's on our website, under Issues and Action. Attend a public hearing and listen to what your neighbors say.

City Convention on June 1 marks the end of this program year and the beginning of the next. This is when LWVMpls members meet to determine our focus. We'll vote on program topic ideas—both those brought up in the January program planning meeting and any suggested during the convention. We'll elect our Board leadership and we'll approve a budget.

This is where **you can make a difference**. Come to Convention prepared:

- ✓ **Watch for Workbook I and read it** carefully. This how-to guide is set to be mailed three weeks before the meeting.

- ✓ **Decide where you want to put your energy.** Is it studying public policy issues? Using our policy positions to lobby elected officials? Registering new voters? Facilitating candidate forums and debates? Attending public forums on current political issues? Participating in small group discussions? Would you like to work on membership or celebrating our 90th anniversary?
- ✓ Look at the list of topics proposed in January (see Karen Harder's article on page 3). Talk with other members about **your favorite issue**.
- ✓ **Gather support.** Invite friends and neighbors to join us. Do you belong to another group that would partner with LWVMpls?
- ✓ **Be ready with a spokesperson.** There will be time on the agenda to pitch ideas.
- ✓ **Attend City Convention.**
- ✓ **Participate with your vote.**

Be part of making a difference in our city by attending LWVMpls City Convention.

Ranked Choice Voting Update

Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) (the preferred term over "Instant Runoff Voting") recently passed a judicial hurdle. After it was passed by the Minneapolis voters by a margin of 2 to 1 in 2006, a group known as Minnesota Voters Alliance challenged its constitutionality. This challenge was dismissed by a district judge, whose decision was then appealed. The Minnesota Supreme Court has taken up the case, bypassing the Appeals Court level. The former plans to conclude the briefing schedule by April 13 and has asked the city to name a deadline by which Minneapolis must decide whether to use a primary/general election system or a RCV system in the fall 2009 election.

Based on a 12 to 1 vote in the City Council, the fall 2009 Minneapolis city election will employ RCV, with a contingency plan to use a traditional election if the Minnesota Supreme Court reverses the district court decision. RCV will be used for City Council, Board of Estimate and Taxation, and Park Board elections. Minneapolis plans a 600-ballot demonstration election in May to test procedures and a strong voter education program. LWVMpls has been in conversation with FairVoteMinnesota, the citizens group that backs RCV, and will also work with Minneapolis Elections to cooperate in the voter education process. (See box on p. 8)

~Claire Olson

Program Results to be Presented at City Convention

League members who attended the Program Planning Meeting on January 10, 2009, discussed program-planning issues and filled out tally sheets expressing interests and priorities for the coming year. Consensus items that must be forwarded to the City Convention for a vote include action on current League positions and any request to conduct a study. Other consensus items noted on the tally sheets are listed below and will also be presented at the City Convention, but do not require further discussion or vote at the Convention.

The consensus of the membership was that no formal study is recommended for the coming year at the City Convention. Other consensus items include the following:

- ✓ Seven priority areas were identified: City Government, Education, Healthy Legacy, Livability, Membership, Social Services, and Voter Services. Each priority area must have a contact person and telephone number to be published in the *Voter* to facilitate connection with the membership.
- ✓ Each month, discussion of a "Lively Issue" or the opportunity to participate in a forum is recommended. At-large members should be encouraged to attend all meetings.
- ✓ A forum should be organized for a City Government, Education, or Livability topic.
- ✓ Briefs are preferred over a larger study. Briefs may be researched and written in a much shorter timeframe, providing a timeliness that a one- or two-year study does not have. Briefs are also shorter, allowing a committee to research a specific topic quickly in order to understand an issue better or to provide background information that may support a more in-depth study in another year.

These consensus items were approved by the LWVMpls Board of Directors on March 17, 2009. Thank you to all who attended the Program Planning Meeting and provided thoughtful input that will guide our program in the coming year.

