



OHIO VOTER

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LWVO a Player in the Governor's School Funding Debate

By Joan Platz, LWVO Education Lobbyist

LWVO president Linda Lalley and LWVO education lobbyist Joan Platz recently met with Governor Strickland to discuss school funding issues. The meeting, which also included Dr. John Stanford, Executive Assistant for Education in the Governor's Office of Policy, provided an opportunity to outline the League's concerns about the current status of the school funding debate. Recognizing how difficult it was going to be to solve school funding issues through one budget, the Governor has met with most education organizations to discuss the next steps needed to create a new school funding system.

The Governor identified school funding as a priority in his "Turnaround Ohio Plan", because of the correlation between high quality education (preK-16) and building a prosperous Ohio. In his first budget proposal, HB 119 (Dolan), Governor Strickland retained many of the school funding components found in the previous state budget (126-HB 66), but also focused additional resources on early childhood education, struggling students, and higher education.

The Governor has withheld his support of the proposed constitutional amendment, proposing instead that stakeholders come together and recommend legislative changes to fix school funding, and use a constitutional

option only if the legislative strategy fails. Two bills, HB 1 (Setzer) and SB 1 (Padgett), have been reserved for any legislative changes that the Governor proposes for funding schools

- 127th General Assembly: Twelve bills have been introduced to revamp Ohio's school funding since the beginning of the 127th Ohio General Assembly in January 2007.

Financing Ohio's public schools will continue to be a concern for Ohio's citizens until a stable, equitable, and adequate school funding system is implemented. In the meantime there is plenty of work to be done. League members should stay informed about their own school district's financial status. Members can help their communities understand the complicated way Ohio funds its schools, and the school funding issues that need to be resolved. Members should also become familiar with LWVO's positions on school funding, which are located in "Agenda for Action" (positions #9-23 p. 11-12).

The League will continue to monitor the debate over school funding and provide information and leadership in support of a strong public education system and its role as the cornerstone of our democracy, society, and economic prosperity.

LWVO and State Discuss Possible Settlement of Election Reform Lawsuit

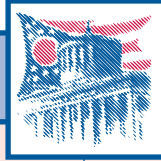
The Secretary of State and the Governor of Ohio, defendants of the historic League of Women Voters of Ohio election reform lawsuit, have committed to responding by October 15 to a proposal by LWVO regarding potential settlement of the lawsuit. Both parties filed a status report on September 14 with the Federal District Court, confirming that they will respond to LWVO's proposal, and meet with LWVO shortly after the October 15 response. LWVO has been exploring a possible settlement with the defendants since December 2006.

Over the summer, League elections experts compiled a detailed proposal of measures to achieve the election reforms sought in the lawsuit. While this detailed settlement proposal

was in development, both LWVO and defendant Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner agreed to continue the stay of appeal first granted by the Sixth Circuit Court in May 2006.

In July 2005, LWVO partnered with LWV-Toledo Lucas County to file the complaint in federal court against the offices of governor and secretary of state, alleging a 30 year pattern of election dysfunction. The lawsuit does not challenge the results of any past elections, nor does it seek monetary damages. Instead, it seeks to protect the rights of Ohio voters in future elections. The relief sought would require the state defendants to exercise their authority by repairing voter problems at all stages of Ohio's elections process.

ACTION



UPDATE

Legislative Update

As is the case in every odd numbered year, the legislature was consumed with the state's 2 year operating budget. The Executive budget proposed by the new Governor contained the smallest increase in revenues in over 50 years. As is common with new Governors, it followed many of the policies of the prior administration. In addition, it contained a \$25,000 local property tax exemption for all property owners aged 65 and over to be paid for by selling the state's rights to monies due from the tobacco lawsuit settlement. A number of initiatives supported by the LWVO passed, including increased funding for early childhood development programs, easing restrictions on the PASSPORT program, freezing undergraduate in-state tuition and adding funding for higher education in the form of grants to recruit students and scholars in the science, technology, engineering and math disciplines. The legislative session was made more interesting by

the Dancers for Democracy and their opposition to SB 16. Even before the Executive Budget was presented to the legislature, the Citizens for Community Values presented an Initiative Petition to the legislature calling for passage of a statute that would require adult oriented businesses without liquor licenses to close between the hours of midnight and 6 a.m. and require nude or semi-nude employees to maintain a six-foot distance from patrons. Rep. Hagan suggested adding a "no touch" provision between lobbyists and legislators and forcing the General Assembly to cease their activities after midnight. Much of SB 16 was enacted into law and may be the subject of a referendum on the ballot this fall. While the League is unlikely to weigh in on the referendum, we might support Rep. Hagan's suggestion!



