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OHIO VOTER

AUTUMN 2011

CLEAN AIR PROMISE CAMPAIGN KICKS OFF!



The League of Women Voters of Ohio Education Fund (LWVOEF), in partnership with local Leagues and with support from the national League of Women Voters Education Fund, is working to change the debate over the Clean Air Act from a focus on the cost of regulation to a focus on the public health cost of bad air quality. From January 1st through August 8th 2011, EPA data showed 2012 dangerous air days in 252 cities, suburbs and even national parks. Ohio had 50 of those dangerous air days. Only six states had worse records. It is not surprising that thousands of Ohioans suffer from the effects of toxic air, and their stories need to be told. The campaign will feature stories about real people with asthma, lung disease and other health problems attributable to air pollution.

The campaign seeks to elicit the following promise from politicians, community leaders, League members and the general public:

"I promise to protect America's children and families from dangerous air pollution. Because toxics and pollutants, such as mercury, smog, carbon, and soot, cause thousands of hospital visits, asthma attacks, and even deaths, I will support clean air policies and other protections that scientists and public health experts have recommended to the EPA to safeguard our air quality."

With grant support from the national League, LWVOEF is providing pass-through funding and coordination to participating local Leagues for activities through Dec. 10th that engage community leaders, politicians and the general public in their communities to make the promise to support clean air. Local Leagues have the opportunity to participate at different levels with pass-through funds reflecting their chosen level of involvement. You may be hearing from your local League about opportunities for you to get involved or to attend meetings as part of the Clean Air Promise campaign.

If your local League has not been able to join the Clean Air Promise campaign - and we recognize that some Leagues' schedule for this fall made participation very difficult - and you want to learn more about it, please contact Jennifer Williams, LWVOEF Executive Director. Details about the campaign can be found on the LWVOEF website and on the LWVUS website at www.peoplenotpolluters.org where you can personally make the Clean Air Promise.

By: Nancy Brown, LWV Ohio Education Fund Co-President

LWVO BOARD OF DIRECTORS APPROVES STANCES ON STATEWIDE BALLOT ISSUES

At the September meeting of the LWVO board of directors, the board voted on stances for issues on the ballot for the November election.

Issue 1: Proposed Constitutional Amendment to change the age at which a person may not be elected or appointed to a judicial office and to eliminate courts of conciliation and the Supreme Court Commission: **NEUTRAL**.

Passage of Issue 1 would increase the age at which a judge could be elected or appointed from age 70 to age 75. Neither LWVUS nor LWV Ohio has a position that pertains to Issue 1. Accordingly, LWV Ohio is taking a neutral stance on Issue 1.

Issue 2: Referendum on legislation relative to government union contracts and other government employment contracts and policies (A referendum on Am. Sub. SB 5): **NEUTRAL**.

Issue 2 is a referendum on Am. Sub. SB 5, which seeks to change laws concerning public employees, in particular teachers, firefighters and police. Major changes affect collective bargaining rights, salary schedules and compensation, layoff procedures and leave. Neither LWVUS nor LWV Ohio has a position that pertains to Issue 2. Accordingly, LWV Ohio is taking a neutral stance on Issue 2.

Issue 3: Proposed Constitutional Amendment to add a section to Ohio's Bill of Rights exempting Ohioans from a federal requirement that individuals purchase a minimum amount of health insurance coverage: **OPPOSE**.

Issue 3 seeks to add a section to Ohio's Bill of Rights exempting Ohioans from any requirement that individuals purchase a minimum amount of health insurance. The amendment is directed at a federal law passed in 2010, The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), but it also seeks to make ineffective similar state and local laws passed after the PPACA was adopted. LWVUS adopted a position on health care in 1993 which supports a basic level of affordable, accessible quality care for all U.S. residents. LWV Ohio believes Issue 3 seeks to undermine efforts to provide a basic level of affordable, accessible quality health care for Ohio's residents. Accordingly, LWV Ohio is opposing Issue 3.

Go to www.lwvohio.org to access the League of Women Voters of Ohio Education Fund November 2011 Ballot Issue Explanations.

**SAVE THE DATE!
STATEHOUSE DAY 2012
APRIL 10, 2012**



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The 129th General Assembly was very busy, as could be attested by League volunteer lobbyists who spent countless hours testifying and attending hearings. The budget was passed and before departing in July, the legislature addressed prison reform, election law, reproductive choice and a host of other issues.