~Karen Harder

Healthy Legacy, Guardians for the Future

The LWVMpls, City of Minneapolis Sustainability Office, Healthy Legacy Coalition and Lake Harriet United Methodist Church held a very successful forum with over 200 League members, Coalition exhibitors and citizens attending. The topic: *How Can Government Safeguard Our Children and Future Generations from Toxic Chemicals?* A study guide and resources are available on LWVMpls' website.

The Lake Harriet United Methodist Church, represented by the Peace and Justice committee, along with LWV member Grace Harkness, provided the facility, the sound system the set up and refreshments. They have been very dedicated to sustainable practices. They served Peace Coffee and recycled and composted waste. Unit 53 also provided cookies and bars and back-up support.

Unit 53 has wanted to take action: members called LWV members in specific districts outstate represented by legislators on the Senate's Business Industry and Jobs Committee to ask them to urge their representatives to support bills introduced by the Healthy Legacy Coalition (See March *Voter*). Several members were on the Healthy Legacy committee. House Speaker Margaret Anderson Kelliher was on the panel and is a member of this active unit. (Individuals were thanked in the last issue of the *Voter*.)

More than twenty members of the Healthy Legacy Coalition set up tables with information about their programs. The exhibitors appreciated the LWV's interest and positions on health and the environment. Mayor R.T. Rybak fired up the audience with his reflections on our distant past. Our city, developed along the Mississippi River, also has many lakes and streams that desperately need attention and preservation. Following the forum, LWV members went to the legislative hearing on the bills related to Healthy Legacy goals on April 1.

Thank you for the opportunity as a League member to connect with Healthy Legacy, to network with other professionals and leaders, while learning and taking action for our future generations.

Many LWVMpls members signed on for our Environmental/Healthy Legacy topic at Program Planning (see above story). Water sustainability has been proposed as a Healthy Legacy topic next year. It is important to form a committee immediately in order to propose a study, forum, or other educational endeavor at the City Convention. Please email or call me if you would like to help the committee maintain momentum. Kay Kessel, 612-926-1387, vernellek@aol.com

~Kay Kessel
Healthy Legacy Committee Chair

Results of the LWVMpls Consensus on Constitutional Conventions and the National Popular Vote Proposal

Minneapolis LWV members have weighed in on the topic of the National Popular Vote. The LWV standard for consensus is 80% or greater concurrence.

Two statements where only 75% concurrence occurred support these statements:

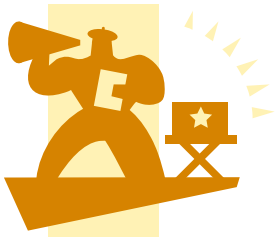
- 1) The possibility that the NPV Compact will require congressional consent is sufficient to conclude that the plan should not be implemented without obtaining such consent.
- 2) A constitutional amendment to establish the direct popular election of the President and the abolition of

the Electoral College will continue to have problems being passed.

There were six consensus decisions with 80% agreement:

- a) Action by states through a compact process is an acceptable way to alter the method for electing the President and Vice-President.
- b) Because a compact has never before been used to address a fundamental constitutional issue such as voting, the chance that it might set a precedent for the future leads to the conclusion that it is better that the

Cont. p. 5



Quiet on the Set

The scripts have been written and the location scouted. Now it's your turn to make this a blockbuster. Be part of the audience for this thrilling tale – 90 years in the making.

Lights

Shine a spotlight on the LWV 90th Anniversary fundraiser Thursday, May 7, 6:00 - 9:00 P.M. at the Zuhrah Shrine Center by telling all your friends. Let your entourage in on the fun.

Camera

Picture yourself nibbling hors d'oeuvres, listening to great music and mingling with the very cool crowd. A photographer from Blacktie – Minnesota will serve as paparazzo for the evening.

Take Action!

Vote on the entries in our first ever short film contest for students. You may be seeing the work of a future Oscar contender or the next YouTube sensation. Help raise money for the important work League does by shopping the silent auction for incredible deals.

Cannes, Sundance and now Minneapolis! VIP* status goes to the first 200 ticket holders. Add your name to the star-studded guest list!

* *Vote in person* for the winning films.