*Ann Henkener,
LWVO Legislative
Director*

Update On ImPACT

By Anne Nelson, imPACT Project Manager

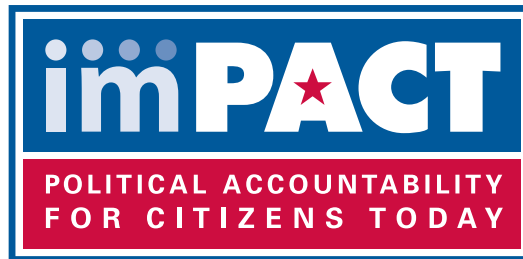
America is at a teachable moment according to Bill Bradley in his new book *The New American Story*. He writes "We are compelled to reevaluate our political system, our leadership, our agenda as a nation and ourselves as citizens".

Politics is the way we get things done in a democracy. That is what imPACT is all about. This, our second year of imPACT, provides local Leagues an opportunity to once again bring citizens together to address five political reform issues. We now have a new understanding of our fine line around advocacy and hope to give town hall meeting participants more direction on how they can take action, something they

felt lacking last year. We held 17 town hall meetings, averaging 80 participants, many non-League members. Monthly e-newsletters were sent to 1245 Ohioans.

The imPACT web site continues to get about 250 visitors each month. The quiz has been revamped and proves to be more user-friendly, educational and fun.

The Ohio Bar Association is providing a new resource for the town hall meetings. For more information on how your League can become a part of imPACT, contact Anne Nelson at anelson6@columbus.rr.com or by calling her at 614-205-4221.



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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-LWV-OHIO, e-mail membership@lwvohio.org, or visit us on the Web at www.lwvohio.org.

What's Happening With the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections?

FIRST PERSON



By Roslyn Talerico, LWV of Cuyahoga Area

• 168,169 Cuyahoga County voters purged after 2000 election.¹

• Cuyahoga County had one of the highest provisional ballot rejection rates. The number of invalid provisional ballots doubled from 17% in 2000 to

33% in 2004.²

- Voters waited in long lines to cast their ballots.
- Flawed 2004 recount: two election workers found guilty of non-random selection of precincts to be recounted.
- 2006 Primary: long lines, polling places opened late hours, election workers did not show up.
- Commissioners appointed an Election Review Panel that found many problems.
- Projection: if future presidential voter turnout matches 2004, 96,000 Cuyahoga County citizens would risk losing their votes due to problems with registration, provisional ballots, ID, and failure to enforce the National Voter Registration Act by public service agencies.³
- Center for Election Integrity conducted a Collaborative Audit of the 2006 election. Audit found damaged uncountable paper trails and voting machines with identical serial numbers. League was a collaborator.
- Leagues notified 1,200 voters, whose provisional ballots were rejected, to re-register.
- Members of Board of Elections and Director resigned.

HAS A NEW DAY DAWNED IN CUYAHOGA COUNTY?

Jane Platten, new Board of Elections Director, has a goal: Cuyahoga County will be a national model for conducting transparent, efficient, effective elections. She plans to improve the system by:

- Holding manufacturers of electronic voting and registration equipment accountable.
- Recruiting new poll workers, including public employees.
- Developing effective poll worker training.
- Developing registration procedures that minimize entry errors.
- Requiring each department and employee to have a specified list of daily tasks to be accomplished from now through the 2008 election.
- Analyzing best sites for voting locations.
- Reducing provisional voting by directing each voter to the correct precinct.
- Improving the provisional ballot system.
- Welcoming public participation: "The Board of Elections learns from the public."