For the first few months, the budget dominated the news. With a projected eight billion dollar state-budget deficit, the League recognized that some difficult cuts were inevitable. We urged the legislature to consider a balanced approach – coupling spending cuts with increases in revenue and/or reduction of tax expenditures, such as deductions for buyers of jet airplane time shares. In the end, a budget was passed which will entail significant cuts for education and local governments. The budget did not reflect a balanced approach: taxes were not raised, loopholes were not closed and the estate tax was eliminated.

One of the areas where the state and local Leagues and our coalition partners can claim some success was in election law. House Bill 194 (HB 194) significantly changed the administration of Ohio's election law, and many of the changes were disappointing to the League. However, some of the worst provisions that were under consideration did not make their way into the final bill. We also succeeded in preventing the requirement that voters under some circumstances provide their full social security number instead of the last four digits. Most importantly, the state and local Leagues across Ohio lobbied against the proposed photo ID law, which would

have required voters to present a driver's license or other government-issued photo ID on Election Day - a requirement that could disenfranchise many voters, particularly students, the elderly and minority voters who lack such identification.

Unfortunately, on balance, HB 194 as passed includes a number of provisions that would make voting more difficult for many and could result in the return of long lines at polling places on Election Day. These include limitations on early voting hours and days without any recognition of the importance expanded and weekend hours have played in many counties. The mail-in voting period is also shortened and county boards of elections are prohibited from sending unsolicited absentee ballot applications to all registered voters. The latter practice was adopted in a number of Ohio's urban counties and helped eliminate the long lines experienced in the 2004 presidential election.

A petition effort to repeal HB 194 was undertaken by Fair Elections Ohio and was backed by a coalition of state legislators, voting rights advocates, progressive groups and others. Although the League typically makes a decision about whether to support a statewide referendum only after it gets on the ballot, in this instance the League Board concluded that because voters' rights and access are core to the League's mission, League support of the referendum drive was appropriate. If the petition effort is successful and the petitioners have gathered the requisite 231,000 plus petitions by September 29th, 2011, the law will be stayed until after voters have the opportunity to vote on it in the November, 2012 election.

By: Nancy Brown, LWVO Co-President

JOIN US!

LWVO/EF is now hosting monthly conference calls for ALL members!

Join us on the first Tuesday of every month at Noon to learn about best practices, get updates on work at the Statehouse, hear the latest about work at the state League, and network with your fellow League members.

HB 194 REFERENDUM UPDATE

In August, LWVO's board of directors voted to endorse the HB 194 referendum campaign. HB 194 includes a number of provisions that will make it more difficult for Ohioans to exercise their right to vote and will result in long lines at the polls and other problems on Election Day.

The deadline for return of signatures was September 29th. As this publication went to print, we learned that the referendum effort was successful in gathering the required signatures – just over 231,000, subject to verification, and HB 194 will be put on hold for the 2011 and 2012 elections. This will enable voters to vote on the referendum in the 2012 general election.

Please visit www.lwvohio.org for up-to-date information on the referendum.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR COLUMN

Thank you for welcoming me so warmly to the League of Women Voters of Ohio/Education Fund. I am excited to be the new executive director for LWV Ohio/Education Fund and have the opportunity to work with all of you in furthering the mission of the League.



**Jennifer Williams,
Executive Director**

As you know, it is a busy and exciting time for Leagues across Ohio and for the state League as we prepare for the November election, monitor the redistricting process, and keep an eye on the challenges to the election reform legislation (see pg 2 for more information on the HB 194 referendum).

Additionally, here at the state League, we are also embarking on our first strategic planning process. We are in the initial phase of organization now, but we are planning to begin surveying the membership and conducting interviews about the League and opportunities for growth and improvement later this fall. Keep an eye on your inbox for your opportunity to provide feedback on our future direction.

It's also time to mark your calendars for Statehouse Day and Council 2012. Please plan to join us on Tuesday, April 10, 2012, in Columbus for a day of education and networking. We look forward to seeing you there!

In early September, a map drawn in the political backrooms was unveiled. Within 48 hours, the new congressional districts were approved by the House without any changes, followed by quick approval in the Senate.

The plan splits counties and cities as districts zigzag across the state in an effort to pack overwhelming majorities of Democratic voters into four districts, leaving 12 districts favoring Republicans, and almost no competitive districts. An even more secretive process played out before the Ohio Apportionment Board which established the new state legislative districts.

Is there a better way?

Absolutely. The League of Women Voters of Ohio Education Fund and Ohio Citizen Action (OCA) led a coalition of 25 Ohio organizations which seek a fair, open, and nonpartisan redistricting process. They sponsored a competition that allowed private citizens to draw congressional and state legislative districts using the same census and political data used by the politicians.

