



LWV Mpls VOTER

Volume 67, Issue 9

MAY 2010

May Topic: Water

Conservation Doesn't Mean Doing Without — It's About Smart Use

Save water — we have all heard this mantra, but why is it important? After all, Minneapolis's water comes from the Mississippi River and it returns to the same river. But, along the way, that water goes through a number of cleaning and treating processes — filtration, disinfection, fluoridation, softening. After it's used, the water is cleaned again at wastewater treatment plants before being put back into the environment.

So here are a few reasons for conserving water:

- ✓ Water never taken from the river never has to go through either treatment process. The result : We will be sending cleaner, more chemical-free water to our neighbors downstream in Winona, Dubuque, Memphis and New Orleans.
- ✓ It is cheaper. High water use, especially in the summer, requires the city to expand every part of its water delivery system to meet peak residential and commercial demand and still have adequate water pressure to fight fires. If we conserve water, we can reduce that peak demand and lower the water delivery costs we all pay.
- ✓ It's good practice for when we run low. In the late 1980s, a drought reduced the flow in the Mississippi to levels that came perilously close to falling below city water intakes. We can adopt habits now that will help us survive the next drought.
- ✓ It's a good example for our kids. Some of us, and many of our children, are likely to end up living in arid areas where water is scarce. Some of those areas are right here in our Twin Cities suburbs. Teach your kids good habits that will last a lifetime.

Conserving water is important whether it comes from a river or the ground. Consider this — of all the Earth's water, 97.5 percent is saline and 2.5



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percent is fresh. Of that small amount of freshwater, 70 percent is locked in glacial ice, and 29 percent is underground. Only about 1 percent of the world's water is in lakes, rivers and wetlands.

Conserving water by capturing runoff and allowing it to penetrate the soil protects the environment by reducing the amount of chemical pollutants that end up in our lakes, rivers and streams when fertil-

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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**

Young anarchists. Some of the Tea Party activists. Anti-government protesters. Very vocal people, all of whom seem to have unlimited free time and are angry about government doing things to them rather than for them. If asked, many would have to say they have never participated in the tedious parts of

the political process. The groups are pretty similar despite different dress codes. Throw in those whom I call the *Khmer Rouge and lipstick* crowd. These are prominent political women who learned everything they needed to know by around age 25 and don't want to muddy their heads with anything so mundane as facts or research. They brand as *elitist* anyone who questions their narrow view of the world.

The media laps up outrageous pronouncements from telegenic faces across a wide political spectrum. All of these groups give the impression they think democracy is like a reality television show where you can edit out the boring bits. Yelling crowds and snappy sound bites may produce good TV but make for dysfunctional governance.

The LWV has a slogan: *We Make Democracy Work*. I think it should have a coda: Democracy is hard work. I was recently reminded of the nuts and bolts (or maybe more accurately, the blood, sweat and tears) that go into making a democratic society function. I was invited to a preliminary meeting of the Minneapolis Charter Commission's redistricting task force. It was eye-opening, even though I consider myself a pretty informed student of civics.

The group that gathered on that early spring evening was made up of a couple of neighborhood representatives, a city council member, members of the Republican, Democratic and Green parties and interested citizens. LWVMN's own Keesha Gaskins and Mike Dean from Common Cause pre-

sented an overview of the current process in Minneapolis and their suggestions for a more equitable way to draw the city's 13 wards once the results of the 2010 census are available. The Park Board districts also come into play, and now that the School Board will not be all at-large members, those districts will be drawn too.

That evening I heard about the fight and eventual court case that resulted from redistricting 10 years ago. I also learned the meaning of "cracking or packing" communities of interest by drawing odd district lines. We have all heard the stories of oddly shaped congressional districts created to benefit an incumbent or exclude a defined racial or ethnic group. Minneapolis has potential for that as well. Our population has changed a lot over the last decade. Our neighborhoods have strong identities, too, partly as a result of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program, and some do not want to have to work with more than one council member.

One of the oddest things I learned from that discussion is how the current process works: "should the (Redistricting) Commission be unable to adopt a plan within the prescribed time – the City Clerk shall draw a plan by lot from the plans under consideration ... at the time of the dissolution." I would hope that the members of the Commission could reconcile on an adequate plan before dropping everything into a hat for a decision. In this political climate anything may happen, however.

Redistricting Values. You may not see catchy slogans about this topic during a protest. Redistricting isn't a sexy subject, but it is extremely important to our representative democracy. Some of the recommendations made by LWV and Common Cause are for strong public input, transparency, and consideration of the nonpartisan composition of the Redistricting Commission. This last value is particularly thorny in a city that has a skewed record of electing candidates from only one party.

Please take a look on LWVMN's website for a Redistricting policy paper. We in Minneapolis will strive to keep you posted about the process to redraw our political map and try to get Keesha Gaskin's presentation posted on our site.