Jane Platten is the first woman to be Director of the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections and Jennifer Brunner is the first woman to be Ohio Secretary of State. Will women make a difference?

¹ Fitrakis, Rosenfeld, Wasserman: *What Happened in Ohio?* pp. 44-48

² *Ibid.* p. 205.

³ Norman Robbins, Ph.D. and Judy Gallo: *Report to Cuyahoga Election Review Panel.* 6/19/06

From the Presidents' Desk

Lobbyists Can Wear White Hats

A pointed exchange among Democratic presidential candidates at the 2007 YearlyKos blogger convention underscored disdain for lobbyist practices. Several frontrunners decried lavish campaign contributions that appear to influence legislators' votes. Conventioneers loudly trumpeted their displeasure with lobbyists.

But wait a minute. The League has an entire corps of lobbyists. Surely we would not employ the kind of people so loudly denounced in Chicago this summer.

Right you are. There are those lobbyists and then there are our LWVO lobbyists.

The lobbyists depicted by Senator Obama and former Senator Edwards are the stereotypical Savile Row-suited people trolling the halls of the Capitol, using their unlimited expense accounts to influence government decisions in favor of special interest groups.



Permission: MOTO PHOTO

Our 22 volunteer lobbyists, by contrast, meet bi-weekly in a community hall over brown bag lunches to strategize actions on state legislation issues of interest to the League. Our annual lobbyist budget of \$350 reimburses their collective mileage and parking costs. Each is a specialist on a different League public policy. Their actions typically include the following:

- Testifying before the General Assembly's legislative committees and other elected officials.
- Monitoring the status of legislation and reporting to us through legislative updates and lobbyist reports.
- Writing letters and articles to the media.
- Sending Action Alerts to all of us to initiate grassroots lobbying of our legislators on pending legislation.
- Participating in coalitions whose goals align with the League positions.
- Preparing background materials for our monthly "Spotlight" emails to members.

We are always looking for additional lobbyists or industry specialists. Technology enables us to tailor a commitment to fit your passion, your availability and your location. If intrigued, consider sampling the lively conversation of a Tuesday Lobby Lunch in Columbus, or call the LWVO office at **1.877.LWV.OHIO**.

While we can't promise you a junket to Hawaii, we can promise you a role at center stage in making democracy work in Ohio.



As the Ohio Voter goes to press, State Issue 1 has yet to receive the required number of petition signatures to be placed on the ballot.

Please Note: The League of Women Voters has no position under which we could endorse or not recommend Issue 1.

**STATE ISSUE 1: REFERENDUM ON
SUB. SENATE BILL 16**

State Issue 1 is a referendum to determine whether Sub. Senate Bill 16 (SB 16), which regulates adult, or sexually oriented, businesses, will stand as law or be rejected by voters. SB 16 passed the Senate by a vote of 24-8, passed the House by a vote of 73-24, and then became law without the Governor's signature. Before the law could go into effect in September, opponents need to submit enough signatures to send the bill to voters for reconsideration. With a majority YES vote on the referendum, the law will go into effect. With a majority NO vote, the law will not go into effect.

If SB 16 goes into effect, the following changes will be made to state law:

- Adult businesses - which include sexually oriented book and video stores as well as X-rated theaters and strip clubs - must close between midnight and 6 a.m. Clubs with liquor licenses could remain open and serve until the hours specified in the liquor permit, but all fully nude entertainment must end at midnight.
- Customers of such businesses will be prohibited from touching performers and their clothing, and performers will be prohibited from touching customers and their fellow performers.
- Customers and performers who violate the "no touch" provisions of the law will be guilty of a misdemeanor criminal offense.
- The state will pay local governments' costs for lawsuits arising from this law under certain conditions, for example, if a local ordinance drafted with the guidance of the Ohio Attorney General is declared unconstitutional.

On the November ballot, State Issue 1 will ask: Shall the law be approved? Voting YES indicates that you want SB 16 to become law. Voting NO indicates that you do not want SB 16 to become law.

