



LWVmpls VOTER

Volume 67, Issue 3

OCTOBER 2009

October Discussion Topic: Charter Change Proposals

In 2005 LWVmpls decided to again study Minneapolis' government structure. This decision was based on perceptions of possible performance inefficiencies and continuing budget difficulties.

MINNEAPOLIS GOVERNMENT: A BALANCING ACT (2005) and MINNEAPOLIS GOVERNMENT: A BALANCING ACT II —THE INDEPENDENT BOARDS resulted from the two-year study. Members adopted several changes to our city government positions after discussions of these studies. Among those changes is one supporting elimination of the Board of Estimate and Taxation (BET). The studies are available at no cost in our League office and on our website at http://www.lwvmppls.org/City_Government.html

In this fall's local election, November 3, Minneapolis voters will be asked to approve at least one change in the City Charter—an amendment that would eliminate BET. Initially there were three charter change proposals initiated by three Minneapolis Council Members: Paul Ostrow, Ward 1; Don Samuels, Ward 5; and Ralph Remington, Ward 10. The Minneapolis Charter Commission did not approve the two proposals relating to a city administrator and an appointed parks commission in lieu of an elected park board. It cited a need for more study before putting them on the ballot. The third proposal passed; the ballot wording is:

Should the City of Minneapolis adopt a change in its charter to the composition of the Board of Estimate and Taxation so that the Board's membership consists of the members of the City Council, with the actions of the Board subject to the powers and duties of the Mayor?

The Board of Estimate and Taxation

The Board of Estimate and Taxation consists of the Mayor, City Council President, Chair of the Ways

and Means Committee, President of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board or another member, and two additional members representing the general public who are elected at-large for four years. Before the Minneapolis Public Library merged with Hennepin County, an elected member of the Library Board was the seventh member of the Board of Estimate and Taxation.

The Board of Estimate and Taxation has three functions: set maximum tax levy rates, sell bonds, and handle internal audit functions. It is required by City Charter to hold public hearings for citizen input relating to setting the maximum tax levies.

The City Government Study Committee found two major reasons to eliminate the Board: First, it diminishes accountability with an unnecessary layer between other elected officials and citizens. Second, voters do not have the necessary background to assess the capability of candidates for the board who need to have highly specialized expertise to be effective.

The study found two reasons to continue to elect the Board; it provides some citizen input, and it forces the players in the budget process to cooperate.

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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**

As I write this we are winding down a crazy summer of health care debate and town hall meetings that were anything but civil. Everywhere you turned there were Jerry Springer antics and uninformed people shouting at each other. My thoughts are that while we do definitely need health care reform, maybe the larger need is re-fresher courses on critical thinking and how to conduct civic dialogue.

This is where the League of Women Voters excels. We try to research all sides (not just right and left) of a topic before we speak out. We plan meetings where opposing views can be shared by participants without raising their voices. We hand out cards at forums so that the questioners need to get their thoughts in order on paper, which avoids emotional vocal outbursts. Maybe that is why we have trouble getting publicity for our extraordinary forums. I hate to think that we need to throw a few chairs to get some attention.

However, I think reasoned discussion will win out in the end. The National LWV President said it best in a letter to the Congress and the President this summer:

"Now is not the time for politicians to get cold feet just because a handful of special-interest-backed protesters spread lies and make noise at public forums. Congress and the President need to demonstrate real leadership and move forward with true health care reform."

Leadership is something that we need to encourage and appreciate when we find it.

On that note, we have not said a proper farewell in

this publication to our retired Executive Director, Lonni McCauley. Her immense organizational skills and calm demeanor have been greatly missed these last few months. Thank goodness she stays involved with LWV. She is active with the Healthy Legacy committee and chaired our successful A&W Floats and Votes event at the end of August. She and her husband, David, not only made most of the arrangements for that event, but hung the banner and dropped off equipment on the mall.

Thank you Lonni for all you have done for us.

We are currently exploring whether we can bring another Executive Director on to lead us during the busy election season and through difficult financial times. As a full-time working president, I think we need someone to provide a guiding hand and coordinate our numerous activities. Watch for updates.

It may not always be as exciting as reality TV but the League is an organization that really makes a difference in this community.



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.

Upcoming LWVMpls Forums Attract Many Candidates

There's a new wrinkle in candidate forums this year because of ranked choice voting. With no primary election to narrow the choices, there will be more candidates than usual participating in the forums. This has made logistics more of an issue than usual. But it also gives forums more importance, and sponsoring groups are responding accordingly.