School Board Breakfast

Ideas of change and continuity spur schools conversation

Superintendent Bill Green and five school board members: Chris Stewart, Pam Costain, T. Williams, Jill Davis and Lydia Lee gave brief presentations to the group of LWV members, parents, neighborhood people and school board candidates gathered at the School Board Breakfast on March 11 at Webster School in Northeast Minneapolis. Judy Farmer, Chair of the Education Committee, served as Moderator.

Superintendent Green spoke of his tenure and the issues of concern to him, including changing school options, accountability, the continuing financial trouble of our district, and the difficulty of moving people (teachers and families) from the familiar to the new and unknown. It is his view that the new Superintendent, Bernadeia Johnson, represents continuity of leadership, which he sees as a district value and he is confident she will do a good job carrying out the district's strategic plan.

School Board members Chris Stewart and Pam Costain, who have decided not to run for re-election, each spoke to the large time commitment required to serve on the Board and the amount of negativity they encountered regarding public schools. Mr. Stewart views school not as an academic system, but rather as a child development system, which is not only about test scores but also about empathy and social intelligence. Ms. Costain praised Minneapolis community support for schools; the latest referendum was supported by 72 percent, though only about 17 percent of households have school-age children. Her message to the LWV was to hold candidate forums for school board candidates and for individual members to volunteer in a school.

T. Williams echoed the child development model of Chris Stewart and stated his concerns that we have been a marketplace for charter schools, which siphon off our students, and that the district has not learned the lessons from "failed" schools. The Board needs to be more accountable to the community and to work together with the



Minneapolis School Superintendent Bill Green, top center, and school board members spoke with more than 35 parents, neighbors and League members at the LWV Mpls School Board Breakfast in March.

(Photo by Melissa Metzler)

Superintendent better than it has.

Jill Davis is an advocate for early education and more before- and after-school programming so parents and children have a seamless support system. She believes we need outside groups supporting schools. The district has not closed the achievement gap.

Lydia Lee spoke to the academic experience she brings to the Board and of her appreciation of the diversity of school board members. She feels that better teacher training is needed for the new needs of this generation. The Board must do what we know will work; we need change but it must be "smart change." She is concerned that AYP (adequate yearly progress) scores result in some schools being labeled as failing when only a portion of students are not making progress.

A short but lively Q and A session followed. School Board members remained to answer individual questions.

Thanks to Education Committee members Judy Farmer, Mary Fisher and Jennifer Bennett, as well as staff member Melissa Metzler for organizing this successful event.

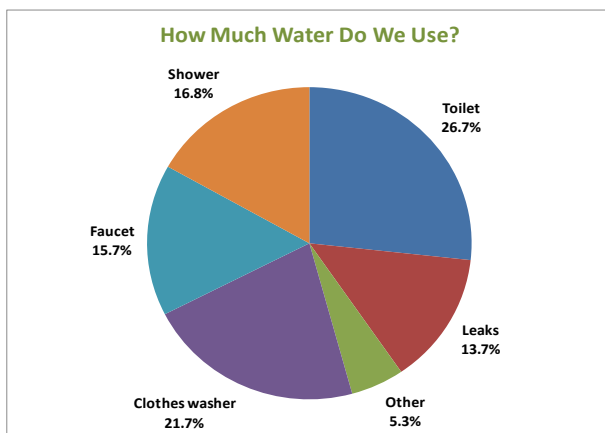
~Marilyn Dean, President-elect

Water, Cont. from p.1

izers and pesticides run off our driveways and lawns. Conservation preserves our groundwater supplies as we contend with climate change and an uncertain environmental future, and it saves energy and money.

Conserving doesn't mean doing without. It means using less water to provide the same benefit. On average, Minneapolis residents use 60 gallons of water a day per person. Some Twin Cities suburbs, where residential lots are larger and automated lawn sprinklers are common, use nearly twice that amount.

Nationwide, 30 to 37 percent of residential water is used outdoors; 65 to 70 percent is used indoors. Let's look at our indoor use.



Source: American Water Works Association
Research Foundation
"Residential End Users of Water." 1999

Most of the action is in the bathroom — about half of all indoor water uses, and the toilet alone uses close to one-third of that. And 14 percent of indoor residential water use is due to leaks, in Minneapolis 11,000 gallons a year per household. A running toilet can waste hundreds of gallons of water each day.

That's only half story. Wasting water is the proverbial money down the drain. In Minneapolis the average household spends \$600 per year on water and sewer. Heating water costs an additional \$230 per year, 19 percent of home energy use.