ARGUMENTS FOR PASSAGE:

1. The law provides uniform rules to regulate adult businesses throughout Ohio, ensuring consistency across local government lines.
2. The law may help reduce crime such as prostitution, thereby protecting property values and reducing the neighborhood blight that sometimes surrounds such businesses.
3. The law protects performers in strip clubs from exploitation and abuse by customers.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST PASSAGE:

1. The law overrides home rule, taking away the right of local governments to pass regulations that govern local adult businesses. These businesses are, after all, legal and already regulated by local zoning, liquor, and criminal laws (for example, those prohibiting prostitution).
2. The law violates First Amendment protections and infringes on performers' constitutional right to free expression.
3. The law may negatively affect Ohio's \$250-million-per-year adult entertainment industry, hurting the state's economy, including convention business.

The ballot language for State Issue 1 is available on the LWVO website: www.lwvo.org.

As the Ohio Voter goes to press, State Issue 1 has yet to receive the required number of petition signatures to be placed on the ballot.

LWV OHIO CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS

By *Chris Driver, LWVO Convention Chair*

Where could you meet someone who lives 200 miles away from you who:

Shares your concern over the funding quandary of public schools?

Is just as fascinated as you are by a description of the ecology of Lake Erie?

Is willing to admit that he/she also is still trying to understand all the details of the legislative districting process?

Really wants to make an impact on the political process and our Ohio community?

Where else but at a League convention? There were over 100 League members who devoted themselves to these discussions and more at the Sheraton Suites Hotel in Cuyahoga Falls in May 2007. Hosted by the Leagues of the Akron Area with volunteers from Kent, Canton



Staff and League members line up for fun at Convention! (L to R) LWVO staff Lisa Fry, Jerolyn Barbee, and Mary Cannon with LWV of Trumbull Co. members Terri Crabbs and Danielle Schmidt.

Hudson, Northern Portage, and Tallmadge, there were workshops, speakers, and informal opportunities to meet new people and forge new networks.

Breaking the mold from previous conventions, a real live Town Hall imPACT meeting was a part of the schedule on Saturday afternoon, featuring honorees from several Akron area organizations. Speakers Catherine Turcer from Ohio Citizen Action and Professor Bill Rich from the University of Akron addressed some of the aspects of campaign finance and the effects of contributions on judicial impartiality.

Several presenters were from within League, such as LWVUS Board member Elaine Wiant and staff member Jeanette Senecal, who spoke about the League's current efforts to secure voting representation

in Congress for the citizens of the District of Columbia.

The Saturday luncheon speaker was David Lieberth, the Akron Deputy Mayor of Administration. He shared historical snippets of inspiration as well as the problem solving that needs to be done as our communities enter the 21st century. During the Saturday evening banquet, the Hon. William O'Neill, recently retired from the Ohio Court of Appeals, gave his personal observations on the judicial campaign finance process.

Convention attendees voted to adopt an update of the state taxation and finance position, and an update on our judicial independence position. A number of timely Action Resolutions were adopted; which are posted on the LWVO website.

The delegates elected a slate of nominees for the 2007-2009 LWVO Board. Newly elected President Linda Lalley, reminded delegates that the political world has changed with

term limits for elected office holders. She stated that the



LWV Metro Columbus member Jean Byrd (Center) welcomes Attaining Membership Diversity workshop facilitators Anita Maldonado (L) and Dr. Steve Michael (R)

focus of League efforts in education and advocacy will have to be on the constituent, who will then lobby the legislator for change. LWVO will need educated and energized members as the first constituents of this process. "Change is rapid and disorienting," she said, "but if we look to our early leaders we will find the example to follow."



LWVO Co-Presidents Linda Lalley (L) and Carol Gibson (R) welcome The Honorable William O'Neill before his keynote address.



What is the Midwest Democracy Network ?

By Catherine Turcer, Ohio Citizen Action

In recent years, the demands on state-based reform organizations for policy, technical and legal assistance have steadily mounted. The leaders of these groups have found themselves increasingly reaching out to, communicating with, and sharing policy and strategic ideas with their counterparts in neighboring states.