Register for the event online:

https://www.blacktie-minnesota.com/calendar/index.cfm?FuseCalendar_ID=2517&FuseAction=ShowEvent

Or contact the LWV office if you did not receive an invitation.

LWVMpls Organizes Sunshine Week and Census 2010 Kickoff



Volunteer Sharon McLaughlin and her daughter Kelly volunteered to help at the Census Forum.

March 20 brought a live viewing of the 4th annual **Sunshine Week webcast from Washington, D.C.**, *Opening Doors: Finding the Keys to Open Government* at the Minneapolis Central Library. Our local event attracted League members, current and former librarians, locals interested in information technologies, former *Star Tribune* reporter Dane Smith (now the chair of Growth & Justice), and City Councilperson Cam Gordon.

A lively discussion after the webcast was led by attorney and data privacy expert Don Gemberling. Check out lwvmpls.org for the archived webcast, information about how to track the spending of Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) monies, handy LWV resources to help promote government openness, and much more! Special thanks to the Minnesota Coalition on Government Information, OpenTheGovernment.org, and the Minneapolis Central Library for collaborating on this event.

Our **discussion of the 2010 Census** on March 25 featured perspectives from the State Demographer's office, the Census Bureau, Hennepin County, the Mayor's office, and the nonprofit sector. Panelists outlined some of their strategies for achieving a complete census count.

NVP Consensus (Cont. from p.5)

LWV continue to work for an amendment to the Constitution to establish the direct popular election of the President and the abolition of the Electoral College.

- c) Enforcement of the plan is likely to add uncertainty and bring the courts into the presidential election in ways that raise substantial concerns.
- d) The uniformity of voting systems is more important to American democracy than the possibility that the NPV Compact can be adopted.
- e) It is more important to amend the Constitution to abolish the Electoral College than it is to achieve the goal of popular election of the President by alternative methods, such as the NPV Compact.
- f) The NPV Compact will have problems being passed because of the need for congressional consideration and the need for action by so many states.

While members found that "Action by states through a compact process is an *acceptable* way to alter the method for electing the President and Vice-President," that statement carries less resolve than the other five consensus statements. The LWVMpls responses trend toward strong support for constitutional action and system integrity.

~Connie Cameron
Program Co-Chair

The census is designed to count *every person*, without consideration of factors such as citizenship, legal residence status, language, disability, or housing situation. However, there are many populations in our city and state that may, for various reasons, be suspicious of census workers and census participation.

The census will occur in April of 2010 and is now less than a year away! Discover ways that *you* can help to reach people who might not know that the process is simple, absolutely safe and confidential, and has a huge impact on the resources our city receives from the federal government. Check out lwvmpls.org throughout the year for continuing updates on how to get involved.

A huge thank-you to the people who made this event possible: Helen Burke, Adam Olson, Sharon McLaughlin and daughter Kelly, Alice Moormann, Julia Wallace, Melissa Metzler, Connie Cameron, Karlynn Fronck, LWVMpls staff and directors, Tom Gillaspay, Sydnee Chattin-Reynolds, Peter McLaughlin, Marcia Avner, Claudia Fuentes, Keesha Gaskins, and Allie Moen. Also, a thank-you to the Hennepin County Library and the Library Foundation of Hennepin County for co-sponsoring this event, which was part of the LWVMN's State of Democracy Project, funded by a grant from the Joyce Foundation.

~Annie Hall
Events Coordinator



**Looking for Active Involvement?
Contact your LWVMpls Committee
Chairs**

City Government Structure
Joan Niemiec, 612.822.7171

Education
Contact: Judy Farmer, 612.379.7429

Healthy Legacy
Kay Kessel, 612.926.1387

Housing
Jean Andre, 612.926.7627

Membership
Kelsey Johnson, 612.333.2374

Minneapolis Libraries
Julia Wallace, 612.378.9429

Speakers Bureau
Marilyn Dean, 612.377.4223

Voter Services
Lynn Pepple, 612.789.3021

Development Corner

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

90th Anniversary
Lonni McCauley
Barb Perry

Memorials
Grace Harkness, in honor
of **Gladys Brooks**

Kathie Cerra
Claire Olson

Shirley Ungar, in memory
of **Michael Perry**

Many Thanks For...