Joan Nephew, Freshwater Society

Top Ways to Save Water Indoors



Stop Leaks. Running toilets and dripping faucets and showerheads are the main culprits. A faucet or showerhead dripping one drip per second can waste up 3,000 gallons a year. Here is link to a U.S. Geological Survey calculator that will help you estimate how much drips in your home might be wasting: <http://ga.water.usgs.gov/edu/sc4.html>. How do you know if your toilet is leaking? Add a drop of food coloring to your tank; if it appears in the bowl within 15 minutes, your toilet is leaking. Be sure to flush immediately as food coloring can stain.

High-efficiency toilets. If you haven't replaced your toilets since 1992, a high-efficiency toilet at 1.6 gallons per flush could save a household 14,000 gallons a year.

High-efficiency clothes washers. Washers are the second-largest water user in your home. Certified Energy Star washers use 35 to 50 percent less water and 50 percent less energy per load.

Turn water off while shaving or brushing your teeth. A bathroom faucet generally runs at 2 gallons per minute — by turning it off you could save up to 200 gallons a month.

Take short showers rather than baths. Baths can use 50 to 70 gallons, while a 5-minute shower uses 10 to 25 gallons. Low-flow showerheads save even more.

Keep a pitcher of water in the refrigerator. Letting water run until cold is just sending it down the drain — 2 gallons a minute, it adds up.

Do you let the water get hot before jumping in the shower? Consider collecting the water in a pail and using it to water house plants.

Put food waste in the compost pile or scrape it into the garbage. Garbage disposals use lots of water. You will save 150 gallons a month.

See the next page for conservation tips outdoors.

Simple Solutions to Water Conservation Outdoors

There is no need to turn your lawn into a rock garden to be a good water steward, but our outdoor water use is a significant concern because we are using water treated and cleaned for consumption to water our lawns, wash cars and clean off our sidewalks and driveways. Half of all the water put on lawns each year is wasted through evaporation or over watering, contributing to low water supplies, energy waste and pollution. That adds up to 1.5 billion gallons a day across the country, nearly enough to fill the Metrodome.

Don't over water. Most lawns need only one inch of water each week, either from rain or from irrigation. Step on your grass and if it springs back, it doesn't need watering. Over watering can cause shallow roots, weed growth, and disease.

Use native and drought-resistant plants. Become familiar with some of the beautiful native plants in Minnesota. Limit the amount of turf you plant, incorporate compost into your soil to help it retain water, don't plant grass on steep slopes.

If you have an irrigation system, maintain and adjust it regularly. Doing so can reduce your irrigation water use by 15 percent. And while you're at it, install a weather-sensing controller or soil moisture sensor to help reduce over watering.

Harvest your rainwater with a rain barrel. Water your plants with rainwater that might, otherwise, run off your property.



Rain gardens. Capture runoff in an attractive, flower-filled depression that will allow the rain to slowly sink into the ground, rather than running off.

Don't wash your car on the driveway. Soap, oil, grease solvents and other pollutants run off hard surfaces and into rivers and lakes. Wash your car on the lawn so it can penetrate the soil.

Clean your driveway and sidewalks with a broom not a hose. Sweep up the dirt, sand and grass clippings rather than letting them wash down the storm sewer. Saving our lakes and rivers from pollutants saves you money.

Developing a new "water ethic," using a little less every time you use water, will protect the environment, our drinking water resources, our lakes, rivers and streams.

Danza Mexica Cuauhtemoc of Minnesota honored the waters of the world at the "Urban Water and Land Use" forum April 6 at Lake Harriet United Methodist Church. They also explained the group's participation in seeking environmental justice.



Water Forum Series

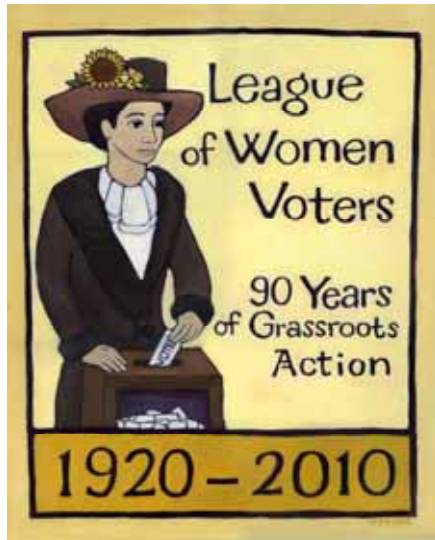
Come and learn more at the May 8 water symposium. Jonathan Foley, director of the Institute on the Environment at the University of Minnesota, will be the keynote speaker.

"Conservation — Preserving Our Water"

May 8

8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Mayflower Congregational Church,
106 E. Diamond Lake Road, Minneapolis



Appeal to League Members

Today I write to appeal to you, the League of Women Voters Minneapolis membership. We have seen recent declines in membership. Of the many difficulties we face, one is financial; another is fewer people to do the work we've always done. The League needs our ideas and active participation in monthly unit meetings and as committee members. Have you volunteered for one or more League events in the past year?