As a result, a growing sense of community among Midwest reformers developed over time. This led to discussions about the need, feasibility and potential benefits of creating a regional forum or clearinghouse.

The Midwest Democracy Network (MDN) was created to meet this need. The Midwest Democracy Network is a loosely affiliated network of reform organizations from five different Midwestern States—Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin, including the Leagues of Women Voters of Ohio. State Leagues from the other participating states have also joined the network.

MDN is guided by a desire to create an amplified collective voice for democracy reform across the Great Lakes region. The primary goal of the Midwest Democracy Network is to facilitate communication and collaboration among reform groups across state lines and work collectively and regionally on projects that none of them could likely be able to do alone in their respective states.

Partners like the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU, the Wisconsin NewsLab at the University of Wisconsin and Elections @ Moritz at the Ohio State University Law School have provided MDN with a clearinghouse of information on campaign finance reform, election administration, redistricting reform and media coverage of elections.

For more information on MDN initiatives, please visit www.midwestdemocracy.org or call Catherine Turcer 614-487-7880.

LWVO Joins With Midwest Democracy Network To Question Presidential Candidates On Reform Issues

The Midwest Democracy Network (MDN), an alliance of reform organizations in five states, called on presidential candidates to explain their positions on a variety of campaign and government reform issues.

The MDN presented the full field of presidential candidates with a questionnaire covering federal campaign finance regulations, ethics and lobbying laws, federal communications policy, voting rights and congressional redistricting. Questions included whether, if elected:

- they would work to enact legislation to strengthen, maintain or repeal presidential public financing;
- they would support ongoing federal funding to improve the conduct of elections in exchange for better information from state and local election administrators on how they are administering elections; and
- they would support federal legislation prohibiting states from redrawing valid congressional districts more than once a decade.

Seasoned political analysts believe that ethics in government was a decisive issue in the 2006 elections. A USA Today/Gallup poll released on October 10, 2006 found that 86% of voters rated corruption in government as extremely or very important to their vote in last year's congressional elections.

Candidates have been asked to submit their completed questionnaires by October 15. Their unedited responses will be disseminated nationally through media outlets and a network of civic organizations.

The Midwest Democracy Network is an alliance of 20 civic and public interest groups based in Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin. The group includes The Leagues of Women Voters of Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin. The complete presidential candidate questionnaire and additional information about the Midwest Democracy Network is available at www.midwestdemocracy.org.

Look for LWVO E-News

Need to keep up-to-date on the latest legislative, issue education and advocacy activities?

Then subscribe to these monthly e-news updates:

imPACT E-Newsletter	1st Wednesday
Members Update	3rd Wednesday
Education Update	every Monday
Legislative Updates	monthly

These electronic communication services are supported by member contributions. Subscribe today by sending an email to lwvoinfo@lwvohio.org

How Does An Issue Get On the Ballot?

By Ann Henkener, LWVO Legislative Director

Sometimes a new century will bring with it needed changes. Reformers want to rid politics of corruption and inefficiency, and want government to do more to protect its citizens and the nation's moral values. And that's exactly what happened in the early 1900's. In 1910 the Ohio voters approved of having a Constitutional Convention. The outcome was not a new constitution, but instead 41 proposed constitutional amendments were voted on in a special election on September 3, 1912. Eight of the proposals did not gain approval, among them granting women the right to vote in Ohio elections, abolishing the death penalty, and the use of voting machines in elections. Among the 33 that were approved were the initiative and referendum – two ways permitting citizens to act directly rather than only through their legislators or convention delegates.

Prior to 1912, the Constitution could be amended if 60% of the members of both the Ohio House and Senate would vote to place it on the ballot. Two-thirds of both legislative branches could vote to put the question of having a constitutional convention to the voters, and in addition, the issue of having a constitutional convention had to be placed on the ballot every 20 years. Citizens could act through these bodies but couldn't act directly.