The LWV Minneapolis will sponsor and co-sponsor several forums. We will also be moderating and timekeeping at a number of forums sponsored by other groups. Groups that ask us to moderate often tell us that candidates are much more apt to participate if they know the League will be moderating. Others know that the members of their organization

have biases and they want to offer a forum that provides total neutrality. See below for a listing of upcoming forums.

LWVMpls has a number of trained moderators who took a refresher course in mid September. There are also a number of other ways that League members can help at forums from timekeeping to question-sorting to greeting the public to making arrangements. Coordinator Margit Berg would welcome your help. You can call her at 612.377.4776 or e-mail her at margitkb@comcast.net.

~Margit Berg
Candidate Forum Coordinator

OCTOBER CANDIDATE FORUMS

✓ **Thu., October 8, 6:30-8:00 pm**

District 6 Park Board candidates (4),* Washburn Library, sponsored by LWVMpls

✓ **Thu., October 8, 6:30-8:30 pm**

District 5 Park Board candidates (5), Board of Estimate and Taxation candidates (6), Keewaydin Park Center, sponsored by Nokomis East Neighborhood Association

✓ **Tues. October 13, 6:30-8:00 pm**

Ward 5 City Council candidates (5), Capri Theatre, sponsored by LWVMpls

✓ **Thu., October 15, 6:30-8:00 pm,**

Ward 10 City Council candidates (4), Walker Library, sponsored by LWVMpls

✓ **Thu., October 15, 6:30-8:30 pm**

Wards 11 & 12 City Council candidates (3/4), Keewaydin Park Center, sponsored by Nokomis East Neighborhood Association

✓ **Tues., October 20, 6:30-8:30 pm**

At-large Park Board candidates (8), District 4 Park Board candidate, Kenwood Gym, sponsored by Kenwood-Isles Area Association

✓ **Wed., October 21, 6:30-8:00 pm**

Mayoral candidates, Downtown Library, sponsored by LWVMpls

* Figures in parentheses indicate the number of candidates in that race.

Floats and Votes

1200 Free Root Beer Floats Celebrate 90 Years of League History

The 90th Anniversary of the League of Women Voters Minneapolis dawned bright, clear and warm on August 27. The occasion was celebrated with *Floats and Votes* on the Nicollet Mall. The floats were provided by A&W Root Beer - also celebrating its 90th Anniversary this year.

This unique partnership was established by League members Barb Kimer and Mary Katherine Johnson. Upon learning of the coincidence of these dates, they called Patrick Nickelsen, who owns four A&W restaurants in the metro area, to find out if a joint celebration was possible. Patrick responded enthusiastically and agreed to provide root beer and ice cream for free root beer floats during a Farmers Market day on the Mall. The next call was to FairVote, which is providing the training about Ranked Choice Voting for this fall's Minneapolis election. They were delighted to provide information and a demonstration of this new voting procedure as a part of the League celebration.

Armed with root beer floats, voting demonstrations, voter registration materials and LWVMpls information, eight volunteers descended on Tenth & Nicollet to bang the drum for the League, A&W and new voting procedures. Volunteers wearing turn-of-the-century hats and VOTE sashes (provided by Barb Kimer and The Guthrie Theater Costume Department) scooped ice cream, poured root beer, and talked non-stop from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.— at which time ice cream, root beer and volunteers were finished.

Many thanks to Claire Olson, Marilyn Dean, Barb Kimer, Karlynn Fronek, Kelsey Johnson, Deborah Jindra, Glenda Larson, Elaine Lindstrom, Sharon Chapman and Sally Pundt for the time they spent setting up, tearing down, dishing up floats and talking with voters. Thanks also to Karlynn for preparing the League hand-out and Jennifer Bennett for all the PR she generated.

Special thanks to Jeanne Massey of FairVote for providing volunteers, information and demonstrations for this LWVMpls-supported new voting procedure. Also, if you get a chance, visit one of Patrick Nickelsen's A&W restaurants located in Coon Rapids, Pine Island, Little Canada and Inver Grove Heights. One more thank you to the Dakota Jazz Club and Restaurant, located on Tenth & Nicollet. Without their gracious agreement to let us use their freezer, we would have sat in a puddle of ice cream.

~Lonni McCauley



L to R:
LWVMpls
President,
Deborah
Jindra; Pat-
rick Nickel-
sen, A&W
owner; A&W
mascot; and
Barb Kimer,
who helped
organize
*Floats and
Votes*.

**Proud to support
the League of Women Voters Minneapolis!**

**90 Years
of Classic
Root Beer**



**90 Years
of Educating
Voters**

A&W RESTAURANT LOCATIONS:

3006 Rice Street Little Canada	9061 Buchanan Trail Inver Grove Heights	703 North Main Pine Island	12759 Riverdale Blvd Coon Rapids
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Marilyn Dean, President-elect, and Elaine Lindstrom, Member .