This year, for the first time in recent history, we will not have a spring fundraiser. This is mostly because of the inability to find a volunteer to chair the event. LWVMpls still hopes to plan a membership event to celebrate our work and bring us together to renew connections, but no way to bring in extra revenue. We need our members to help as much as possible.

About the revenues: We all love the League, but we need to be able to keep it funded. As we step into our 90th year, please give a little more to support the legacy. LWVMpls appreciates the extra dollars members have given. One reason for the lack of revenue is the large portion of membership dollars that goes to the national and state leagues. Please consider giving to your local league, the League of Women Voters Minneapolis.

~Kelsey Johnson, Membership Chair

Action on Program Topics Will Begin at June 3 Convention

League of Women Voters Minneapolis' City Convention 2010 is next month (see the flyer with the VOTER and on the website). Packets for the June 3 meeting will be arriving in the mail, but to help prepare, here is a summary of the topics considered important at the January program planning meeting.

Membership/Strategic Plan

Working on building a vibrant, 21st-century League, recruitment and retention of members, use of technology, and financial issues.

Housing/Homelessness

Assessing Heading Home Hennepin plan, looking at new innovative programs, developing coalitions in difficult times, keeping focus on the issues with a possible forum.

Healthy Legacy III -- Air Quality

The call is to continue to build these collaborations for the coming year with the focus on air quality. This year's three forums on water are providing important public service education on vital environmental issues. Let's keep the League's involvement strong.

City Government: Structure and Efficiency

The League's role in studying city government continues to evolve as we look at updating earlier LWVMpls studies. There are opportunities here to carry out the mission of the League to study and offer recommendations for good government in our own community.

Dialogue with New Immigrants

This is a new topic that needs developing. Minneapolis now has a large immigrant population. What are their needs and concerns? What format can be used to enter into dialogue? How can League provide voter services to these groups?

Other topics that have recently emerged for League discussion: School board and Judicial Elections. Come to the Convention June 3 with your thoughts and ideas.

See you there.

Kate Donahue, Program Co-chair

Development Corner

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

**Anna Hall
Gail Hanson**

New Members (since January)

**Mary G. Flannery
Janet Hallaway
Rosemary Lawrence
Mary E. Nelson
Barbara Risken (national member)
Jill Weese (national member)
Susan Young**

A Gift for a Heartfelt Occasion

You can honor a loved one or a special occasion with a gift to the League of Women Voters Minneapolis. We will promptly send a notification card to your designee that tells of your thoughtful gift but does not include the amount of the gift. The name of the honoree will be published in the VOTER.



Thank You!

Office Help: Marilyn Dean, Janet Gendler, Carol Green, Susan Reinhart

Voter Mailing: Eileen Reagan, Claire Olson

990 Preparation: Eileen O'Byrne

Voter Proofreaders: Ginny Craig, Pat Kovel-Jarboe, Deborah Jindra, Julia Wallace



Looking for Lively Conversation?

If you are interested in attending a unit meeting, 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: Janet 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

Fourth Wednesday, 7:00 p.m.
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

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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
action and advocacy.

Deborah Jindra, President
*Sharon Emery, **VOTER** Editor*

We're on the Web!

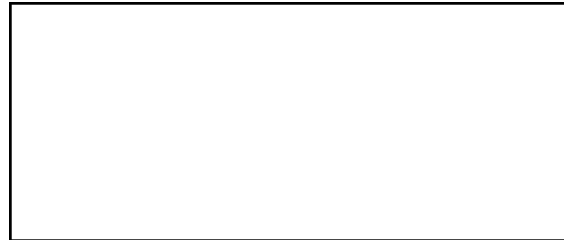
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Upcoming Events Save the Date!

Sat., May 1

9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
LWVMN Council 2010
Minnesota Landscape Arboretum
3675 Arboretum Drive, Chaska, Minn.

Sat., May 8

8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
"Conservation —Preserving Our Water"
Mayflower Congregational Church
106 E. Diamond Lake Road, Minneapolis, Minn.

Wed., May 19

7:00 p.m.
Board Meeting
LWVMpls Office

Thu., June 3

City Convention 2010
Registration, 5:15 p.m.; Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
Minnesota Church Center
122 W. Franklin Avenue, Minneapolis, Minn.

VISIT US ONLINE!!

www.lwvmpls.org

- ◆ Election information
- ◆ Links to government officials
- ◆ To DONATE
- ◆ Renew your membership
- ◆ The latest events
- ◆ Information on the latest forums, and discussions
- ◆ Opportunities to volunteer
- ◆ 90th Celebration information
- ◆ LWV positions on local, state and national issues

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