After 1912, citizens gained another way of changing Ohio's constitution – one that by-passed the legislature and didn't require a constitutional convention. Any citizen can file an initiative petition to place a proposed constitutional amendment on the ballot. The petition must be accompanied by signatures of 10% of the electorate. That has been defined in statute as 10% of the number of voters who cast ballots in the prior gubernatorial election. In 2006 over 4 million Ohioans voted in the gubernatorial race, so over 400,000 signatures are required to place an amendment on the ballot.

Ohio citizens also have the right to propose new statutes. An initiative petition for a proposed statute need be signed by only 3% of the electorate. It is then submitted to the legislature. If the legislature doesn't pass it within 4 months, the petitioners can get signatures from an additional 3% of the electorate and have the issue placed on the ballot. While the signature requirement is lower, it is still substantial. Based on the 2006 gubernatorial race, over 240,000 signatures are required.

Ohio citizens can also petition for a referendum to challenge laws enacted by the general assembly. Laws become effective 90 days after final approval, and the petition must be filed with the secretary of state within those 90 days. The signature requirement is similar to that of the statutory initiative petition – 6% of the

electorate. The legislature does have the authority to pass emergency laws not subject to referendum, but they must receive 2/3 vote by both the house and senate, and are limited to a few subjects.

Ohioans have taken their rights to initiative and referendum petitions seriously and in the last 10 years have presented voters with issues as varied as classifying mourning doves as song birds, allowing drug offenders to request treatment in lieu of jail, the definition of marriage, and numerous election law issues. In 2007, Ohioans gathered signatures for a proposed constitutional amendment to change education funding, a proposed statute to require employers to provide sick leave, and a proposed referendum of a statute to place statewide limits on adult entertainment. At this writing, the only issue that may have sufficient signatures is the referendum about adult entertainment.

Order Updated LWVO Publications Today

The League of Women Voters of Ohio Education Fund (LWVOEF) has long been a source for citizens to gain a basic understanding of their role in a representative democracy. Through brief, non-technical brochures accessible to voters of different backgrounds, the League helps individuals understand, monitor, and get involved in the work of their local, state and federal government.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Murray and Agnes Seasongood Foundation, LWVOEF recently completed updates of the following publications in English:

The Sunshine Act: A guide to Ohio's open meetings and open records laws. There Oughta Be A Law: A guide to passing legislation. Whether at the local or state level, this publication is a step-by-step guide on how a bill moves through the legislative process.

Contacting Your Legislator or Elected Official: A guide to lobbying elected officials. This brochure helps citizens make formal contact with policymakers, including proper salutations, suggestions for conveying an effective message, and tips for lobbying.

Township Government In Ohio: A guide to understanding what townships are under Ohio law. The brochure gives the history of townships in Ohio and explains the difference between townships and other municipalities.

Spanish versions of these brochures will be available by the end of October. We have also updated three member publications: *Welcome to the League: A Handbook for New Members, Taking Action and For the New and Not So New Board Member.* To order, please call the office at 877-598-6446 ext. 10. Members can also download PDF versions of the brochures from the LWVO website: www.lwvohio.org/publications.htm

Leaving a League Legacy: Planned Giving and the Goals of LWVO/EF

By Nike Mendenhall

What better legacy is there to leave to future generations than your commitment to the *League of Women Voters of Ohio*? Whether you are taking those first important steps toward planning your estate or in the process of updating your estate plan, thinking about supporting those organizations that have been an integral part of your life are part of estate planning.

The *League of Women Voters of Ohio* recognizes the importance of offering League members the information they need to make their planned giving choices. In upcoming issues we will explore the many forms of planned giving and how they address different financial goals:

- * Some wish to make significant gifts in their lifetime while others want to make their gift a part of their estate.
- * Others prefer to donate a specific asset such as life insurance, securities, or real estate.
- * Some options allow the opportunity to increase retirement income or reduce tax liability while allowing assets to be passed on to future generations.

Naming the *League of Women Voters of Ohio* in your will or estate plan will help continue your efforts toward better citizenship and provide an enduring legacy. For more information, contact the LWVO office at 877-598-6446.

MEMBERSHIP FORM



Yes, sign me up as a member of the League of Women Voters of Ohio!

\$50 Individual \$75 Household

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

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

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