Fifty-three congressional maps and a dozen state legislative maps were generated through the competition. The League and our competition cosponsors submitted some of the best plans to the Legislature and Apportionment Board for their consideration.

A team of experts scored all of these maps using mathematical formulas that measured compactness, the number of counties that were split, and whether the districts were competitive. The team also scored the current districts and the new congressional districts adopted by the Legislature.

The results of the scoring? The congressional districts adopted by the Legislature this fall scored dead last – worse than all 53 plans generated by the private citizens! Go to www.draughtlineohio.org to check out the maps yourself.

The districts that have been adopted will be challenged in court and possibly through a referendum. But, unless we take action, the unsavory process will repeat itself in ten years, and the politicians will again create districts which favor themselves instead of the public.

The League has long supported amending Ohio's Constitution to require that districts be compact, respect county and municipal boundaries, and reflect the political balance of Ohio voters. The League needs to continue to work to educate the public about how redistricting works and how it affects all the other issues of importance to the League.

It has been my privilege to work with the League and others for the past several months on this issue. I have seen firsthand why the redistricting process needs to be moved as far away from the politicians as possible. It is up to all of us to make that happen.

By: Jim Slagle, Manager, Ohio Campaign for Accountable Redistricting



ARE YOU CHOOSING YOUR POLITICIANS, OR ARE THEY CHOOSING YOU?

Next year, and again every two years until 2020 we will go to the polls to vote and we will elect Democrats in the 3rd, 9th, 11th, and 13th congressional districts and we will elect Republicans in the other 12 congressional districts.

**Jim Slagle, Manager,
Ohio Campaign
for Accountable
Redistricting**

Wait. Don't they have to count the votes first?

This is the real problem with allowing politicians to pick their voters instead of allowing the voters to pick their politicians. The politicians create districts that benefit themselves and their political party. They create safe districts which determine who will be elected, years before the votes are counted.

This year the Republicans are in charge of redistricting, and as the Democrats did when they were in power, they are creating districts intended to ensure majorities for their party in the State Legislature and in the Ohio Congressional delegation for the next decade.





ISSUE 1:

PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

TO CHANGE THE AGE AT WHICH A PERSON MAY NOT BE ELECTED OR APPOINTED TO A JUDICIAL OFFICE AND TO ELIMINATE COURTS OF CONCILIATION AND THE SUPREME COURT COMMISSION

(Proposed by Joint Resolution of the General Assembly of Ohio)

To amend Section 6 and repeal Sections 19 and 22 of Article IV of the Ohio Constitution

A YES vote means approval of the amendment.

A NO vote means disapproval of the amendment.

A majority YES vote is required for the amendment to be adopted.

If approved, the proposed amendment will take effect immediately after the election.

LEAGUE EXPLANATION OF ISSUE 1:

Currently a candidate for judge is not eligible to run or be appointed if the candidate will be 70 years old or older when assuming the office. The proposed change would prohibit a candidate for judge from being elected or appointed if that candidate exceeds the age of 75 years. This would allow a judge to assume office at age 75 and serve out a six year term, meaning that a judge could potentially serve until age 81. Currently Ohio is one of 20 states with an

age of retirement of 70 years. Eighteen states have no age limit. Four have a retirement age of 72, seven have a retirement age of 75, and one has a retirement age of 90.

The amendment would eliminate the Supreme Court Commission (established in 1875) and Courts of Conciliation (established in 1851). Neither has ever been utilized.

PROPONENTS OF THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT ARGUE THAT:

1. In 2011 people live longer and are mentally sound longer than was the case in 1968, when the current age limit was adopted.
2. Experienced, knowledgeable judges should be permitted to run for office. Voters should determine if a candidate for judge is able to serve.
3. If a judge is unable to perform judicial duties because of age or any other reason, the Ohio Supreme Court can discipline or remove the judge. In addition, judges are subject to impeachment proceedings in the Ohio General Assembly.

OPPONENTS OF THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT ARGUE THAT:

1. Having a higher age limit effectively creates a more entrenched judiciary.
2. The current system works and there is no compelling reason to change it.
3. Extending the retirement age will burden the courts with some judges whose best years are behind them.



ISSUE 2:

REFERENDUM ON LEGISLATION RELATIVE TO GOVERNMENT UNION CONTRACTS AND OTHER GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS AND POLICIES

(A referendum on Am. Sub. SB 5)

A YES vote means approval of SB 5.