Voter Mailing
Eileen Reagan
Shirley Ungar

Fundraising
Deborah Jindra
Janet Gendler
Sue Verrett
Tracey Ruzicka
Barb Kimer
Karlynn Fronck
Julaine Heit

Voter Proofing
Pat Kovel-Jarboe
Janet Gendler
Julia Wallace



**Looking for Lively
Conversation?**

April Unit Meetings:

Unit 1
Mon, May 11, 7:15, Potluck
30 Luverne Av.
Contact: Lindsey Thomas, 612.824.4489

Unit 11
No meeting in May
Contacts: Jan Midtbo, 612.926.0954
Judy Walter, 612.927.5847

Unit 25/29
Tues., May 12, 7:00 PM
147 Cecil St. S.E.
Contacts: Carol Green, 612.789.6314
Kate Donahue, 612.378.9538



Unit 48
Mon, May 18, 7:00 PM
5100 28th Av. S.
Contact: Jennifer Johnson, 612.377.6084

Unit 49
Please call for information.
Contacts: Gerry Sell, 612.823.3248
Marilyn Kelly, 612.824.6404

Unit 53
Please call for information
Contacts: Elaine Lindstrom, 612.377.3262
Marilyn Dean, 612.377.4223



LWVMpls

City Convention 2009

**Monday, June 1st
5:00 to 9:30 P.M.**

**Location: St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church (FREE parking)
3450 Irving Avenue South**

Keynote Speaker: Dr. David Wallinga

*recently named a Distinguished Fellow by the William T. Grant Foundation,
which works to improve the lives of America's Children*

Voting with Your Fork: Making Healthy Food Choices Every Day

*A topic you can sink your teeth into—considering where our food comes from,
if it's sustainable, healthy, and safe for our families*

- 5:00 Social Hour**
- 6:00 Salad Buffet Dinner (including dessert)**
- 6:30 Speaker – David Wallinga, MD**
- 7:30 Annual Meeting**

**Cost:\$33.50 Dinner & Meeting
\$ 8.00 Meeting Only**

Please let the office (612-333-6319) know if lack of transportation could keep you from attending the convention.

~~~~~  
**Please return this bottom section by May 22, 2009**

\_\_\_\_\_ **\$33.50 enclosed for dinner & meeting**  
\_\_\_\_\_ **\$ 8.00 enclosed for meeting only**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Unit \_\_\_\_\_ or At Large \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make checks payable to "LWVMpls"**  
**Return to:** League of Women Voters Minneapolis  
81 S 9<sup>th</sup> St., Suite 335  
Minneapolis, MN 55402

**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](mailto:vote@lwvmpls.org)  
Website [www.lwvmpls.org](http://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.

*Janet Gendler, President*  
*Ginny Craig, VOTER Editor*

***We're on the Web!***  
***[www.lwvmpls.org](http://www.lwvmpls.org)***

## Upcoming Events Save the Date!

**Thur., May 7**  
Spring Benefit  
6:00 - 9:00 PM  
(See p. 4)

**Thur., May 14 -  
Sat. May 16**  
LWVMN State  
Convention  
Willmar, MN

**Tues., May 19**  
5:30 - 7:30 PM  
Board Meeting  
LWVMpls Office

**Mon., June 1**  
LWVMpls City  
Convention  
5:00 - 9:30 PM  
3450 Irving Av. S.  
(See pp. 1 and 6)



## Help Needed At the Grassroots

- ✓ **Moderators and timekeepers needed for fall candidate forums. Contact Margit Berg, 612.377.4776, [margitkb@comcast.net](mailto:margitkb@comcast.net).**
- ✓ **Volunteers will be needed to help educate voters if ranked choice voting is implemented in Minneapolis this fall. Call the office to get your name on a list of potential volunteers.**
- ✓ **And don't forget our own LWVMpls grassroots City Convention June 1!**