Elaine Lindstrom and Sally Pundt, Members.



Kelsey Johnson, Member, and Sharon Chapman, LWVMpls Administrative Manager



Claire Olson, Member, offering voting information.

School Board Breakfast in Planning Stages

Planning for "Breakfast with the School Board" has begun and we are looking for host committee members. The proposed event will run approximately 8:30 to 10:00 am and is scheduled for February 2010. The plan is to invite current league members and encourage them to bring a parent of a school-age child for a panel discussion with Minneapolis school board members and superintendent. If you are interested in joining the host committee please e-mail Mary Fisher at mmfisher2@msn.com

~Mary Murphy Fisher

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

Development Corner

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

Gwen Myers
Shirley Unger

Thank You!

Marilyn Dean and Claire Olson, Newsletter Support

Welcome New Member

Carole Martin



Looking for Lively Conversation?

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

Unit 1

Contact: Lindsey Thomas, 612.824.4489

Unit 11

Contacts: Jan Midtbo, 612.926.0954
Judy Walter, 612.927.5847

Unit 25/29

Contacts: Carol Green, 612.789.6314
Kate Donahue, 612.378.9538

Unit 48

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

LWVMpls Needs You *Now* Our Legacy Depends on Participation

Every one of us joined the LWV because we believe in its mission—a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major policy issues and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

In September, units met, and committees started on this year's goals. Have you thought about your involvement? It is not too late.

At your next unit meeting, please sign up to be a topic discussion leader, host a meeting or serve on a committee. At-Large members may sign-up to chair or serve on a committee of interest. You'll learn a lot, meet great people and probably have fun. Some of the committees that need members are: Candidate Forums, Education, Healthy Legacy, Parks and Recreation, Membership Recruitment and Library.

The Speakers Bureau needs members to speak to outside groups (usually about voting). Last year,

Charter Change Proposals from p. 1

There was strong consensus from our members to adopt two new positions related to the Board of Estimate and Taxation: (1) abolish the Board, and (2) designate the Mayor and City Council to perform the duties currently performed by the Board.

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) sought a charter change for an independent park board and obtained the required number of Minneapolis registered voter signatures to place the item on the ballot. Both the Charter Commission and the Council declined to place this issue on the November 2009 ballot. At the time this article was prepared, the matter was in court and the judge was taking it under advisement. It is unknown whether the item will be on the ballot.

Prior to our 2006 study, LWVMpls had a 1974 position supporting an independent Park Board. Members did not support retaining this position. There was no support for alternative choices such as be-

coming a city department or part of Hennepin County. This means we have no support for any governance option for MPRB.

fifteen requests were filled. All of us should be able to speak about Ranked Choice Voting after our September meeting! The Speakers Bureau needs a new chair too; one or two people with a good list of available speakers can do this fun job easily.

As we begin our 90th year, commit yourself to the LWV. It is more important than ever so that we can grow as an organization. Without active participation we may just fade away. Don't let down those women who worked so hard to win us the vote and created the League.

You can sign up at Unit meetings, contact the League office (lwvmplsoffice@lwvmpls.org), or call 612.339.6319 or email Deborah Jindra (deborah630@earthlink.net) or Marilyn Dean (marilyndean11@hotmail.com).

~Marilyn Dean, President-elect

LWVMpls will be providing information to members and the public about the proposal to eliminate BET and the reasons we support doing so. Depending on the outcome of the current legal dispute, LWVMpls may be providing information to members and the public about the pros and cons of an independent park board based on information from the studies.

Please check the LWVMpls website for the most current information about proposed charter changes as well as candidate information.

~Joan Niemiec
City Government Committee Chair
~Pat Kovel-Jarboe

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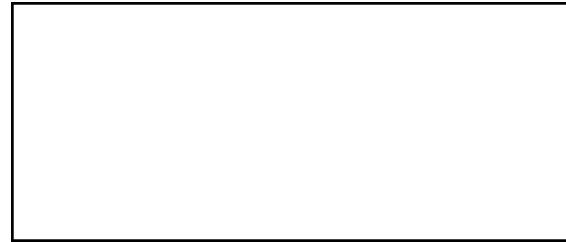
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MISSION

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!

For a list of City Election candidate forums taking place in October, please see p. 3.

Wed., Oct.21
7:00 - 9:00pm
Board Meeting
LWV Office

Funny Business



Time to tickle your funny bone! How would you like to work on a short, happy project and raise money for LWVMpls?

We're planning a hilarious comedy club event and are seeking sponsors and volunteers.

Seriously, we need your help to make this a success. Contact the LWV office if you can pitch in. During the stress of the election season, we could all use a good laugh.