A NO vote means disapproval of SB 5.

A majority YES vote is required for SB 5 to become effective.

If approved, the provisions of SB 5 will take effect immediately after the election.

LEAGUE EXPLANATION OF ISSUE 2:

Approval of SB 5 changes laws concerning public employees, in particular teachers, firefighters and police. Major changes affect collective bargaining rights, salary schedules and compensation, layoff procedures, and leave. For example, approval would:

- prohibit public employees from striking;
- eliminate binding arbitration as a way to settle contract disputes for safety forces;
- require performance-based pay for teachers;
- provide a minimum that public employees must pay for pensions and health insurance;
- allow the governing body (public employer) to impose its own last offer to settle a contract dispute.

PROPONENTS OF SB 5 ARGUE THAT:

1. Schools and local governments need to reduce costs to balance their budgets. They must have the right to reject unaffordable government employment contracts.
2. Government employees should pay a larger portion of the cost of health insurance and retirement plans in an amount closer to that paid by private sector employees.
3. Seniority-based layoffs for teachers often force the best teachers to be laid off first.

OPPONENTS OF SB 5 ARGUE THAT:

1. Public employees should have rights to protect themselves in the workplace. For example, police and firefighters should be able to negotiate for critical safety equipment. Nurses should be able to demand reasonable staffing levels in hospitals.
2. The budget shouldn't be balanced by requiring additional sacrifices by Ohio's public employees who have already made over \$350 million in concessions. Corporations should give up their tax breaks.
3. Teachers, nurses and firefighters did not cause Ohio's budget problems.

Websites

In support of SB 5:

Building A Better Ohio <http://betterohio.org/>

In opposition to SB 5:

We Are Ohio <http://weareohio.com/>



ISSUE 3:

PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT CONCERNING HEALTH CARE AND HEALTH CARE COVERAGE

(Proposed by Initiative Petition)

To add a new Section 21 to Article I of the Ohio Constitution

A YES vote means approval of the amendment.

A NO vote means disapproval of the amendment.

A majority YES vote is required for the amendment to be adopted.

If approved, the proposed amendment will take effect 30 days after the election.

LEAGUE EXPLANATION OF ISSUE 3:

The amendment would add a section to Ohio's Bill of Rights exempting Ohioans from the requirement that individuals purchase a minimum amount of health insurance coverage (individual mandate). The requirement is found in The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), a federal law passed March 19, 2010. The amendment would also apply to any similar federal, state or local law requiring participation in health insurance or a health care system. It would not apply to any law or rule in effect as of March 19, 2010. This would include health insurance coverage such as Medicare, Medicaid, workers' compensation, Social Security Disability, veterans' programs as of that date.

Generally, a state law, or a state constitutional provision, cannot overrule a federal law. The PPACA is currently being challenged in federal court as violating federal law. The provision exempting Ohioans from PPACA would likely have little or no effect on that challenge. However, if passed, the amendment could have a direct impact on any Ohio law (state or local) with an effective date after

March 19, 2010. Ohioans would be exempted from any requirement imposed by the Ohio legislature, or by any of Ohio's counties or cities, which would require individuals to purchase health insurance. It is unclear how far that might extend and what the impact would be on such issues as workers' compensation, Medicaid, or health services operated by the state such as clinics at state universities.

PROPONENTS OF THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT ARGUE THAT:

1. The freedom from being forced to purchase government-defined private health insurance is a fundamental right that should be embodied in the Ohio Bill of Rights.
2. Government must be prohibited from passing laws requiring purchase of health insurance coverage.
3. Ohioans should be able to vote on whether they want to be covered by government-defined health insurance.

OPPONENTS OF THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT ARGUE THAT:

1. Without required participation the entirety of the PPACA might be declared to be unconstitutional. Some consequences would be that insurance companies could continue to exclude people, including children, with preexisting medical conditions from getting health insurance coverage, and continue to impose annual and lifetime caps on health care coverage.
2. Exempting Ohioans from requirements of a federal law violates the U.S. Constitution and should be struck down by the Courts.
3. Changes the Ohio legislature has made to health insurance coverage since March 19, 2010 as well as future changes would be invalid. This would include needed changes to Medicaid, workers' compensation, and student health insurance.

Websites

In support of the proposed amendment:
Ohioans for Healthcare Freedom
www.ohioansforhealthcarefreedom.org.

In opposition to the proposed amendment:
No on Issue 3 Committee <http://votenoissue3.com>.



FROM THE CO-PRESIDENTS' DESK...

The Leagues of Women Voters in Ohio – at the local and state level – is collectively a vibrant organization of members and Leagues who define the League by the difference we make. This coming election season will be no different, as Leagues across Ohio—as always—advocate, educate and serve as catalysts for change in their communities and at the state level...publishing impartial Voters' Guides, conducting Election Day phone banks and educating voters on everything from what identification is required at the polls to what the ballot issues are about.



Nancy Brown Meg Flack

We are typically one of the very first organizations in our communities and at the state level that Ohioans, the media and elected officials turn to for information on public policy issues—from election administration to redistricting to judicial reform to so much more. Why? Because of our trusted nonpartisan reputation and our informed, objective perspective on the issues.

Moreover, we know it is not enough just to believe or just to state our beliefs. We know our actions must support our rhetoric at all levels of the organization. And so they do. We need only to look at Leagues' leadership in working to defeat the photo ID bill introduced this summer, their current involvement in the HB 194 referendum process, local and state Leagues' ongoing work to monitor the 2009 LWVO v. Brunner election-administration lawsuit settlement agreement, and Leagues' voter-registration campaigns and community debates and forums. Leagues' and League members' actions—and the results of those actions—are why Ohioans turn to the League to guarantee open, fair elections.

You could be giving your time and resources to any organization – but you choose to give them to the League. You choose to give them to help ensure your fellow Ohioans have the information they need to make informed decisions at the polls—and to ensure that all eligible Ohioans can vote and that all valid votes are counted. Thank you for your commitment to making democracy work—and best wishes for continued success!

Nancy G. Brown and Meg G. Flack

ELECTION SEASON IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO GROW MEMBERSHIP!

As election season moves into high gear, Leagues have a unique opportunity to reach a broad audience and educate them about the value of League membership, as well as about the issues and candidates.

Following are tips drawn from LWVUS' Election Checklist, a valuable resource for Leagues' use. The suggestions are meant to

complement the work Leagues are already doing, and the list is not comprehensive.

1. VOTERS' GUIDE

- Include an ad to join the League in the Voters' Guide—and make sure it has the League's contact information (note: the ad needs to be paid for with operating fund or (c)(4) resources).
- Place membership materials near/with Voters' Guides that are in public places, such as libraries.
- Ask allied groups to help promote your Voters' Guides.

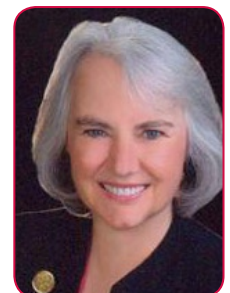
2. AT CANDIDATES' DEBATES AND ISSUE FORUMS

- Be sure moderators are scripted to invite those in attendance to join. (Note: Sample scripts are included in LWVUS' "Gain New League Members and Visibility During This Election Season").
- Have a "crawler" or "screen shot" during televised events about how to join the League (e.g., go to the League's Web site).
- Collect attendees' contact information (e.g., through sign-in sheets) for additional follow up.
- Have League members serve as "membership ambassadors" to welcome attendees, provide more information about League, make an additional invitation to join, and accept membership forms.
- Make sure the League logo and name are visible, such as on podium signs, moderator wearing League pin, etc.

3. THROUGHOUT ELECTION SEASON

- Maximize the visibility and membership opportunities at Election Day-related activities, for example, by having volunteers wear League buttons or stickers—and be ready to talk about the League and/or provide contact information.
- Have membership information available at voter-registration events – and members ready to talk about their personal experiences with League and the value of being a member.
- Place a prominent "join us" message on your League's Web site and make it easy to join.
- Educate League members to be "ambassadors" during election season, complete with carrying membership brochures to hand out, having a prepared "elevator speech" about the value of League membership, a script for the "ask" inviting people to join, and a means to get contact information from interested people.
- You can find additional ways to grow League membership during election season on the LWVUS Web site (www.lwv.org) using the search terms "Election Checklist" and "Gain New League Members and Visibility During This Election Season."

By Carol Patterson, Chair - LWV Ohio Membership Development and Engagement Committee





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

For membership information, call (614) 469-1505, toll free 877-LVW-OHIO, email membership@lwvohio.org, or visit us online at www.lwvohio.org.



Twitter.com/lwvohio



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MEMBERSHIP FORM



Yes, Sign me up as a member of The League of Women Voters of Ohio!

\$60 Individual \$75 Household

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

State _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Mail this form with check to
LWVO, 17 South High Street, Suite 650
Columbus, Ohio 43215

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